**I. Introduction to Ecclesiastes**

 A. The Title

1. The Greek word Ecclesiastes means “convoking an assembly”

2. Another way of saying it would be a “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”

3. Also note the similarity between Ecclesiastes and ekklesia, which is commonly found in our Bible translated as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

4. The Hebrew title is Qohlet = Preacher, which is used throughout the book.

B. The Authorship

Hebrew tradition says that Solomon wrote it as part of the following sequence:

 a. Song of Solomon was written in the early period of his life

b. Proverbs was written in the fullness of maturity and spirituality

1. Ecclesiastes was in his old age – after his time of carnality – 945 BC

**II. How Ecclesiastes fits into the cannon of scripture**

#### A. Job – sovereignty of God, time of tribulation

#### B. Psalms – Christ takes the throne, emotion, our hearts desire

#### C. Proverbs – Mind of God, Hebrew parallelism, Moral purity

#### D. ECC – Secret to happiness in reverse order – All philosophical approaches = vanity; emptiness. God’s way equals happiness

**III. The Keys to Understanding Ecclesiastes**

A. The Key word is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Means emptiness

2. Occurs 38 times

3. The message taught – Life is empty when your are trying to live it apart from God’s plan.

4. One author says- **Ecclesiastes: the inspired book of** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5. Only book in the Bible that reflects a human rather than divine point of view.

B. Key Phrase: Under the sun

 1. Occurs 27 times

2. Shows that these are the preachers words spoken from man’s perspective (Solomon should know!)

3. Also point us to the fact that Solomon penned the words but he did so under inspiration of The Sun – Mal 4:2

## IV. Organization of Ecclesiastes

###### Introduction 1:1-11

###### A. First Sermon: The vanity of Personal \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. 1:11-2:26

1. Key verses: 2:10-11

2. Vanity of searching for wisdom in Philosophy 1:12-18

3. Vanity of searching for meaning in pleasure and riches. 2:1-11

4. Chapter 2 = Philosophy of hedonism

5. Vanity of life when all men die. 2:12-17

6. Vanity of hard work. 2:18-23

7. The empty conclusion of personal experience. 2:24-26

###### B. Second Sermon: The vanity of personal \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. 3-5:17

1. Chapter 3 -This is the existential viewpoint – could also be called fatalism

Attitude that says “All we can really trust is our own reaction to events, to existence”

2. Key verses: Ecc 4:4

3. Vanity of life’s cycles. 3:1-22

4. Vanity of human society. 4:1-16

5. Chapter 4 = Capitalism

Although can be good for the good players, Solomon points out all the: oppression, envy and covetousness that goes with capitalism.

6. Vanity of human selfishness. 5:1-17

7. Chapter 5 = Religion

Man cannot live like animals that don’t care about deeper things; Man seeks explanations and deeper meaning to life.

8. The empty conclusion of personal observation 5:18-20

###### C. Third Sermon: The vanity of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. 6-8

1. Key verses: Ecc 6:7-8

2. Chapter 6 materialism - the philosophy of "the good life."

3. Vanity of materialism. 6:1-12

4. Vanity of moralizing. 7:1-29

5. Chapter 7 = stoicism -- a cultivated indifference to events -- and his conclusion is that in order to view life this way, aim for a happy medium; be moderate in all things.

Key word of chapter 7 is “Better”

6. Chapter 8 = master the structures in life – try to be on the right side at the right time.

7. Vanity of human government. 8:1-15

8. The empty conclusion of practical morality. 8:16-17

###### D. Fourth Sermon: The victory of a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_: 9-12

1. Chapter 9 examines the world's value judgments and points out again that they all come to the same thing: Vanity

2. Key Verse Ecc 9:11

3. The certainty of death and brevity of life demand that man seek wisdom. 9:1-18

4. Chapter 10 – maintain discretion in life -- be temperate, diligent, cautious, accommodating; try to get by as best you can

5. Pleasure, philosophy, and good works are all vanity. 10:1-20

Look at all the “good” people, especially the Hollywood set who are trying to make themselves happy be doing good works but are still so empty.

Good stewardship is one thing but realize: all of the big “social” causes are simply lost men trying to restore the Garden of Eden by their works \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, rather than by serving and waiting on God to restore it as he has promised.

6. The only solution to man’s dilemma is to live life with an eternal outlook and plan! 11:1-12:12

7. Chapter 11 - success is simply a matter of diligence -- in order to get something out of life, you need to work and apply yourself.

8. But then he concludes even that is all vanity: Ecc 11:6-8

9. Examine natural man’s deducted conclusions about this world: Ecc 2:24, 3:22, 5:18, 8:15, 9:7, 10:19

Natural Man’s conclusion about this life is eat, drink for tomorrow we die!

CAREFULLY NOTE: Total pessimism rules in a life that is lived without God.

#####  E. Conclusion: How to be happy: 12:13-14

1. Key Verse of Ecclesiastes: Ecc 12:13

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. 14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil.

2. Only by serving God, do you avoid conviction and experience joy in this world.

3. Only by focusing on **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** can you truly have satisfaction!

###  V. Discussion Points:

Where are you now with your walk with God and serving Him in the Great Commission:

1. Have you progressed (or digressed) in the last year in your walk and service to God?
2. What should your next step be?
3. If you look at your calendar, how much of it is devoted to God and His work vs. vanity?
4. If you look at your checkbook, how much of it is devoted to God and His plan vs. vanity?
5. If you judge what you think about, how much of that energy is focused on God and His plan vs. vanity?
6. If God were to judge you right now, what grade would you earn (A-F)? Would God say that you are faithfully serving Him, or are you failing Him by living your life in in vanity?