

Introducing Ecclesiastes

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 31 January 2016

Preacher: Cedric Moss

[0 : 0 0] I knew from the very outset that this would be a very difficult book to understand and certainly a difficult book to preach from. And as I consulted commentaries, without exception, all of the commentators began at the very outset of their commentaries to make the point about how difficult Ecclesiastes is.

Peter ends, begins his Ecclesiastes commentary with these words. He writes, To introduce a book of the Bible is often seen as a preliminary necessity, almost a courtesy to ease readers into the content of the book.

This is not the case with Ecclesiastes, for which it is precisely the standard questions, who wrote the book, when and for what purpose, that continue to prove challenging for any commentator.

Not only will one find widely divergent answers to these questions documented throughout the history of interpretation of Ecclesiastes, but the difficulty is that how one answers these questions will ultimately affect one's interpretation of the book as a whole.

In his book, Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes, Sidney Grudanus writes, Ecclesiastes may be the most difficult book to interpret and preach.

[1 : 3 9] In his commentary, Ian Provan opens with these words, It's best to be frank from the outset. Ecclesiastes is a difficult book.

And then finally, Douglas Sean O'Donnell, the person that I will be referring to most, I think, in terms of the commentaries that I'm finding helpful.

He writes in his commentary these very candid words. Ecclesiastes is a tough read. So while the commentators disagree about many things in Ecclesiastes, what they agree on is that the book is hard.

It's a difficult book to understand. It's a difficult book to interpret. Now, some of you may be asking, well, why in the world would you choose such a difficult book to preach?

And in a sense, I did choose the book, but it was only after prayer and a sense that this is where God is leading us that I really settled on this book.

[2 : 4 9] We had been in the New Testament for the last three sermon series. We did Colossians, and then we did the Sermon on the Mount, and then we did 1 Timothy. And so I felt we would go to the Old Testament, and I was initially looking at the book of Judges.

That was where I had assembled resources, started to study. But as I really prayed, I really sensed the Lord leading us to the book of Ecclesiastes.

And my doing it really is out of a sense of obedience. I don't think I prayed as much about a message series as I have about this one.

I don't think I will be praying as much as I will for each individual message. I don't think I've ever prayed that much in the past. So I share that as well so that you can certainly join me in prayer.

And bear in mind that when you pray for me, you pray for yourself, because if I don't know what this book is about, you're going to have to endure it if you're here. So please pray for me as we work our way through this book.

- [3 : 53] As I think about the reason, here's what I could really say this morning. The sense of God's direction, that this is what God's will is for us at this time, really overshadows in my mind the difficulty of the book.
- And I'm trusting the Lord to meet me as I study and meet us as we sit under His Word. Well, my goal this morning is to introduce Ecclesiastes.
- And you will soon see that just the way we're introducing it, that this is a very different kind of book. It's going to be a different kind of sermon series.
- This morning, our attention will be confined to the two opening verses. Ecclesiastes chapter 1, verses 1 through 2.
- Please follow along as I read. The words of the preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.
- [4 : 59] Vanity of vanities, says the preacher. Vanity of vanities. All is vanity. Let's pray.
- Father, we come to you this morning, Lord, and I am deeply aware, more so this morning than on previous mornings, of my great need for you and your help.
- And Lord, for us as a church, because Lord, we have come to this book with the conviction that it is your Word, but yet we are personally aware and we have been made aware by others, others who have studied this book and given themselves to this book during the course of their long lives.
- And over many centuries, this book continues to be labeled as not just a difficult book, but perhaps the most difficult book in your Word.
- But Lord, since it is your Word, and since all of your Word is to profit us, we ask that you would help us this morning as we lay a foundation for this series and that you would help us in the coming days.
- [6 : 25] Father, I pray that you would cause us to not just engage this book as a distant book from a distant time, but help us, Lord, to hear it as your timeless and timely Word for your people.
- Father, would you work in our hearts in ways that you only can and posture our hearts to hear and receive what you have for us this morning. We ask that you would do this in the name of Jesus, your Son.
- Amen. Amen. But in this introduction this morning, I have two goals. First of all, I want us to consider the historical setting of Ecclesiastes, which I believe will help us to appreciate the book.
- And then, I want us to consider the overall message of Ecclesiastes. My hope is that if we take this approach, we would be positioned to navigate ourselves through this book.
- In other words, if you think of it this way, we could see the overarching message of the book, the overall message of the book. That's kind of like seeing the forest, knowing that it's a forest, and then you can inspect and go through the trees.
- [7 : 47] If we don't do that, we'll get lost in the trees. We'll get lost and probably not find our way in any beneficial way as we work through. So, that's the goal this morning, to consider the historical setting of Ecclesiastes, and then consider the overall message of Ecclesiastes.
- So first, let's consider the historical setting of Ecclesiastes. First, let's talk about the author of Ecclesiastes.
- Who wrote the book of Ecclesiastes? Ecclesiastes. Well, Ecclesiastes begins with these words in verse 1. The words of the preacher, the son of David, king, in Jerusalem.
- We should not overlook the fact that the word preacher in verse 1 and elsewhere in the book is capitalized, meaning that it's a proper noun. And if you have the English Standard Version of the Bible, there's a footnote, number 1, after the word preacher.

