

## Through the Bible in One Year Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon

What O.T. books we will have covered after this session:

- \*5 books of Law (Genesis – Deuteronomy)
- \*17 books of writings (Joshua – Song of Solomon) –  
history, poetry, wisdom literature

What O.T. books are still ahead:

- \* 17 books of Prophecy (Isaiah – Malachi) – 5 “major” prophets and 12 “minor,”  
determined by scroll size

### 1. ECCLESIASTES

Closely related to Proverbs – wisdom literature – “wise” or “wisdom” used 49 times – contained the spiritual journal of Solomon in his later years (about 935 BC)

Observation about leadership: The great temptation of leaders is cynicism – people you depend on, trust in, fail you, and do not come through.

Solomon was wise – he wrote 3000 proverbs (I Kings 4:32) – but we will discover he was a workaholic (Ecc. 2:4-6), a compulsive spender (Ecc. 2:7-8), and a sex and love addict, with 700 wives and 300 concubines

(I Kings 11:3) –how could this have happened to a man who was so intimate with God at the beginning (I Kings 3:1-15). Two possibilities:

- (1) He coasted spiritually – You cannot maintain your spiritual life on the basis of past spiritual experiences.
- (2) He lacked the kind of same-sex covenant friendships he needed – he knew the importance (Ecc. 4:9-12) but did not have the kind of relationship system his father, David, had had.

Read by the Jews at the Feast of Tabernacles to recall the bitter wilderness wanderings.

1:1 Title – the “preacher” is Solomon (1:1, 12) – no one else in Israel ever tasted so full a life

1:2 Theme – “all is vanity” – word “vanity” is used 37 times – it does not refer to conceit, but to empty, futile, worthless, meaningless, zero

1:3-11 The cycle of futility in nature – nature is in ceaseless motion but nothing new results from it - Vs. 9- “What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun.”

1:12 – 2:26 Solomon’s personal experience with this futility – he sought to find meaning through wisdom (1:16-18), pleasure (2:1-3), and achievement (2:4-11) – but none of them delivered the meaning that they promised – Solomon’s pessimistic conclusion:

- (1) The only thing we have to look forward to is death – (2:14, 3:19-21, 6:6, 9:3, 11:8)
- (2) We should therefore adopt an epicurean life philosophy – (2:24, 3:12, 13, 22, 5:18, 8:15)

3:1–15 Our efforts to change the created order are futile – life contains things we like and things we do not like whether we like it or not – each has a “season” – whether we are in a good season or a bad season, it will not last – Read vs.11 KJV “He (God) has put eternity in our hearts” – other translations “He has put a sense of past and future into their minds”.

- 3:16-4:3 Our efforts to produce a just society are futile – The only real justice will be God’s ultimate judgment upon the world (3:17, 12:14) – His ultimate conclusion: It is better to be dead than living; it would be better yet not to have been born (4:1-3) – pretty depressing!
- 4:4-6 A few bits of collected wisdom
- 4:7-12 Because of the misery of life, we need human companionship, such as friendship and marriage – Read vs. 9-12 – togetherness provides mutuality, support, comfort, defense-9:9
- 4:13-16 Glory and fame are temporary – people will forget you quicker than you think – 5 stages in an actors life: Who’s Hugh O’Brien? Give us an older Hugh O’Brien. Give us Hugh O’Brien. Give us a younger Hugh O’Brien. Who is Hugh O’Brien?
- 5:1-7 Religious rituals are futile – listening is better than sacrifice – but pay your vows to God
- 5:8-20 Materialism is futile – v.10 “The love of money will not be satisfied with money....”
- 6:1-9 Leaving legacies is futile
- 6:10-12 The determinism of nature is futile
- 7:1-14 Seven proverbs comparing good things with better things
- 7:15-18 Avoid extremes
- 7:19-29 No one is really righteous or wise
- 8:1-9:12 Wise people accommodate to the harsh realities of life – Our outcomes in life are more about timing and chance than intelligence and skill (9:11)
- 9:13-11:7 More bits of collected wisdom
- 11:8–12:8 Youth is to be relished as the best part of life since old age and death come soon – 12:1 “Remember your creator in the days of your youth; before the days of trouble come, and the years draw near when you say, “I have no pleasure in them!” – - 12:7 “And the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.”
- 12:9-14 Epilogue: summary of human responsibility is to fear God and keep God’s commandments

## 2. SONG OF SOLOMON (SONGS)

Like Esther, there is no reference to God in this scroll – Some Rabbis argued it should not be included in the canon.

Read by the Jews at weddings.

Unique, nothing similar in scripture – reads like a Jewish Opera – read it in the “New Living Translation”

Two characters in the opera:

1. Young woman in love – “Shunamite” (6:13) from the village of Shunam – possibly Abishag (I Kings 1:1-4) – Solomon owned the land that her family rented (8:11) – apparently the father of the home was dead – the mother had 2 sons (6:13) and 2 daughters (6:13; 8:8) – our heroin was the youngest daughter – this is a Cinderella story – her brothers made her work hard and did not allow her to care for her personal appearance (1:6) – she kept flocks (1:8) and a vineyard (2:15) – over-exposure to the sun caused her to be deeply tanned and beautiful (1:5)
2. Young man in love – one day Solomon comes to the vineyard disguised as a shepherd (1:7) – a love relationship develops – later Solomon comes in regal splendor to make her his bride (3:6-7) – she does not love him for what he has but for who he is.

Flow of the opera: the interaction between the woman, the man, and the two choruses, which act as a poetic device - one chorus is the “maidens of Israel” and the other is her brothers – once you are able to separate the voices, you can see them on stage in your mind’s eye – sensual, sexy stuff.

How are we to interpret Song of Solomon?

1. Literally – it is God’s affirmation of male/female attraction, courtship and marital sex – God is not repulsed by sex – Hugh Hefner and Larry Flynt did not invent sex; God invented sex – the Victorian puritanical attitude toward sex was wrong. – God never wanted girls to go to their marriage bed filled with neurotic fears about being tortured by their husbands – neither is pornography and sexual hedonism God’s idea – Heb. 13:4 “Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled”.
2. Allegorically – Jesus, the king, came as a shepherd to win his bride, the church – it will consummate at the marriage of the Lamb (Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 19:7, 21:2,9) – the last time I got married I was the groom: next time I’ll be the bride! Christ desires intimacy with us!

Note to husbands: If you do not know how to compliment your wife, read her these passages (4:1-15, 5:10-16, 7:1-10)

Next week: Isaiah Schedule of Daily readings:

	<u>Option One</u>	<u>Option Two</u>
Monday	Isaiah 1-10	1:18-20, 6:1-8 9:2-7
Tuesday	Isaiah 11-20	11
Wednesday	Isaiah 21-30	25
Thursday	Isaiah 31-39	34
Friday	Isaiah 40-48	40:1-8, 43:1-13
Saturday	Isaiah 49-57	53
Sunday	Isaiah 58-66	61