

What all of this hermeneutical stuff means is that when you study Ecclesiastes you should do it under the same set of principles that you would use in the study of John's Gospel, for example, and not approach it with a special idea that will take the heart out of the literal meaning. Certainly the truths of Hebrew poetry, etc., must be applied as a part of the hermeneutic but these should be used consistent with other passages as well. Sorry for this long complicated note but I have often felt that a faulty approach was seen among evangelicals towards the book of Ecclesiastes that prevented them from appreciating and using its message.

II. Introductory Notes for the Study of Ecclesiastes

A. The Approach in this Course

B. Particular items

1. Authorship:

Personally I will argue for the traditional view: Solomonic authorship. You will have an assignment giving you opportunity to see how others view this matter. That assignment will be up for discussion in one of these classes. My own feeling is that the material in the book argues for an authorship that shows the content to be somewhat autobiographical and that the suggestions of other authorships depend on external materials and comparisons. But we will not argue about it.

2. Date:

Late 10th century BC if the traditional authorship is correct. Otherwise a date must be given to agree with whatever authorship is suggested. Some vocabulary data is suggested as offering a later date but this is not at all conclusive as was shown many, many years ago by Keil and Delitzsch and has been repeated by many other writers since.

3. Occasion of writing:

I think it is best understood in the concepts of chapter 12 that a wise man has come to his senses and is trying to make order out of a life that had many advantages but did not set the proper goals and consequently has "come up a cropper". The action described in chapter 12 with regard to gathering good materials, etc., is certainly in keeping with this concept and this continues to harmonize with traditional ideas: Jewish and Christian.

4. The intended audience:

Everyone interested in establishing life values...or neglectful of the same.