And you'll see the footnote at the bottom of your Bible. At the bottom of that page, it gives us some additional words for preacher, like convener, one who convenes a gathering of people or a collector, one who brings people or sayings together.

[9 : 13] preacher. We're also given the Hebrew word for the, from which the translators translated the word preacher.

It's the word kohaleth. This word kohaleth comes from a Hebrew verb that means to assemble. In his commentary on Ecclesiastes, Ian Provan writes, the associated common noun, kohal, refers to a group of assembled people, most frequently to the people of Israel gathered together for war.

For example, Judges 20, verse 2, or for a specifically religious purpose such as listening to God's word.

For example, in Deuteronomy 5, 22. Or worshipping. For example, 2 Chronicles 30, 25.

A kohaleth was probably in origin a person who participated in, played some, an unspecified role in, an assembly, a kahal, the Greek rendering of kohaleth is Ecclesiastes, from which we derive our English word, the English title of the book, and it captures this sense for an Ecclesiastes was a person who sat or spoke in the Ecclesia, the assembly of local citizens.

[10 : 56] So Ian Provan helps us to get an appreciation for why this book is called Ecclesiastes and who this preacher is in terms of his function.

He is a gatherer of people. He's one who has some particular role in the assembly of people gathered together.

and certainly since we would see this in the Jewish context, he gives these various examples of how people gathered at different times. So that's how this book came to have its name.

It went from Ecclesiastes to Ecclesiastes with the C's in there from Greek to English. And the Greek translation of the word came from the Hebrew word Kohelet.

And it can be either K-O-H-E-L-E-T-H or just simply K-O-H-E-L-E-T. You'll find both being used to translate this word the preacher.

[12 : 03] So we must see the book of Ecclesiastes as a message being preached. Now the author identifies himself as the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

But exactly who is that? Now I grew up believing that Solomon was the undisputed author of the book of Ecclesiastes.

And as I began to study and read the various commentaries, I came to realize that people much smarter than I am who have given their lives to study, and particularly the study of this book, disagree that Solomon is the author of Ecclesiastes.

Now there are some who hold to the authorship of Solomon, but there are many, many, and conservative scholars who say that for various reasons, many, many reasons, Solomon couldn't be the author of Ecclesiastes.

Now I won't overwhelm you with all of those reasons, but I did select a few of them that I'll share as to reasons why these individuals in this group say Solomon is not the author of Ecclesiastes.

[13 : 26] First they point to Ecclesiastes 1 verse 16. Look at Ecclesiastes 1 verse 16, where the preacher says, I said in my heart, I have acquired great wisdom surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.

Those who disagree that Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes make the point that since David was the only king before Solomon, it was in the Jewish dynasty of kings, it was David and then Solomon, they make the point that it's not likely that Solomon would have written these words because the person writing these words is talking about all the kings who were before him in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem. So that's one of the points that they point out. Another is in verse 12, where he writes, I, the preacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

And here, the point that they would make is that the preacher is writing in past tense, and in Solomon's case, there was never a time since he assumed being king in his later years, there was never a time that he ceased to be king.

