

Dr. Al Fuhr, Ecclesiastes, Session 1

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Good on the lighting right here, and if I start to get choked up. I'm okay to get a little. Yeah if it's good enough for Marco Rubio. It's good enough for you.

That's right I was thinking about Marco when I said that it didn't look good for him All right, am I on here Yeah, no, you're good. Okay. I just need to click here It's bouncing off the wall, but I think it's Yeah It seems counterintuitive to me, but it actually the picture comes out better All set, and then I usually do this before

Hello, my name is Dr. Richard Allen. My colleagues and friends call me Al and I'm happy to be able to share with you all a few thoughts from the book of Ecclesiastes in a series of lectures Ecclesiastes is a fascinating book. I've spent some time studying it. I've taught it in Various classes Old Testament poetic books I teach an inductive Bible study class where I probably use more illustrations from Ecclesiastes than most students know what to do with but Ecclesiastes is just a fascinating book and so I'm honored to be able to have some time and to be able to have the privilege to share with you from this incredible book Oftentimes a neglected book of the Old Testament sometimes a misunderstood book from the Old Testament But a very relevant book a book that speaks to us in our day just as much as it did Some 3,000 years ago in a very ancient in a very different context.

And so with the book of Ecclesiastes, I want to take some time over the next few hours in a series of lectures to share with you a thematic approach to the book an approach that looks at various themes or motifs that we see popping up again and again throughout the text of Ecclesiastes and my opinion is that an accurate understanding of the book of Ecclesiastes is completely dependent upon an accurate understanding of repeated themes motifs and critical words that we find within this 12 chapter book from the Old Testament Nearly 3,000 years ago a wise man Kohelet pondered and used over some of the perplexities of life that many of us find ourselves Thinking about and pondering today. He saw injustice in the world He saw a righteous man getting what the wicked deserve and a wicked man getting what the righteous deserve and he saw that as backward. He looked at the various Things that occur in this world this fallen world that seem not only in just but sometimes absurd and a front to human reason things that just simply don't make sense in a world that should be governed by God where one would expect things to work out one way but they simply don't work out in the face of reality in the way that we would expect them to and so Our wise man from thousands of years ago pondered these things in a context where wisdom sages spent many many hours? pondering the realities of the fallen world that they lived in and trying to find ways in which wisdom might come to some resolution some answer to some of these Difficulties the book of Ecclesiastes is a wisdom book and it's found within the wisdom genre of the Old

Testament a functional genre Wisdom books are largely comprised of poetry, but not exclusively The wisdom books that we might be familiar with from the Old Testament include the book of Proverbs the book of Job where you have in the experiences of one man some of the greater challenges to conventional wisdom played out and then in the book of Ecclesiastes Where through reflection speeches and example stories and a little bit of even autobiographical experience our wise man Kohelet ponders the difficulties and challenges of his world And so I mentioned the name Kohelet and were introduced to this figure in the book of Ecclesiastes I I may at times reference him as Solomon.

There's certainly a Solomonic identity there with Kohelet, but you'll find me more often than not referring to him referring to our primary figure in the book of Ecclesiastes as Kohelet. Some of you who are familiar with English translations such as the King James Version might know the name "the preacher" or "the teacher" in the New International Version and the preacher and the teacher is simply a translation of the Hebrew Kohelet. Kohelet is simply a participial form so it's kind of takes on a noun function of the verb kohol the Hebrew verb kohol. Kohol is simply a word that means to assemble or to gather and so the Kohelet is simply the one who gathers or the one who assembles. One of the critical questions that scholars face in the study of the book of Ecclesiastes is whether or not the Kohelet is one who gathers or assembles people into an assembly, thus the translation preacher or teacher, or whether or not Kohelet is one who gathers and assembles wisdom.

There is a kind of a collection of Proverbs as we see in the book of Ecclesiastes, especially in chapter 7 and chapter 10. Whatever it is that the Kohelet is involved in, he's certainly a wise man. He's a sage who gathers wisdom and proclaims it, teaches it to others.

We see that in the book of Ecclesiastes itself. And so, you'll hear me refer to the Kohelet as the preacher or the teacher. Now one of the critical questions, of course, with the book of Ecclesiastes is whether or not the Kohelet is Solomon.

