

Ecclesiastes
on
The Purpose,
Priority,
and Vanity
of Man
Under the Sun

Lesson 1

Chapter 1 Introduction to Solomon, the book, the genera and the study

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 1:1-18

The goal here is to teach 13 lessons on the book of Ecclesiastes and extract every ounce of richness inspired by the wisest man to walk on earth, Jesus Christ the righteous, and recorded by the wisest man to walk on earth previous, Solomon. A lofty goal.

This goal is to be pursued with 4 strategies.

- I. To explore my purpose in life. As the book has this purpose and aspiration, it would be frightful to teach the book without it having a life altering effect on the teacher.
- II. To explore the the purpose in study; to learn to more effectively read the Bible as literature, understanding better it's communicative techniques, provisions and power; understanding this better in the overlooked genera of Hebrew poetry.
- III. The pursuit of wisdom. Or, in the words of our author “ *To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.* “ (Prov 1:2-6)
- IV. The pursuit of teaching. That I could influence others to pursue the previous three strategies for the next 13 weeks would be the equivalent of teaching a poor man to fish, rather than giving a poor man a fish.

Let's begin. The book of Ecclesiastes is unlike any other book in the Bible. It explores and reaches for the whole value of man 'under the sun' and it comes up sorely lacking. To detail this vanity of man from every angle the wisest man of the world, Solomon, organized the greatest wisdom genera of the world, Hebrew poetry, into a dense pack of inspired communication, Ecclesiastes. It is thus the value of man 'under the sun' that is lacking not the book of Ecclesiastes.

One cannot pursue the depths of the little book without a better grasp of it's author. The book walks through the reasoning of a man from his youth, chapter 2, through his grey headed grave, chapter 12. Let's do the same lesson by lesson with Solomon. In our introduction we will consider the whole background of Solomon. As each lesson unfolds we will revisit these milestones of Solomon's life and note that they parallel the maturing process that the preachers theme seems to mirror. Here then is an outline of maturing, roughly aligned with the chapters of the book and highlighting the life of Solomon.

Chapter 2 Reasoning of a youth age under 21

Consider Solomon's youth and parents. David's great sin with Solomons mother, Bathsheba. (2Sam 11) The dysfunctional home but God's love of Solomon (2Sam12:24-25, 1Chron 3)

Chapter 3 Reasoning of a young man aged to 28

Consider Solomon's dysfunctional home, his brother Amnon's crime and Absalom's murderous retribution (2Sam 13-14)

Chapter 4 Reasoning of a young man aged to 35

Consider the struggle for the kingdom; his brother Absalom's takeover of his fathers throne (2Sam15-19)

Chapter 5 Reasoning of a middle aged man aged to 42

Consider the unsettled aftermath of the revolt, Joab's part and Sheba's

revolt (2Sam 20-22)

Chapter 6 Reasoning of a middle aged man aged to 49

Consider the death of Solomon's father, David and the struggle to get Solomon on his throne. (2Sam 23, 1King 1, 1Chron 23:1-6)

Chapter 7 Reasoning of a mature man aged to 56

Consider David's charge to Solomon (1King 2) And Solomon's assuming the throne with prayer for wisdom (1King 3).

Chapter 8 Reasoning of a mature man aged to 63

Consider Solomon as a father, teacher (Proverbs 1, 2:1,3:1,4:1,5:1,6:1,7:1 'My Son!')

Chapter 9 Reasoning of a thinking man aged to 70

Consider Solomon's building of the temple (1King 5-6, cf 1 Chron 17,22, 2Chron 1-4) and building his own house (1Kings 7)

Chapter 10 Reasoning of a thinking man aged to 77

Consider the dedication of Solomon's temple and the appearance of God (1King 8-9:9, 2Chron 5-7)

Chapter 11 Reasoning of a wise man aged to 84

Consider Solomon's wealth and fame. (1King 9:10-11:25, 2Chron 8-9) and his son's failure in the kingdom (1King 11:26-12, 2Chron 10-12)

Chapter 12 Reasoning of a wise man aged to 91

Consider the longevity of wisdom (Prov 8)

Lesson 13 Review and Conclusions

Consider Solomon's 4000 proverbs of which we can study only 1000. (Proverbs 1)

Consider now the book Ecclesiastes. We have covered what our goals are for these lessons and the background information on the author, Solomon. For adults and teens the tact for this study should be formatted like a book club wherein each one reads the whole book first then reads and comes to class ready to intelligently discuss each chapter. Including their participation will greatly expand their

comprehension, open thoughts and ideas that you and I had not considered, and teach people to fish for themselves.

Review the purpose and outline given here by C.I. Schofield, paying close attention to the verbal plenary inspiration of the book of Ecclesiastes.