So he was king up until his death, so he would not have had a moment in time where he could say when I was king. That's another reason that they offer.

[15 : 08] They also point to verses, chapter 5, verses 8 through 9, and chapter 8, verses 1 through 9, and the point that they make is that the writer writes these words from the perspective of a subject, not as a ruler, not as a king.

He writes them from the perspective of one who is being ruled, not as a ruler. So they're pointing to a lot of internal evidence in the book itself to say it's not like that Solomon wrote this.

Another objection that they raise is that it's not likely that Solomon would have written Ecclesiastes simply because of the quality of the Hebrew language that they find in the book of Ecclesiastes.

And people who study these things, who are linguists, who can pick up a piece of literature from a particular period of time, and they can study it, and they can say, well, this literature was constructed during this period of time, because languages change over time.

We see that in English language. I was supposed to check to see the time of it, but I would imagine that it's only been about 25 or so years that we started to begin sentences with conjunctions like and and but and so forth.

[16 : 41] When I was in school, you couldn't do that. So if someone, let's say 100 years from now, was to pick up a piece of literature from say this period and maybe 25 years ago, just understanding changes in language, they could pretty much date those things.

Another example is, you know, now, I just saw about three weeks ago that they, to use they to refer to a single person is now okay.

that you could now do that. It's official that you could do that. I mean, of course, my hair raises when I think about that, but there are people who are now doing that and it is considered to be proper English today.

So those who study these matters in the Hebrew language say that when they study the quality of the Hebrew in Ecclesiastes, it points to a time after Solomon, not during Solomon's time.

Here's how Ian Provan put it when he adds it to all the other objections that he also raises about the authorship of Solomon. He writes, we may add to all of this that the language of the book taken as a whole gives every indication of being later rather than earlier Hebrew, the language of the post-exilic rather than the pre-exilic period.

[18 : 19] And so he's talking about, he's saying that the Hebrew that you find in Ecclesiastes was written after Israel came out of exile, not before. And obviously Solomon ruled long before Israel went into exile.

And so the point made is that the language points to a time after Solomon, not during the time that Solomon reigned.

And so this brings us now to the next question. And let me say this right now. It seems though that the majority position is against the authorship of Solomon.

Though you do find in the minority many solid good scholars who hold on to the view that Solomon wrote it. So it's a divided camp, but the majority would be on the side of saying Solomon did not write it.

Similar to the authorship of Ecclesiastes, there are also different positions on when it was written, and I've touched on this already. Some scholars say that the gloomy tone of Ecclesiastes points to the fact that it could not have been written during the time of Solomon, which would have been somewhere in the 10th century.

[19 : 35] Solomon reigned somewhere between 970 and 931 BC. That's the approximate time of his 40 year rule in Jerusalem.

They reject that Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes or anyone else wrote it in his time. One scholar is Edward Young, and here's what he says.

The background of the book does not fit the age of Solomon. He's talking about the time it was written. It was a time of misery, reading from the evidence in the book.

When you read the book, you'll see it was a time of misery and vanity. We see that in chapter 1, verses 2 through 11. The splendor of Solomon's age was gone.

Chapter 1, verse 12, through chapter 2, verse 26. It was a time of death. A time of death had begun for Israel. Chapter 3, verse 1 through 15.

[20 : 45] Injustice and violence were present. Chapter 4, 1 through 3. There was heathen tyranny. Chapter 5, 7, and then 9 through 19.

Death was preferred to life. Chapter 7, verse 1. And one man ruled over other men to their hurt. Among those scholars who reject a date during Solomon's era, there are many who do so for different reasons.

But there seems to be a broad agreement that it was written sometime after the Jews had gone into exile, into Babylonian captivity for 70 years, between the period of 605 B.C.

and 536 B.C. Now let me just take a moment to talk about this dating system. Some of you may know this, but I would say that many present would not know it.

And from time to time we talk about these things, B.C. and A.D. and we kind of hear it. And I think when we don't understand particular things, we tend to dismiss them.

