ECCLESIASTES

EXPLAINED: Episode Summary

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1. ESSENTIALS

What Do You Need to Know First to Study Ecclesiastes Well?

DATE: ***~935 BC:*** Likely End of Solomon's Life
GENRE: ***Wisdom:*** Reflections on What Matters
AUTHOR: ***Solomon:*** Called "King" & "The Preacher"
SETTING: ***Israel:*** During Its Prosperous Times
PURPOSE: ***Meaning:*** Understanding Vanity in Life
AUDIENCE: ***National Israel:*** Generations of Faith

2. STORYLINE

What Do You Need to Know First to Study Ecclesiastes Well?

Final Years of Israel's Prosperity

- Solomon's Golden Years Are Ending
- Israel Has Flourished
- Idolatry Settled in Solomon's Heart
- Lust & Polygamy Overtook His Faith
- Full Circle on What Matters Most

KEY VERSES

The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

- Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

3. THEMES & IDEAS

What Major Biblical Concepts Do We Find in Ecclesiastes?

- Futility of Life Outside of God
- The Temporality of Earthly Riches
- The Passing Pleasures of Sin
- The Inevitability of Mortality
- The Poor Stewardship of Wisdom
- The Testimony of a Good Name
- The Value of Human Relationships
- The Fear of God & Obedience

4. STRUCTURE

What are the major sections of Ecclesiastes?

CH 1:1-11: 1. The Preacher's Introduction: What Profits?
Lamenting the emptiness of life "under the sun," apart from God

CH 1:12-2:26: 2. The Preacher's Subject: The Vanity of Life
A blunt summary of wasted wisdom, worldly labor, and temporal pleasure

CH 3-11: 3. The Preacher's Synopsis: Unfiltered Reflections
Honest thoughts on regret, work, wealth, justice, death, and sorrow for the wise

CH 12: 4. The Preacher's Conclusion: Fear God & Obey
The only true source of meaning is fearing God and keeping his commandments



4. STRUCTURE - EXPANDED

4. What are the major sections of Ecclesiastes?

5. What do we learn about God from each of these sections?

6. What do these sections offer our Christian life?

CH 1:1-11: 1. THE PREACHER'S INTRODUCTION: WHAT PROFITS?

The sermon opens with its main theme: without God, all our toil is vapor

CH 1:1-3: Vanity of Vanities
The Hebrew word means vapor or smoke: what profit is all our toil under the sun?

CH 1:4-11: Nothing New Under the Sun
The sun rises and sets, the eye is never satisfied, and every generation passes away

CH 1:12-2:26: 2. THE PREACHER'S SUBJECT: THE VANITY OF LIFE

Solomon holds nothing back: he has tried everything, and none of it satisfies the soul

CH 1:12-18: Wisdom Without God
The king searches out all that is done under heaven and finds it grasping for the wind

CH 2: Pleasure & Great Works
He withholds no pleasure from his heart, yet all his labor is vanity with no profit under the sun

CH 3-11: 3. THE PREACHER'S SYNOPSIS: UNFILTERED REFLECTIONS

Old Solomon sits down to teach: sarcasm and cynicism with a purpose, so the wise will listen

CH 3: God's Purpose in Every Season
A time for everything: God makes all beautiful in its time and puts eternity in our hearts

CH 4: The Value of a Friend
Two are better than one, and a threefold cord is not quickly broken

CH 5-8: Gain, Honor & Practical Wisdom
Riches do not satisfy, a good name beats fine ointment, and it will not be well with the wicked

CH 9-11: Perspectives on Labor & Living
Live joyfully, do with your might what your hand finds to do, and value wisdom over strength

CH 12: 4. THE PREACHER'S CONCLUSION: FEAR GOD & OBEY

The book ends where wisdom begins: remember God while there is time, for every deed will be judged

CH 12:1-8: Remember Your Creator
Remember him in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come and the light grows dark

CH 12:9-14: The Whole Matter
Fear God and keep his commandments, for God will bring every secret thing into judgment

5. HOW ECCLESIASTES POINTS TO CHRIST

- In Jesus, who swallowed up death and gives us the victory
- Beyond life "under the sun" is the Son, who gives abundant life
- In Jesus' question: what profit to gain the world and lose your soul?
- In God's purpose to make all things one in Jesus (John 17)

