

## **Synthetic Bible Studies**

Containing an outline study of every book of the Bible  
with suggestions for Sermons, Addresses and  
Bible Expositions

By

James M. Gray, D.D.

Fleming H. Revell Company

Copyright © 1906

by

Fleming H. Revell, Westwood, New Jersey

edited for 3BSB by Baptist Bible Believer in the spirit of the Colportage Ministry of a century  
ago

*~ out-of-print and in the public domain ~*

### **LESSON TWENTY-ONE**

#### **ECCLESIASTES**

The ground for ascribing Ecclesiastes to Solomon is fourfold:

- (1) The indirect claim of the book itself, (1:1,12);
- (2) the general opinion of Jews and Christians from the earliest times;
- (3) the fitness of Solomon to write it;
- (4) the lack of agreement among critics as to any other author or period.

The design of the book seems to be to show the insufficiency of all earthly objects to confer happiness, and thus prepare man to receive the true happiness in CHRIST when presented to him. It is not affirmed that this was the design present in the mind of the human writer, but that it was the design of the HOLY SPIRIT who inspired the writing.

There are many different plans or theories of the book.

- in the first place, there are those who conceive of it as a formal treatise on the vanity of human affairs.
- there are others who think it merely a collection of disconnected thoughts and maxims.
- a third class speak of it as a kind of sustained dialogue between a teacher and his pupils, as suggested in the introduction to the book of Proverbs in our last lesson.
- a fourth regard it as a biography of Solomon's own life, and
- a fifth, as an ideal book of the experience of the natural as distinguished from the spiritual man.

This last does not necessarily exclude any of the others, but rather explains, perhaps, why anyone of them may be taken as the correct view.

They who hold to the first idea of a formal treatise recognize four distinct discourses, e. g., chapters 1, 2; 3-5; 6:1-8:15; 8:16-12:7.

They who hold to the fourth idea think that the book not only records, but re-acts the secrets of Solomon's own search for happiness, making of it a kind of dramatic biography. In other words, Solomon becomes himself again in the writings of the book, the various phases of his former self, having fits of study, luxury, misanthropy, etc., all ending in disappointment. In this case it is important to note that the word "wisdom" as used in Ecclesiastes means "science," while as used in Proverbs it means "piety."

They who hold to the last-named conception of the book are best represented as far as I know, by W. J. Erdman, D.D., whose concise work, entitled *Ecclesiastes*, cannot be too highly commended.

### **The Book of the Natural Man**

By "*the book of the natural man*" is meant man as he is "**under the sun**," compared with the man spoken of by Paul whose "**conversation** [citizenship] **is in heaven**."

The first proof presented is that the only divine name used in the book is the "natural" name, GOD (Elohim), the significance of which all will recognize from our reference to it in the study of Genesis. the Lord, the name associated with the covenant of redemption, is not once employed in the book of Ecclesiastes; hence man is seeking what is best "**under the sun**," but not seeking Him who is above the sun.

A second proof is the frequent use of that phrase just referred to, "**under the sun**." As Dr. Erdman says, "Man is looking up but not knowing what is beyond, except judgment."

A third proof is this, viz.: that all the experiences and observations of the book are bound together by the one question: "**What is the chief good?**" "Is life worth living?" While the answer is sought amidst general failure, contradictions, and half-truths, because man is out of CHRIST, and yet face to face with the mysteries of GOD and nature.

A fourth proof is what the book itself styles "**the conclusion of the whole matter**" (12:13, 14), which, the more you think about it, the more you perceive to be that of the natural man only. "**To fear God and keep His commandments**," is right, but the author of Ecclesiastes confessedly has not done so, and yet he sees judgment in the distance and has not preparation to meet it. "Where man ends therefore, GOD begins."

The book of the natural man concludes where that of the spiritual man begins. The all-in-all of man under the sun, the first Adam, convicts him of failure and guilt in order to lead him to the all-in-all of the man above the sun, the second Adam, who bare our guilt in His own body on the tree.

This conception of the book easily explains why some of its conclusions are only partially true and others altogether false, such as 2:16; 3:19; 9:2, etc.

And if it be asked, How then can the book be inspired?

The answer is that in contending for the inspiration of the Bible we do not claim the inspiration of the men, but the writings; while in the latter case it is not meant that every word thus written is true, and in that sense GOD's Word, but that the record of it is true. That is, GOD caused it to be written that this or that man felt this or that way, and said thus and so, and hence the record of how he felt and what he said is GOD's record, and in that sense true and inspired.

~ end of Lesson 21 ~

\*\*\*