[21 : 59] We don't tend to listen to them as closely as we should. The system of using B.C. and A.D. to date history was developed by a monk by the name of Dionysius Exiguus. His name means Dionysius the humble. And he developed this system to make the birth of Jesus Christ the dividing line in world history.

B.C. means before Christ so whatever number of years B.C. means that number of years before Christ was born. So 1500 B.C.

would mean 1500 years before Christ was born. 10 B.C. means 10 years before Christ was born. 1 B.C. means one year before Christ was born. So the Babylonian captivity was between 605 B.C.

and 536 B.C. So notice that you count down when you're on the B.C. side coming to the year in which Christ was born.

So the captivity started 605 years before Christ was born and then it ended 536 years before Christ was born. Now some people think that A.D.

[23 : 19] means after death. I used to for many years but it does not. What A.D. means is it is the abbreviation for the Latin phrase anno domini which means in the year of the Lord or we say in the year of our Lord.

So the dating goes to 1 B.C. there's no zero and then it goes to 1 A.D. so one year before Christ and then 1 or A.D. 1 is actually the proper way to do it.

So we count from A.D. 1 upwards so we are now in A.D. 2016 approximately 2016 years since Christ was born and I say approximately because after Dionysius had done his work scholars discovered that Jesus was actually born a little earlier than A.D.

1 he was born somewhere around 3 or 4 B.C. but it really doesn't change much but it's just good to remember that it's not exactly when Christ was born not A.D.

1 but somewhere around 3 or 4 B.C. Now back to the dating of Ecclesiastes like the authorship of Ecclesiastes there are different views on when the book was written but I think Peter ends summarizes the position well on the dating and the authorship of Ecclesiastes this way he writes debates will certainly continue concerning a more precise dating of Ecclesiastes but it is not likely that arguments for authorship in Solomon's time will be able to gain academic support so he is basically saying that over time people may get more data that helps them to come up with a more precise date for Ecclesiastes!

[25 : 21] But he doesn't see that it is likely that there will be a growing number of academics to support that Solomon wrote it so pointing away from the time of Solomon they probably want to know what is my informed position on all this well from what I can see there are scholars good scholars on both sides of the authorship debate both sides of the dating debate and I'm happy to be a part of those individuals who simply say I don't know I don't know enough to land on one of those sides so I simply would say I do not know while we don't know who the human author of the book is we know who the divine author of the book is the divine author of all scripture and therefore we are able to!

writes to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3 16 he writes that all scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching for reproof for correction and for training in righteousness that the man of God may be competent equipped for every good work so what is important is not when Ecclesiastes was written or who the human author is what is important is that it was written it is God's word and God is the divine author of the book of Ecclesiastes!

So as we work our way through the book of Ecclesiastes I won't be referring to a name like Solomon I just be referring to the preacher or to the writer well that's the background to Ecclesiastes in a broad sense but let's now consider since we have considered the author and the dating of it to whom was this book written who was the original audience of Ecclesiastes in answer to this question Sidney Greatness observes that because the words in Ecclesiastes 5 1 warn that people are to guard their steps when they go up to the house of God he makes the point that the original audience must have lived near Jerusalem and near the temple that's a good observation to make that since there's this warning to the people to watch how they go up to the house of

God he makes the point that it means that they lived in some close proximity to Jerusalem and to the temple again drawing from the contents of the book Shun Lung Siao observes that the preacher's audience were apparently preoccupied with all sorts of social and economic issues the volatility of the economy the possibility of wealth inheritance!

social status the fragility of life and the ever present shadow of death Kohelet drew on these concerns and employed idioms that were familiar to his audience in order to subvert their preoccupations and by an idiom he is referring to how you'll find in Ecclesiastes certain sayings that would have just been appreciated in that culture in that context at that time and that's helpful to know because when you come into a language there needs to be this appreciation that there are some things that we won't naturally understand without a context for those things like for example I remember an American friend of ours years ago saying how when she came to the Bahamas and she called someone she called this lady at home and said what are you doing she said man I right here trying to catch myself and she didn't know what the woman was talking about trying to catch herself what are you trying to do but we know what trying to catch yourself is that's an idiom and there are idioms in the book of Ecclesiastes if we don't appreciate them we look at them and they would seem strange but when you say to a person you're trying to catch yourself they say well man catch yourself they don't they don't of course

