

STUDY GUIDE FOR BOOKS OF ECCLESIASTES AND SONG OF SOLOMON

I. INTRODUCTION.

- a. Writer—Both books written by Solomon, son of David and king.
- b. Date written—likely during reign of Solomon (970-930 BC).
- c. Name—(1) “Ecclesiastes”—from Greek in Septuagint Old Testament translation “Ekklesiastes”. (2) “Song of Solomon”—Septuagint shows “Song of Songs”—Older English versions show “The Song of Solomon”.

II. BACKGROUND.

- a. Solomon’s career—achieved many great things but at a cost!
 - i. Extravagant projects and “forced labor”—I Kings 4:6 and 5:13-15.
 - ii. Solomon’s marriages of “political expediency”. (I Kings 3:1 & 11:1-9)
- b. Ecclesiastes—a review of Solomon’s search for happiness & worth-while things of life.
- c. Song of Solomon—a unique book about human love—“a song of love in Oriental language and imagery”.
 - i. Some interpreters have said the book is an allegory—others say best to take the book for what it appears—“a song about the beauty and holiness of married love”.
 - ii. As was the case of Esther, the name of God does not appear in the book.

III. MESSAGES OF BOOKS OF ECCLESIASTES AND SONG OF SOLOMON.

- a. Ecclesiastes—life is vanity apart from God and His commandments. (Eccles. 12:13,14)
- b. Song of Solomon—the divine gift of married love is praised.

IV. MAJOR THEMES/ISSUES OF BOOKS OF ECCLESIASTES AND SONG OF SOLOMON.

a. THE PESSIMISM OF ECCLESIASTES.

- i. On the surface, the book with its “all is vanity” statements appears unduly pessimistic and not in harmony with the messages of other books of the Bible.
- ii. Ecclesiastes’ “circular view” of history brings about its pessimistic message. (See Eccles. 1:4-10)
- iii. Book ends on a positive God-focused note. (Eccles. 12:13-14)

b. SONG OF SOLOMON AND THE TREATMENT OF HUMAN SEXUALITY IN THE BIBLE.

- i. God’s Word has a positive view about human sexuality.
- ii. The Bible speaks candidly of the sexual nature of God’s human creation:
 1. Genesis 1:27,28. 2. Genesis 2:18-25. 3. I Corinthians 7:3-5. 4. Hebrews 13:4.
- iii. “Song of Solomon”: “... encourages the cultivation of an exclusive (4:12) and unconquerable (8:6-7) attachment of two people to each other within legitimate marriage.” Shelley, p.82.
- iv. Sets forth lesson which needs to be stressed today in face of the abuse of marriage and the perversion of sexuality in our time.

V. CONCLUSION.