Solomon is never mentioned by name in the book of Ecclesiastes. I personally would not deny Solomonic identity with the Kohelet. He very well may be one and the same with Solomon.

There are certainly some hints within the book that would seem to suggest so. As a matter of fact, if you've got your Bibles with you in the book of Ecclesiastes, you may want to turn with me to a few particular texts within the book. The book begins, with the words of the Kohelet, the teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem, which would certainly make one think of Solomon with that introduction.

But of course, take note, Solomon is not mentioned by name there. The autobiographical segment of Ecclesiastes, especially in chapter 2 verses 1 through 9,

seems to indicate that the Kohelet had within his capacity the various kinds of things that only royalty would be able to assemble or to be able to experience. And certainly, in 1 Kings chapters 10 and 11, we find that Solomon is greatly wealthy.

He gathers and amasses silver and gold. The Kohelet claims to have been able to amass wealth beyond anyone else's capacity to do so. The Kohelet exceeded in wisdom.

He proclaims repeatedly that what he does in pondering the mysteries of the world that he lived in, he does by wisdom, through the lens of wisdom. His wisdom stays with him. And of course, we know Solomon was granted wisdom in 1 Kings chapter 3. Throughout the narrative of 1 Kings, we find that Solomon is oftentimes applauded for his exercises of wisdom.

We see in the book of Proverbs the name Solomon mentioned repeatedly. And so, we tend to associate the book of Proverbs and the origination of Proverbs, even in 1 Kings chapter 4, we find that Solomon was the originator of it. It's Solomon's creation to come up with various Proverbs that we even find included within the canonical book of Proverbs. And so, there are plenty of things in the book of Ecclesiastes that might make us think of Solomon as the Kohelet, as the author or at least the figure within the author's book of Ecclesiastes, but he's never mentioned by name.

There are actually some things in the book of Ecclesiastes that would be a little bit awkward for Solomon to have stated either about himself or for us to identify with the Kohelet and an association with Solomon. For instance, in chapter 1 and verse 12, I the teacher, the Kohelet, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. This reference to his being king over Israel in Jerusalem seems to be in the past tense, and we never find a place where Solomon ever is not king.

He dies as king. And so that would seem to be a little bit awkward if it is an association with Solomon. Another perhaps more important notification here in the book is in Ecclesiastes chapter 1 and verse 16.

I thought to myself, look, I have grown and increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me. And so how many kings ruled over Jerusalem before Solomon? Well, we know that David ruled over Jerusalem before Solomon, but Saul didn't. And for Solomon to say that regarding Jebusite kings or others would seem a little bit awkward.

And so, the fact that Solomon seems, or the Kohelet here, seems to be referring to those who have reigned over Jerusalem before him in the plural, would seem to be a little bit awkward coming from Solomon. But of course, none of these things necessarily tell us that Solomon is not to be identified with the Kohelet, and many would argue that the evidence in favor of Solomonic identification with the Kohelet

is greater than those lines of evidence against. Now, critical scholarship for years has denied Solomonic identity or authorship with the Kohelet, and many scholars date the book of Ecclesiastes even during the post-exilic period, well beyond the years of the United Kingdom and the years of Solomon.

In my opinion, personally, the message of Ecclesiastes is not dependent upon a particular background or context as much as perhaps in certain other books. For instance, the prophets. When we study prophetic literature, oftentimes their message is directly tied to the geopolitical circumstances and events that are taking place in their day.

You don't find that kind of necessity in the book of Ecclesiastes. The message is not as tied to geopolitical or situational or historical kinds of contexts, and so we're not going to be overly concerned with this issue of Solomonic identity. I say a lot of these things simply to let you all know who is viewing this if I don't refer to Solomon but rather refer to the Kohelet, I'm referring to what the text itself provides for us.

Now, a few interesting things about the Kohelet. He's referred to in the third person in certain portions of the book, and in other portions of the book, he speaks in the first person. I, the Kohelet, did this.

I, the Kohelet, did that. And so, we do have this interesting dynamic, which seems to indicate perhaps that there might be some distance between the Kohelet figure and the author of Ecclesiastes. Again, that's not necessarily a problem for the inspired authority of the text.