[30 : 06] I was thinking that's changed a bit because parents will say to kids today you better catch yourself and what that means is you know if you don't catch yourself I'll catch you and you would not like me to catch you so there are these idioms!

in the book G.S. Hendry notes that the preacher addresses people whose worldview is bounded by the horizons of the world he meets them on their own ground and proceeds to convict them of its inherent vanity this is further borne out by his characteristic expression under the sun so what we see as we consider these observations from the content of this book we see that Ecclesiastes was written to people like us the preacher's original audience comprised of people just like us people who were occupied and in some cases preoccupied with the issues pertaining to this life financial issues social issues inheritance

Inheritance issues what are my parents going to leave for me what am I going to leave for my children how will my children turn out will they get a good education and make enough money to take their place in society and suppose I die before my children will they be able to fend for themselves will they grow and be educated and will they get married and will they have children and who will they marry and who is going to win the next election both here and in the United States these things preoccupy us and this book addressed people who had similar preoccupations at another time but not only was Ecclesiastes written to people like us we need to be persuaded this morning that Ecclesiastes was written to us Ecclesiastes is God's word written to help us to understand that the issues pertaining to this life are not to be absentmindedly considered under the heat of the sun but they are to be consciously considered under the gaze of a

God who judges so that's the first point the historical setting of Ecclesiastes now to my second and final point what is the overall message of Ecclesiastes the overall message of Ecclesiastes what is Ecclesiastes about now before I answer that question let me take a moment to note the category or what we say the genre of writing that Ecclesiastes belongs to genre is just a classification of writing the kind of writing that it is and we all appreciate genre of writings even though we may not use that technical word if somebody says this morning to you once upon a time what do you know immediately it's fairy tale you know that they're going to tell you a story and it's not to really be believed as true because they cue you in when they say to you once upon a time

Ecclesiastes is in the genre of scripture called the wisdom books so it belongs in the same category as Proverbs as Job as the Song of Songs or we say the Song of the Songs of Solomon so this category for Ecclesiastes is wisdom literature it's a type of of writing it's different from other books in the Bible therefore it should be read differently the same way we don't read a story beginning once upon a time the same way we read the newspaper we should not read Ecclesiastes the same way we read for example Paul's letter to the Romans the epistle we shouldn't read it the way we look at the book of Deuteronomy the book of Deuteronomy is a law book and we certainly should not read it the way we read the book of

[34 : 54] Revelation the book of Revelation is what we call apocalyptic literature it's where the message of the book is communicated through signs and symbols you go in the book of Revelation and you see John having visions and he said for example I had this vision I saw this woman seated on the moon clothed with the sun and 12 stars on her head now if you go to the book of Revelation and you try to read Revelation the way you would read a letter from Paul you get confused because it is an impossibility for a woman to sit on the moon be clothed with the sun she'd be burnt up if she was clothed with the sun and she certainly wouldn't have 12 huge stars on her head but that's the nature of that book and so you read it in a symbolic sense that it is written in and that's the way you actually interpret it so the same is true with the wisdom literature when we approach the wisdom literature we have to see it as that it is actually wisdom literature

Sidney Grudenus makes this simple but profound and undeniable point he writes one cannot rightly interpret and preach a text until one has taken into account its specific genre the category of writing that it is and the bible is filled with these different categories of writings and so when we approach them we need to understand okay what am I reading and that's going to tell us how we need to be interpreting it ecclesiastes is wisdom literature and the purpose of wisdom literature is to teach wisdom to God's people J.A.