Schofield's Introduction and Outline¹

The Book of Ecclesiastes or The Preacher

This is the book of man "under the sun," reasoning about life; it is the best man can do, with the knowledge that there is a holy God, and that He will bring every-thing into judgment. The key phrases are "under the sun;" "I perceived"; "I said in my heart."

Inspiration sets down accurately what passes, but the conclusions and reasonings are, after all, man's. That those conclusions are just in declaring it "vanity" in view of judgment, to devote life to earthly things, is surely true; but the "conclusion" (#Ec 12.13) is legal, the best that man apart from redemption can do, and does not anticipate the Gospel. Ecclesiastes is in five parts:

I. Theme, 1.1-3.

II. Theme proved, 1.4-3.22.

III. Theme unfolded in the light of human sufferings, hypocrisies, uncertainties, poverty and riches, 4.1-10.20.

IV. The best thing possible to the natural man apart from God, 11.1-12.12.

V. The best thing possible to man under the law, 12.13,14.

In this lesson we are taking an introductory overview of

¹ The Scofield Study Bible Special Helps by Dr. C.I. Scofield
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where we are going to go in the next 12 weeks. Use the time to generate curiosity and excitement that will get your students reading ahead. Ask them to read the whole book in one sitting, and to at least read the first and second chapters before next week. Then challenge them to come to class with a paragraph in their own words that describes the theme and outline of of chapter 2.

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws of Teaching that we all know and love.

Law of the Teacher

A. Law - A teacher must know that which he would teach.

Lesson 2

Chapter 2 Reasoning of a youth age under 21

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 2:1-26

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider Solomon's youth and parents. David's great sin with Solomons mother, Bathsheba. (2Sam 11) The dysfunctional home but God's love of Solomon (2Sam12:24-25, 1Chron 3)

Chap 2 Outline

Read through ch 2 with this outline in view. Does it capture it?

vr 1-2. Comedy and pleasure

vr 3-11 What one may DO

I made me, I got me, I gathered me!

Notice the me me me

vr 12-16 Beholding Wisdom and Folly

vr 17-20 Despair of it all

vr 21-23 Perhaps if labor was in wisdom?

... Not so .. it is still vain

vr 24-26 Conclusion

"Eat drink and be merry for tomorrow ye shall die"

Note: vr 24 this I also saw (ERRANTLY?) as from God

Cover this outline in the class time by highlighting several of the verse wordings. (There will not likely be time to cover each argument) This chapter ends on a depressing note that is in error. Don't leave your class there for the week, jump to the conclusion in Eccl 12:13. Emphasize that Solomon is accurately revealing the thought processes that he went through, even though he ends chapter 2 on this low note of error.

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws

Law of the Teacher

A. Law - A teacher must know that which he would teach.

B. Rule - Know thoroughly and familiarly the lesson you wish to teach --teach from a full mind and a clear understanding.

Lesson 3**Chapter 3 Reasoning of a young man aged to 28**

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 3:1-22

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider Solomon's dysfunctional home, his brother Amnon's crime and Absalom's murderous retribution (2Sam 13-14)

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws of Teaching that we all know and love.

Law of the Learner

A. Law - A learner must attend with interest to the material to be learned.

Lesson 4**Chapter 4 Reasoning of a young man aged to 35**

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 4:1-16

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider the struggle for the kingdom; his brother Absalom's takeover of his fathers throne (2Sam15-19)

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws of Teaching that we all know and love.

Law of the Learner

A. Law - A learner must attend with interest to the material to be learned.

B. Rule - Gain and keep the attention and interest of the pupils upon the lesson. Do not try to teach with out attention.

Lesson 5

Chapter 5 Reasoning of a middle aged man aged to 42

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 5:1-20

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider the unsettled aftermath of the revolt, Joab's part and Sheba's revolt (2Sam 20-22)

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws of Teaching that we all know and love.

Law of Language

A. Law - The language used as medium between teacher and learner must be common to both.

Lesson 6

Chapter 6 Reasoning of a middle aged man aged to 49

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 6:1-12

Encourage the class to read the whole book in one sitting again.

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider the death of Solomon's father, David and the struggle to get Solomon on his throne. (2Sam 23, 1King 1, 1Chron 23:1-6)

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws of Teaching that we all know and love.

Law of Language

A. Law - The language used as medium between teacher and learner must be common to both.

B. Rule - Use words understood in the same way by the pupils and you -- language clear and vivid to both.

Lesson 7**Chapter 7 Reasoning of a mature man aged to 56**

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 7:1-29

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider David's charge to Solomon (1King 2) And Solomon's assuming the throne with prayer for wisdom (1King 3).

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws of Teaching that we all know and love.