For instance, in the Gospels, Jesus is not the author of any of the Gospels, and yet we don't have a problem with that. And so, the authority of the text does not necessarily lie in the identity of the author and the figure as being necessarily one and the same. Again, these things are not necessarily proven one way or another, but they are our concerns that we don't want to completely ignore either.

In my opinion, actually, one of the reasons that I tend to shy away from identifying too directly with the experiences of Solomon's life and what we know of his life and the downfall of Solomon in 1 Kings chapter 11 is that sometimes I think artificially imposing that history upon the text of Ecclesiastes has actually led to misinterpretation of the book. As a matter of fact, one of the very common popular approaches to the book of Ecclesiastes is that the book of Ecclesiastes is Solomon's testimony at the end of his life. When he's kind of come to his senses and come to realize that in his abandonment of Yahweh and his embracing of idols and false religions into his own experience and into the life of Israel, he's come to his senses and he's realized that all of that was wrong and all of that led astray and that really to fear God and to serve God is the only path that provides any purpose or meaning to life.

I think when folks impose that kind of biography into the book of Ecclesiastes, it actually leads to erroneous interpretive conclusions. Things which the book of Ecclesiastes, the text, and the 12 chapters themselves, simply do not testify to. We don't find anywhere in the book of Ecclesiastes, for instance, where the Kohelet claims to have become an idolater or to have backslidden in such a way.

We don't find the writer of Ecclesiastes or the Kohelet ever abandoning God or ever claiming anything other than the fear of God as being appropriate and right. And so again, we don't find any kind of testimony of backsliddenness or idolatry or even hedonism, although oftentimes that's read in chapter 12 or chapter 2 and verses 1 through 9 of the book. Again, a few things to keep in mind with the study of Ecclesiastes.

Now, so far as the text itself is concerned, the structure and the style of Ecclesiastes, there are a number of things that really make the book of Ecclesiastes quite fascinating, especially when taking on a thematic approach to the book. For one, the repetition of stock terminology within the book of Ecclesiastes. Words that we might find elsewhere in the Old Testament, but the book of Ecclesiastes embraces these words in such a way and sometimes even attaches associated meanings to certain words that you don't find elsewhere in the Old Testament.

For instance, some repeated words that will be exposed to in this study of Ecclesiastes. The Hebrew word *hevel*, meaning mist or vapor. We find that word repeated 38 times throughout the book of Ecclesiastes and an accurate interpretation or understanding of the way Kohelet uses the word *hevel* is absolutely essential to accurately interpreting the book of Ecclesiastes.

Other keywords such as *tov*, what is good to be found in this *hevel* world that we live in. The word *tov* is repeated throughout the book of Ecclesiastes. Understanding the nature of good as Ecclesiastes would frame it is very critical.

The Hebrew word *yitrom*, is a word that is not common in the Old Testament, but we find it repeated a number of times in the book of Ecclesiastes. The solution to the dilemma of *hevel*, the gain or the profit or the surplus that Kohelet seems to be searching for is a critical word. The Hebrew word *amal*, work, or toil.

The Hebrew word *helek*, a portion, a lot, an allotment. Understanding accurately how that word is used in the book of Ecclesiastes is going to be critical to our understanding of the message as a whole. And so, as we work our way through the various themes or prominent motifs in the book of Ecclesiastes, we'll be exposed to certain Hebrew words.

This is not a Hebrew exegesis class. This is not the level of exposition of the book that I want to undertake here, but it is absolutely essential to expose you, the student, to certain critical words in the book of Ecclesiastes. Without that knowledge, I don't think the book of Ecclesiastes is going to be as easy to understand.

We're also exposed to a variety of literary genres in the book of Ecclesiastes. Functionally speaking, it's a wisdom book. In other words, the book of Ecclesiastes is in the tradition of wisdom literature.

It has the function of wisdom literature. It has the purpose of wisdom literature, both on the practical as well as on the theological fronts. Practically speaking, the book of Ecclesiastes demonstrates in a paradigmatic and in a very pragmatic way how a wise man has an advantage or can find an advantage in a fallen world.

