

EXIT 21: Ecclesiastes

PURPOSE: To spare future generations the bitterness of learning through their own experience that life is meaningless apart from God

AUTHOR: Solomon

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE: Solomon's subjects in particular, and all people in general

DATE WRITTEN: Probably around 935 B.C., late in Solomon's life

SETTING: Solomon was looking back on his life, much of which was lived apart from God.

KEY VERSE: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

SPECIAL FEATURES: The title of the book "Ecclesiastes" means "The Preacher". This book, if not taken carefully, can be very depressing.

OUTLINE:

1. Solomon's _____ (1:1—2:26)
2. Solomon's general _____ (3:1—5:20)
3. Solomon's _____ counsel (6:1—8:17)
4. Solomon's final conclusion (9:1—12:14)

CHRIST IN ECCLESIASTES:

Words of truth given by one shepherd (Ecc. 12:10-11)

Ecclesiastes 12:1-7

- (1) Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;
- (2) While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:
- (3) In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened,
- (4) And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low;
- (5) Also *when* they shall be afraid of *that which is* high, and fears *shall be* in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets:
- (6) Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.
- (7) Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.



ECCLESIASTES



BIBLE STUDY

MEGATHEMES

THEME	EXPLANATION	IMPORTANCE
Searching	Solomon searched for satisfaction almost as though he was conducting a scientific experiment. Through this process, he discovered that life without God is a long and fruitless search for enjoyment, meaning, and fulfillment. True happiness is not in our power to attain because we always want more than we can have. In addition, there are circumstances beyond our control that can snatch away our possessions or attainments.	People are still searching. Yet the more they try to get, the more they realize how little they really have. No pleasure or happiness is possible without God. Without him, satisfaction is a lost search. Above everything we should strive to know and love God. He gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy.
Emptiness	Solomon shows how empty it is to pursue the pleasures that this life has to offer rather than seek to have a relationship with the eternal God. The search for pleasure, wealth, and success is ultimately disappointing. Nothing in the world can fill the emptiness and satisfy the deep longings in our restless hearts.	The cure for emptiness is to center on God. His love also can fill the emptiness of human experience. Fear God throughout your life, and fill your life with serving God and others rather than with selfish pleasures.
Work	Solomon tried to shake people's confidence in their own efforts, abilities, and wisdom and to direct them to faith in God as the only sound basis for living. Without God, there is no lasting reward or benefit in hard work.	Work done with the wrong attitude will leave us empty. But work accepted as an assignment from God can be seen as a gift. Examine what you expect from your efforts. God gives you abilities and opportunities to work so that you can use your time well.
Death	The certainty of death makes all human achievements futile. God has a plan for each one of us that goes beyond life and death. The reality of aging and dying reminds each individual of the end to come when God will judge each person's life.	Because life is short, we need wisdom that is greater than this world can offer. We need the words of God so we can live right. If we listen to him, his wisdom spares us the bitterness of futile human experience and gives us a hope that goes beyond death.
Wisdom	Human wisdom doesn't contain all the answers. Knowledge and education have their limits. To understand life and make right choices, we need the wisdom that can be found only in God's Word—the Bible.	When we realize that God will evaluate all that we do, we should learn to live wisely, remembering that he is present each day, and learn to obey his guidelines for living. But in order to have God's wisdom, we must first get to know and honor him.

Ecclesiastes

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities,
all is vanity." Ecclesiastes 1:2