Law of Lesson

A. Law - The lesson to be mastered must be explicable in terms of truth already know by the learner -- the unknown must be explained by means of the known.

Lesson 8**Chapter 8 Reasoning of a mature man aged to 63**

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 8:1-17

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider Solomon as a father, teacher (Proverbs 1, 2:1,3:1,4:1,5:1,6:1,7:1 'My Son!')

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws of Teaching that we all know and love.

Law of Lesson

A. Law - The lesson to be mastered must be explicable in terms of truth already know by the learner -- the unknown

must be explained by means of the known.

B. Rule - Begin with what is already well known to the pupil upon the subject and with what he has himself experienced -- and proceed to the new material by single, easy, and natural steps, letting the know explain the unknown.

Lesson 9

Chapter 9 Reasoning of a thinking man aged to 70

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 9:1-18

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider Solomon's building of the temple (1King 5-6, cf 1 Chron 17,22, 2Chron 1-4) and building his own house (1Kings 7)

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws of Teaching that we all know and love.

Law of The Teaching Process

A. Law – Teaching is arousing and using the pupil's mind to grasp the desired thought or to master the desired art. Excite and direct the self-activities of the pupil, and as a rule tell him nothing that he can learn himself.

Lesson 10

Chapter 10 Reasoning of a thinking man aged to 77

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 10:1-20

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider the dedication of Solomon's temple and the appearance of God (1King 8-9:9, 2Chron 5-7)

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws of Teaching that we all know and love.

Law of The Teaching Process

A. Law – Teaching is arousing and using the pupil's mind to grasp the desired thought or to master the desired art. Excite and direct the self-activities of the pupil, and as a rule tell him nothing that he can learn himself.

B. Rule - Stimulate the pupil's own mind to action. Keep his thought as much as possible ahead of your expression, placing him in the attitude of a discoverer, an anticipator.

Lesson 11

Chapter 11 Reasoning of a wise man aged to 84

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 11:1-10

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider Solomons wealth and fame. (1King 9:10-11:25, 2Chron 8-9) and his son's failure in the kingdom (1King 11:26-12, 2Chron 10-12)

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws of Teaching that we all know and love.

Law of the Learning Process

A. Law - The pupil must reproduce in his own mind the truth to be learned.

Lesson 12

Chapter 12 Reasoning of a wise man aged to 91

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 12:1-14

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider the longevity of wisdom (Prov 8)

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws of Teaching that we all know and love.

Law of the Learning Process

A. Law - *The pupil must reproduce in his own mind the truth to be learned.*

B. Rule - Require the pupil to reproduce in thought the lesson he is learning -- thinking it out in its various phases and applications until he can express it in his own language.

Lesson 13 Conclusion

Ecclesiastes Reasoning of purpose, priority and vanity

Read aloud in Class Proverbs 1:1-10, 8:1-36

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider Solomon's 4000 proverbs of which we can study only 1000. (Prov 1)

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws of Teaching that we all know and love.

Law of the Review Work

A. Law - The test and proof of teaching done must be a reviewing, rethinking, re-knowing, reproducing, and applying of the material that has been taught.

B. Rule - Review, review, review, reproducing the old, deepening its impression with new thought, linking it with added meanings, finding new applications, correcting any false views, and completing the true.

Appendix Palm Memo Outline

Purpose in Eccl study

1. Explore the Purpose in life
2. Explore the Purpose in Study - Reading the Bible as literature
- Hebrew poetry
3. The Pursuit of Wisdom - from the wisest
4. The Pursuit of Teaching someone else

Book Outline

Lesson 1 Who was Solomon?

Eccl 1:1-2

Background

Intro chapter 1 The prelude

Lesson 2 Pursuits of Pleasures and labors Eccl 1:3-2:22

Lesson 3 Circles in life 3:1-

Lesson 4 Oppressions in life 4:1-

Lesson 5 Instructions for life 5:1-

Lesson 6 ... Eccl 6:1-

Lesson 7 ... Eccl 7:1-

Lesson 8 ... Eccl 8:1-

Lesson 9 ... Eccl 9:1-

Lesson 10 ... Eccl 10:1-

Lesson 11 ... Eccl 11:1-

Lesson 12 ... Eccl 12:1-

Lesson 11 Conclusion . Eccl 1:1-18.

chap 2

vr 1-2. Comedy and pleasure

vr 3-11 What one may DO

I made me, I got me, I gathered me! Notice the me me me

vr 12-16 Beholding Wisdom and Folly

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Appendix
Seven Laws of Teaching

Law of the Teacher

- A. Law - A teacher must know that which he would teach.
- B. Rule - Know thoroughly and familiarly the lesson you wish to teach --teach from a full mind and a clear understanding.

Law of the Learner

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