How he can make the most of life, even in light of the difficulties or challenges that living in a fallen world brings to mankind. And so, in that sense, the book is very practical, much like the proverbial wisdom from the book of Proverbs is very practical. But we also find that in the book of Ecclesiastes, certain theological issues are brought up, much like in the book of Job.

Whereas in the book of Job, we have a kind of wisdom theodicy where the writer of Job wrestles with the question of God's sense of justice. We find that same question dealt with through reflection, speeches, and even through proverbial wisdom in the book of Ecclesiastes. And so, from a theological as well as from a practical vantage point, the book of Ecclesiastes is very much within the tradition of wisdom literature.

But functionally speaking, as a wisdom book, Ecclesiastes also includes structural and literary techniques that are typical within Hebrew poetry. And so, for instance, we find Proverbs within the book of Ecclesiastes in chapter 7, in chapter 10. In those chapters, almost the entire chapters are comprised of Proverbs, much like we find in the collection of Proverbs in the canonical book of Proverbs.

In chapter 11, verses 1 through 6, we find a collection of Proverbs dealing with risk and dealing with how to make the most of or take advantage of opportunity and what I like to call probabilistic wisdom. In the book of Ecclesiastes in chapter 4, we have a collection of better-than-saint. Again, additional Proverbs that we find within this wisdom book.

As an example, for instance, and we'll take some time later on to look at some of these Proverbs in more detail, in chapter 11, in verse 1, cast your bread upon the waters for after many days you will find it again. That's a proverb. Or verse 2, give portions to seven, yes to eight, for you do not know what disaster may come upon the land.

If clouds are full of water, they pour rain upon the earth. Whether a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where it falls, there it will lie. A kind of observational Proverb.

Or in verse 4, whoever watches the wind will not plant, whoever looks at the clouds will not reap. One of my favorite Proverbs on taking risks. Sometimes a wise man, in order to take advantage of opportunities that God may grant them, must take a step forward, even when the outcome is not certain.

A very practical bit of wisdom that we find here in the book of Ecclesiastes. A proverb like this would be just as at home in the canonical book of Proverbs, but here we find it in the book of Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes, however, is known for other literary sub-genres as well.

For instance, in chapter 1 and chapter 2, we find autobiographical reflection. For instance, in chapter 2 and verse 1, or verse 4, let me skip ahead to verse 4. I undertook great projects. I built houses for myself and planted vineyards.

I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made reservoirs of water groves of flourishing trees. I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house.

I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I amassed silver and gold. They're again kind of calling upon the imagery that we would associate with Solomon.

For myself and the treasure of kings and provinces, I acquired men and women singers and a harem as well, the delights of the heart of man. I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. Again, a somewhat odd statement coming from Solomon, given that he was only the second Israelite king to reign in Jerusalem, but something that is not necessarily impossible to associate with Solomon.

In all this, my wisdom stayed with me. So again, there we find structurally and literarily speaking an autobiographical reflection. We've got an example story, for instance, in chapter 9 and verses 13 through 16.

And by the way, something that is somewhat interesting in the book of Ecclesiastes, in chapters 1 and 2, you find this autobiographical reflection that seems to come from the voice of one who is royalty. But then later in the book, you seem to have the Kohelet kind of stepping back from that kind of association. So, he observes royalty rather than speaks as if he is royalty.

But in any case, a good example of an example story in chapter 9 and verses 13 through 16, I also saw under the sun. By the way, under the sun is going to be one of

those phrases that are repeated frequently throughout the book of Ecclesiastes. This example of wisdom greatly impressed me.

There was one small city with only a few people in it. A powerful king came against it, surrounded it, and built huge siege works against it. Now there lived in that city a man poor but wise, and he saved the city with his wisdom.

But nobody remembered that poor man. So, I said, wisdom is better than strength. But the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are no longer heeded.

Now that's followed up by Proverbs. The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouts of a ruler of fools. But an example story in verses 13 and 16 sets up the Proverbs as conclusions.

And so there again, we see an example of some literary flexibility in the book of Ecclesiastes. You've also got examples of allegory within the book. One of the more famous examples is in chapter 12 and verses 1 through 7, where old age, the aging process, seems to be allegorized or presented as an extended metaphor.

