

# Survey of the Old Testament

## The Book of Ecclesiastes

- I. Author identifies himself as “the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem” (1:1).
  - A. The Hebrew word for “preacher” is *Qoheleth* (variation in spelling, *Koheleth*). Thus, you sometimes see him referred to this way.
  - B. Since he identifies himself as **the son of David**, and as **king in Jerusalem**, and since the author **was obviously rich**, and since this is a **book of wisdom**, most have thought that Solomon must be the author. Also, note 1:16 – no one after Solomon could claim such a thing.
  - C. Some, however, question Solomonic authorship.
  - D. If written by Solomon, it was likely written shortly before 930 BC – which was about when Solomon died.
- II. Key word: Vanity. “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.”
  - A. His point: life is totally meaningless. He tried everything to see what life is about, and nothing made sense.
  - B. This presupposes an approach that leaves God out. This is crucial to a proper reading of the book. Why is a human no better than an animal (3:19-20)? Does a human just return to the dust as animals do? Isn’t there a difference? There is, but from a worldly perspective, there is not. If you leave God out, there is no difference!
  - C. The purpose of the book, then, is to discover the real purpose of life – just what is life all about? What makes life worth living? What is the goal of life?
- III. Samples of where Qoheleth sought meaning in life:
  - A. Wisdom (1:17-18; 2:12-16)
  - B. Wealth (2:1-11; 5:10-11, 15; 2:18-19)
  - C. Pleasure (2:1-8)
  - D. Building projects, etc. (2:4-6)
- IV. The point is, if you leave God out, life has no meaning. These matters are NOT satisfying in themselves. They are only satisfying within the bounds of a relationship with God.
- V. Thus the conclusion of the book in 12:13-14 – fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of people.
  - A. The word “duty” is added by translators; it is not in the Hebrew text.
  - B. Not just the *duty* of people, but their *whole* is tied up in fearing and obeying God.