Loder explains wisdom literature this way he writes wisdom is concerned with the correct ordering of life wise action is that which integrates people harmoniously into the order that God has created the rules of life that prescribe how human beings must integrate themselves into that order are the precepts of wisdom so in essence saying this is God's world God has established how his world is to be lived in and wisdom is when we live in accordance with how God says we are to live in his world and that's what we're going to see Lord willing as we engage ecclesiastes in the coming months we will find wisdom that teaches us how life is to be ordered we will find wisdom that teaches us what we are to believe about

God in God's world we will find wisdom that teaches us what we are to believe about God's world and how we are to view and relate to things like work and pleasure money and wealth life and death times and seasons opportunities and risk contradictions in life and many other topics Sidney Redenas also points out that in this genre of wisdom literature you have some subforms of literature that we should be aware of and it didn't seem appropriate to try to take the time to describe all of them but he lists seven of them and what I want to do this morning is just hit them give them to you in terms of the categories that he mentions but what I will do is

I'm going to make available on the website a document that gives a definition and some examples of all of these so that as we go through Ecclesiastes and we encounter these we would know how to really how to understand them how to approach them the first one he mentions is a subgenre of wisdom literature is reflection and you'll see this often when the preacher says I observed this I saw this and then I considered so he's reflecting on life and also we'll encounter proverb the second form that we will encounter and we see in some proverbs it would make a statement and then make a contrasting statement to it and here again proverbs are not laws proverbs are general principles that are generally true but they're not absolutely always true give an example of that if you turn to

[39 : 59] Ecclesiastes chapter 10 and look at verse 12 Ecclesiastes 10 and 12 it says the words of a wise man's mouth win him favor but the lips of a fool consume him or you know bring him trouble that's proverbs 10 12 these are some examples there are a good number of proverbs in chapter 10 and there are also some in chapter 7 but when we consider that as a proverb I think we would all agree that not every single time do the words of a wise man's mouth bring him favor not every single time and not every single time do the words of a fool's lips consume him or bring him trouble we can think of

Jesus Jesus was wisdom personified and his wisdom did not always bring him favor his wisdom sometimes caused him to be rejected so much that he said to those who were rejecting his wisdom he said wisdom is justified by her children and so we see these proverbs we should understand that was generally true but not always absolutely in every single case true because if that's the case we move from it being a proverb to it being a law we will see these proverbs in ecclesiastes and as we read them we read them with an understanding that this is generally true but not always true and sometimes some of the proverbs don't become true in our own lives because of the mercy of!

is! God is merciful to us in some ways the third category that he mentions is instruction the fourth is autobiographical narrative where we'll see whether the preacher would refer to his own experience he would tell a story about his own experience to make a larger point anecdote will also be found where he'll point to little situations that he observed to teach a larger point and then metaphor and some great metaphors in chapter 12 and then the last one is allegory so it's important to understand these forms because they'll help us to appreciate and interpret what is being said what then is the overall message of Ecclesiastes what is the overall message of this book in his approach to getting at the message of

Ecclesiastes Douglas Sean O'Donnell writes this Ecclesiastes is like a thousand piece puzzle taken from the box thrown on the floor and kicked around by the kids but if you discipline the children quiet the house and our heart start to lift the scattered pieces from the ground lay them on a clean table and slowly humbly and prayerfully as one should always approach God and his word piece the pieces together a clear picture emerges but that's encouraging it's encouraging that in this book that's described like a thousand piece puzzle that's been kicked around and scattered all over the place that we in quietness and fearful humility are able to put these pieces together and see a clear picture of what this book is about and over the next several weeks we'll be working to put these puzzle pieces together but as we do that there's a rule that we need to bear in mind in interpreting what we're going to see as we put these pieces together it's a rule that

Jesus himself taught us and the rule is that Ecclesiastes and indeed all of the Old Testament is about Jesus that's the rule that we must bear in mind as we approach this book Jesus himself said so Jesus said Ecclesiastes and all of the Old Testament is about him in Luke 24 and I would ask if you would turn there with me in Luke 24 we read the account of the two men on the road to Emmaus Jesus had just been crucified three days prior and these men were still under the depression of that they were very sad and Luke gives us an account of the encounter with Jesus starting in verse 13 this is the day that

[45 : 37] Jesus arose Luke writes that very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus about seven miles from Jerusalem and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened while they were talking and discussing together Jesus himself drew near and went with them but their eyes were kept from recognizing him and he said to them what is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk they stood still looking sad then one of them named Cleopas answered him are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days and he said to them what things they said to him concerning