And of course, this shouldn't be confused with allegorizing the text, which I would call an erroneous approach to reading the text, but rather an allegory is simply a literary device that kind of extends metaphor forward. And so in chapter 12 and verse 1, remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, I find no pleasure in them, before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain when the keepers of the house tremble and the strong men stoop when the grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades, when men rise up at the sound of birds and all their songs grow faint, when men are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets when the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags himself along. And of course, here we know that the Kohelet's not speaking of almond trees and grasshoppers per se, but he's using these various pictures to present to us an image of the aging process.

And so, the interpreter has to figure out what certain of these images are pointing towards. Then man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the streets. Remember him before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken, before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well, and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

So here we have again an example of allegory. We've also got poems within the book of Ecclesiastes. Of course, one of the best-known poems is in chapter 3, and verses 2 through 8, the poem on time, where you've got these binary pairings dealing with

various aspects of either appropriate time or determined time, and that's something that we'll wrestle with later on in a future lecture.

But in any case, a poem on time, a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plan and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away. A time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace. This is a self-contained unit.

It's a poem. What precedes it, what follows it, might be a commentary on the poem, but the poem itself is an independent literary piece. You've also got examples of what we call reflection speeches in the book of Ecclesiastes.

Perhaps my best or favorite example of a reflection speech is in chapter 9. I mean, actually the introduction of this tells you it's a reflection speech. So Kohelet says, so I reflected, first person, so I reflected on all this and concluded that the righteous and the wise and what they do are in God's hands, but no man knows whether love or hate awaits him. All share a common destiny, the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad, the clean and the unclean, those who offer sacrifices and those who do not.

As it is with the good man, so with the sinner, as it is with those who take oaths, so with those who are afraid to take them. And so here you've got the Kohelet reflecting upon certain observations that he's been making. And so, the book of Ecclesiastes is a mix, it's a collage of various literary forms or subgenres that are standard fare within the functional genre of wisdom literature.

And we'll see and be exposed to more of these subgenres later on as we continue along. You've got other structural elements such as *inclusio*, a kind of literary book ending, or bracketing within the book of Ecclesiastes. This kind of bracketing we actually find holds the entire book together in chapter 1 and chapter 12 with the introduction and the conclusion.

Hevel of Hevels. Now this is a Hebrew word that I'm going to introduce you to in a little bit. The NIV, which I've actually got in front of me, reads meaningless meaningless.

The reason that I avoid using the word meaningless is because I don't think that that's the best translation of the word *Hebel*. But we'll deal with that in much more detail later on. But Hevel of Hevels says the teacher, utterly Hebel or meaningless, everything is meaningless again as the NIV has it.

The KJV, which some of you all might be familiar with, has vanity of vanities. And so there you have that keyword Hebel translated for us. In chapter 12 and verse 8, we've got Hebel of Hevels.

Meaningless meaningless says the Kohelet or the teacher. Everything is Hebel. There again, you've got a repetition of what we're introduced to as the problem in chapter 1 and verse 2. That literary book ending is called inclusio, and we'll see some other examples of that later on as we move forward.

We've also got an epilogue at the end of the book. Actually after the back end of the Hebel of Hevels pronouncement. We've got in chapter 12 and verse 9, not only was the teacher wise, the Kohelet wise, here he's spoken of in third person, but also he imparted knowledge to the people.

He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs. Chapter 7, chapter 10, and chapter 11, we find this proverb. The Kohelet searched and found just the right words and what he wrote was upright and true.

By the way, let me pause for a second here. There are many who take a very negative approach to the book of Ecclesiastes. One of the things that you're going to find that I do in this series of lectures is that I take a very optimistic, or let me just say realistic, approach to life as viewed through the lenses of our Kohelet here.

I take a positive approach to interpreting the book. I do think within the canon of Scripture its message is overwhelmingly positive, both practically as well as theologically. And again, we'll kind of get into the weeds of those details here as we move forward.

