

Lecture 28 – Ecclesiastes, I

Not only was the Teacher wise, but also he imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs. The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true. The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails, given by one Shepherd. Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them. Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body.

*Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter:
Fear God and keep his commandments,
For this is the whole duty of man.
For God will bring every deed into judgment,
Including every hidden thing,
Whether it is good or evil. Ecclesiastes 12:9-14*

Key Terms

Modern, unity, structure, authorship, theme

Lecture Objectives

- *Identify and discuss issues surrounding the interpretation of Ecclesiastes.
- *Outline the case for Solomonic authorship of Ecclesiastes.
- *Provide an outline of Ecclesiastes and identify its major themes.

Preliminary Questions

- *Some people wonder why Ecclesiastes is in God's inspired Word. How would you respond to someone who had this question? What redemptive role does it have? What is its function in the Christian life?

Dr. Long begins with an illustration of the Son Taylor story as a reminder why we study the Bible.

Ecclesiastes, I

I. Ecclesiastes

- Thoroughly modern book
- A controversial book?
 - Unity
 - Structure
 - Authorship
 - Theme
- A. The authorship question
 1. Early Jewish and Christian tradition
 - a. Internal evidences
 - b. Conclusion
 - 1) 1st person speaker appears to be Solomon (but does not name himself)
 2. The modern consensus: Solomon not the author, *i.e.* Kidner, p. 97, "Koholeth dons the mantle of Solomon"
 - a. Internal evidences
 - b. Linguistic evidences
 - 1) "If the book of Koholeth is of Solomonic origin, there is no history of the Hebrew language." - Franz Deilitsch
 - c. Conclusion of most modern scholars

- 1) Author dons Solomonic guise for teaching lesson
3. A dissenting view (Dan Fredericks, Duane Garrett, Gleason Archer)
 - a. Internal evidences already mentioned above
 - 1) Solomon the logical choice
 - b. Jewish tradition
 - 1) Given some weight, not ultimate weight
 - c. Inconclusiveness of the linguistic evidence
 - 1) Granted it is different from that period, but it is different from any period!
 - 2) More to do with dialect than chronology, *Illustration: people who pray in King James English*
 - d. On supposed indications that author is not a king?
 - 1) A king can step back, *Illustration: Winston Churchill*
 - e. Archer's conclusion
4. Conclusion:
 - a. Straddling the fence (for now)
 - b. Solomon, the likely author of the book
 - c. Inspired author, can definitely teach us about Solomon
 - d. Bible does not claim Solomon is author, so does not involve a truth claim/orthodoxy test

What is your stance on the authorship of Ecclesiastes? Is this an important issue? Why or why not?

B. Unity, structure and message

1. Unity: Increasingly recognized
 - a. Comparative ANE literature
 - b. Koheleth often quoted material in order to refute it (e.g., 4:5-6)
 - c. Motive?
 - 1) Why bother trying to "fix" something that badly broken?
 - d. Title and epilogue probably from disciple
 - e. The book as "notebook"
 - 1) Philosophical /theological reflections without progression?
2. Structure:
 - a. 2 common views
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____

G. Wright's structuring of the book as recorded in Rolf Rendorff, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (E. Fortress, 1985) 265.

	1:1	Title
I.	1:2-11	Poems about vain toil
	1:12-6:9	Critical investigations of human life. ' <u>All is vanity and a striving after wind</u> '
II.	6:10-11:6	Consequences
	6:10-12	Introduction
A.	7:1-8:17	<u>Man cannot discover what is good for him to do</u>
B.	9:1-11:6	<u>Man does not know what will come after him</u>
	11:7-12:8	Poems on youth and old age
	12:9-14	Epilogue

- b. A mediating position. (Brevard Childs)

1) Maybe not a tightly organized structure, but does have a progression of thought

Why would your views about the structure of Ecclesiastes matter in your interpretation of the book's message?