Jesus of Nazareth a man who was a prophet mighty indeed and word before God and all the people and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death and crucified him but we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel yes and besides all this it is now the third day since these things happened moreover some women of our company amazed us they were at the tomb early in the morning and when they did not find his body they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said but him they did not see and he said to them this is

Jesus saying to them oh foolish ones and slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory and notice verse 27 in particular and beginning with Moses and all the prophets he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself now the term Moses and the prophets that was a technical term to refer to the Old Testament or it's Moses and the prophets or the law and the prophets and the only scriptures that they had at that point was from Genesis to Malachi the New Testament that we have now wasn't written yet was being written as the gospel of Jesus was being lived out in time it would be written some years after that but at this particular point that

Jesus encounters these men on the road to Emmaus all they had was the Old Testament the law and the prophets and notice what Luke says Luke says that Jesus interpreted to them in all the scriptures in all the scriptures the things concerning himself so we have to believe if these words are true and they are true because it is the word of God that Jesus took them from Genesis through to Malachi and he showed them the things pertaining to himself I don't think that he went to every single verse and said there I am in this verse there I am in this verse but I think what he did was he took them through all of those books and was able to help them to see how he is the focal point how he is the person to whom the content of those books pointed Ecclesiastes would have been one of those books we don't have the benefit of how

Jesus did that we don't have the benefit of where he lingered and where he spent time and the things that he actually said but I suppose when Jesus came to the book of Ecclesiastes as he opened the book perhaps and he sees the cry of the preacher vanity and vanity everything is vanity it's a vapor that's another translation of this Hebrew word for vanity it means vapor a mist and Jesus would have pointed out to those men on the road to Emmaus that the reason that he came was in response to the preacher's repeated cry about every aspect of life under the sun being empty vanity being a vapor being a bunch of nothingness and Jesus would come into this world this empty monotonous vaporous world and he would live a life of obedience to God he would live a purposeful life to God obeying the law without sin and then he would die a substitutionary death on the cross so that

[51 : 15] God can forgive sinners so that God can receive sinners as sons and daughters and that they can then live a meaningful life in this seemingly meaningless world with what is described as a chasing after the wind scripture both predicts Jesus and the need for Jesus through prophecies but it also helps us to see the need for Jesus through the fall and through the effects of the fall and certainly the book of Ecclesiastes helps us to see why Christ needed to come the message of Ecclesiastes is that life without God is meaningless it is a vapor it is empty it is a chasing after the wind and I suppose that as we consider Ecclesiastes and we can see that it doesn't end there it isn't just well you need a life with

God see Jesus becomes the center piece of that because Jesus himself said I am the way the truth and the life no one comes to the father except through me so even though we can see in Ecclesiastes that life without God is meaningless the only way that we get that life with God is through Jesus Christ because he says I am the way I'm the only way he's not one of the ways he's not an alternative way he he says I I I am the way to the father no one comes to the father except through me so the way we escape the meaninglessness of this life living it under the sun and waking and rising and going after the things that pertain to this life and worrying about tomorrow and worrying about all the cares of this life the way we escape that is to be in relationship with the God who created it all and the God who gives wisdom about how it is to be engaged and how it is to be enjoyed and we aren't able to short circuit and just go there and get it it only comes through

Jesus Christ it only comes through Jesus Christ so as difficult as the book of Ecclesiastes is we have a very important interpretive guide as we go to understand this book we want to be looking for Jesus we want to be crying our Lord show us Christ as we study Ecclesiastes!

As we encounter these topics in this book as we encounter the issues of money and wealth and poverty and oppression and pleasure death God show us Christ show us Christ in the midst of this seemingly complex puzzle Jesus would have told these men on the road to Emmaus that he came to live a life the life that he lived and the death that he died so that sinners living this vain empty vaporous life under the sun can have a meaningful life in a true relationship with God enjoying his gifts fearing him and keeping his commandments so my prayer is that as we study this book over the coming weeks this large message will be clearer and clearer as the weeks go by let's pray together