But I do find that it's interesting that the epilogue itself speaks of the words of the Kohelet as being upright and true, and so the approach that sees the bulk of language in the book of Ecclesiastes as negative, I just don't really see that borne out by the testimony of the text itself. The words of the wise are like goes, they're collected sayings like firmly embedded nails given by one shepherd. Be warned my son of anything in addition to them.

Makes us think of the instructional dialogue or instructional discourses in Proverbs chapters 1-9 with the warning to my son. Of making many books there is no end, and much study where is the body? Now all has been heard, here's the conclusion of the matter. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil, and so the book concludes with a third-person epilogue, and again we see this as a kind of literary conclusion. Now the approach that I want to take to the

book of Ecclesiastes as I've mentioned already is a thematic approach. And so with this thematic approach, we're going to be exposed to interdependent prominent motifs that seem to be brought up again and again and again within the 12 chapters of Ecclesiastes.

Not only are key stock words very important to understand in the book of Ecclesiastes, but also the motifs and their function within the book and how they relate to one another is critical in coming to an accurate or appropriate understanding of the message as a whole. Now towards the end of these lectures, we'll spend more time working our way through the text of Ecclesiastes. And we'll certainly do plenty of that as we're exposed to these prominent motifs.

But in this introduction, I'd like to at least begin by framing out some of these motifs in summary fashion, and then we'll explore them in much more detail as we move forward. The first of these motifs that I want to expose you to is the hevelness of life. Now I know that's kind of a funny word.

It's not a regular English word. I'm kind of just taking the Hebrew word hevel, which literally means mist or vapor, and it's found 38 times in the book of Ecclesiastes. We'll explore its meaning in detail here in the next lecture.

And we're going to understand this as a motif within the book. In other words, this is the problem representative of the dilemma of life in its falling condition. This is the problem that the Kohelet faces and he brings his wisdom to solving or resolving this problem, this dilemma, that all mankind is faced with.

The hevelness of life, things which he observes in this world that he describes as hevel, judgments that he makes that he claimed to be hevel, things which he observes that wisdom is incapable of resolving, he calls that as well hevel. And so the hevelness of things, the hevelness of life, kind of takes on the role of motif in the book of Ecclesiastes. There are a couple of perspectives that we're going to be exposed to in Ecclesiastes that also take on the role of motif.

One is the under-the-sun perspective. In other words, understanding properly what the under-the-sun perspective is that Kohelet observes life through is going to be critical in properly interpreting the book. Is the under-the-sun perspective a backslidden, fallen, without-God perspective? Or is it simply a horizontal, human level, non-revelational perspective? That's going to be important in understanding the book.

Wisdom itself becomes a motif. Wisdom is a perspective through which the hevelness of life is examined. We're going to find that it's through the lens of wisdom that Kohelet undertakes this journey.

Of course, the book itself needs to be understood in alignment with its function and its characteristics as wisdom literature. And so, we're going to take the proper hermeneutical suggestions or hermeneutical rules that apply to the study of wisdom literature with us to the study of Ecclesiastes. Wisdom itself is explored in the book of Ecclesiastes.

Wisdom's capacity to be able to resolve the dilemma of hevelness is going to be explored. What is wisdom still good for if it's not able to resolve the dilemma of hevel? These things are going to be dealt with in the book of Ecclesiastes as motif. And so hevelness, under the sun perspective, and wisdom are all motifs.

The sovereignty of God and the imposition of limitation on mankind becomes a theological motif that is threaded throughout the book of Ecclesiastes. In other words, Kohelet is going to explore some of the perplexities that come with recognizing a sovereign God who seems to be in control of things, and yet certain things occur in this world that seem to be so out of control. So Kohelet is going to deal with a theological vantage point exploring the nature of God, the justice of God, the doings, and the activity of the divine.

He's also going to explore that in connection with what seems to be the imposition of limitation upon mankind. In a hevel world, in a mortal existence, mankind, even the wisest among us, seem to be limited in what they're able to do to resolve the problems of hevelness, of fallenness, in this current condition that we all live in. And so what we're going to find is a theological thread or motif.

The connection between the sovereign divine God and the inability of mankind to resolve certain things. What I like to call a theological anthropology that we find threaded throughout the book of Ecclesiastes. The inevitability of death becomes a very significant motif in the book of Ecclesiastes.

As a matter of fact, it's that motif that tends to bring about a bit of air of negativity to the book. In virtually every chapter, Kohelet is going to ponder, you know, what is coming, the eventual end of all mankind, death. The common experience of both the wise and the fool, the rich and the poor, is death.

And so, the inevitability of death becomes a very significant motif and connecting that to the hevelness of life and to the sovereignty of God and the imposition of limitation upon mankind. What can wisdom bring to resolve or to maybe even bring about any kind of guarantee to what is inevitably going to occur in the great? These kinds of things become very, very important in the study of Ecclesiastes. The enjoyment of life.

As a matter of fact, thinking structurally throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, we find seven times refrains that reflect upon the enjoyment of life and even commend and

command the enjoyment of life, factoring significantly to the message of the book of Ecclesiastes. Enjoy life with the wife of your youth. Take the opportunity, the proverbial bull by the horns, and make the most of every opportunity that you have.

Enjoyment of life becomes in Ecclesiastes almost a commandment, an imperative, if you will, that God not only gifts mankind but even requires of mankind. And then the fear of God. The fear of God is an often neglected, but very significant motif in the book of Ecclesiastes.

And it's not just in chapter 12, verses 13 and 14 at the conclusion of things that we find the fear of God. We find in chapter 3 and verse 17. We find in chapter 5, that the fear of God is very much front and center.

We already read Ecclesiastes 12 and verse 1. Remember your creator in the days of your youth. Okay, implying the fear of God. And so the fear of God is actually a balance to the enjoyment of life.

I would suggest to you that by looking at the interdependency of these motifs within the book of Ecclesiastes and accurately understanding the relationship of these motifs to one another, is really the key to understanding the message of the book of Ecclesiastes. In conclusion, I find that there's really a two-fold wisdom message in the book of Ecclesiastes. You might even see it as a two-sided coin.

Basically, what we're going to find in the book of Ecclesiastes is that in light of life's heaviness and in light of the inevitability of death, the wise man will enjoy life as a gift from God, making the most of every opportunity that God presents them with. For they will soon die. We don't know if tomorrow is guaranteed to us.

So take advantage of the opportunities that you have in the present. Make sure that you enjoy life as a gift from God. The allotment that he gives, even within a fallen world, the capacity to be able to enjoy life is a wise thing to grasp.

It's a wisdom imperative if you will. But wisdom is not just about simply enjoying life. We also ought to live soberly in the fear of God, knowing that tomorrow is not guaranteed, knowing that we will one day answer to our Creator for the deeds that we have done.

And so, a wise man will not only enjoy life, he won't enjoy sin. A wise man or a wise woman will make the most of every opportunity, knowing that tomorrow is not guaranteed. They will also fear God, knowing that tomorrow is not guaranteed and that we will one day stand before our Creator and answer for the deeds that we have done.

I don't know within scripture of any book of the Bible that has a more pragmatic message for today than the message of Ecclesiastes. Enjoy life. Make the most of every opportunity.

Live soberly, recognizing that you will stand before God. Live in the fear of God. Allow the choices that you make, the decisions that you make, every day of every step of life that you undertake to be dictated by, to be framed by, this kind of wisdom paradigm.

Incredibly practical, and we'll stress the practicality of the message of the book of Ecclesiastes as we continue through this lecture series. Again, I'm honored to be able to present this, to be able to share with you some of the treasures from Ecclesiastes. I hope that this will be time well spent for you.

In our next lecture, we're going to get into this concept of the heaviness of life. We're going to look at life in its falling condition, and what this vanity of vanities thing is, is that the book of Ecclesiastes is so best known for. Thank you very much.

How long did I go? Oh, it's 40 minutes. Okay, that's pretty good. I was kind of not sure.

One thing I want to experiment with. Can you drop, your blinds down about two feet? I might be able to. Yeah, it was just I was getting a little bit of glare.

Yeah, and then I was thinking that's perfect. Okay, so we got the lighting down. Good.

All right. Yeah, you want to take a break? Yeah, let's take a little break. What time do we have here? 11 o'clock.

Okay, one thing that obviously occurred with my phone. Let me kill that sound there, too. So, I'll take this phone out.