

**A. INTRODUCTION**

1. Return to Study In Ecclesiastes ..... **ECCLESIASTES 4**
  
2. We've Noted Ecclesiastes Is
  - a. Poetical - philosophical - polemical
    - 1) As such it is a difficult, repetitious & deeply reflective book
    - 2) It is NOT just for casual reading BUT pondering
  - b. Exploration & declaration
    - 1) Explores - various ways people seek meaning & happiness in this life under the sun (apart from God)
    - 2) Declares - life & all its pursuits without God - is vanity - *without substance & quickly passes away*
  - c. **Chapters 1-2** - Ko-helleth (The Preacher) lists 3 ways people search for meaning & happiness
    - 1) Through wisdom & knowledge - BUT ALAS ..... **1:18**
    - 2) Through pleasure - BUT ALAS ..... **2:2**
    - 3) Through activity & achievement - BUT ALAS ..... **2:11**
  - d. **Chapter 3** - considers providence of God
    - 1) God establishes the times & seasons (**vs 2-8**)
    - 2) God puts eternity in man's heart (**vs 11**)
    - 3) God will judge and in proper time MAKE all things right (**vs 17**)
    - 4) Proper response IS - FEAR OF GOD..... **3:14**
  - e. **Chapters 4-10** - Preacher fleshes out thesis of vanity by highlighting particular problems & pointing to God's answers.
  - f. **Chapters 11-12** - conclusion of book & summary of Preacher's conclusions
  
3. Because of Nature of Book - I Think We Will Touch Upon Some of The Issues (**4-10**) & Move Towards the Summary of the Book
  
4. Today Consider the Subject of Oppression
  - a. In **3:16-4:3** - Preacher addresses the harshness of life
    - 1) **3:16-22** .....addresses injustice
    - 2) **4**..... addresses oppression
  - b. Oppression by definition means
    - 1) *to crush or burden by abuse of power or authority*
    - 2) *to burden spiritually or mentally : weigh heavily upon*
  - c. He addresses oppression from two standpoints
    - 1) **4:1-3** - Devastating effects of oppression
    - 2) **4:13-16** - Somber assessment of oppressors

## **B. TEXT CONSIDERED**

### 1. Something Noble & Perceptive About **4:1-3**

- a. Solomon said - **“again I saw”**
- b. Many people live in the world BUT never see (words by Bob Dylan)

*And how many times can a man turn his head,  
and pretend that he just doesn't see?  
And how many ears must one man have,  
before he can hear people cry?*

- c. 11 x's in ESV - Solomon **says “I saw”**

### 2. Something Ugly & Disturbing About **4:1-3**

- a. Considering oppression through unbelieving eyes of secularism he notes
  - 1) OPPRESSED are grieved AND have no one to comfort them - - better if they died in INFANCY
  - 2) OPPRESSORS have power AND have no one to comfort them - - they die INFAMY
- b. Gordon Keddie says that **vs 2-3** compose

*“one of the most brutally frank expositions of the naked emptiness of the ‘hope’ of the godless secularist” (97)*

- c. Here is one of modern society's arguments for ABORTION & EUTHANASIA
  - 1) Better to EUTHANIZE - than have no quality of life
  - 2) Better to ABORT - never be - than being unwanted or sick
- d. Keddie notes

*The hopelessness outlined by Solomon three millennia ago now has the tools to express itself in the mass self-destruction of godless human societies (97).*

### 3. Reality of Oppression Is Not Something I Need to Prove to You - World Filled With Oppression

- a. Dr Derek Thomas illustrates

*Jennifer is eleven. She has a beauty about her, but it's a beauty that's tinged with sadness, brought on by years of sexual abuse. Her childhood and innocence have been taken away. She's tried to talk to her mother, but her mother doesn't know what to do and is ashamed. And has said to her, “You must never speak of this again.” She is oppressed and she has no hope. Michael works for a chemical company. He knows that every day he breathes in fumes that are killing him. He dare not speak about it. He dare not complain or he will lose his job and he needs his job. He's married. He has four children. He can barely make an existence. He's oppressed and he has no hope. Joanna, well, she hasn't got a name. Her parents don't really admit that she exists. She's 12 weeks old; she's very small; she weight about 18 grams, she's 17.5 centimeters long; she has a*

*brain; she has a nose, eyes, ears; she even has toenails; she has a heartbeat. But in a few minutes she will be killed. She is oppressed and she has no hope. The world is full of pain. The world is full of sadness. The world is full of sorrow . . . the world is full of pain.*

- b. Oppression exists in varying forms all over the world - from GOVERNMENTS to BUSINESSES to INDIVIDUALS
- c. Oppression knows no age, color or language or shame
- d. **Mt 18:28** - Parable of Unforgiving Servant
  - 1) He's forgiven debt of 10,000 talents
  - 2) Found a man who owed him 100 denarii chokes him & has him imprisoned

#### 4. God Condemns Oppression

- a. State - **Proverbs 28:16** (ESV) — <sup>16</sup> A ruler who lacks understanding is a cruel oppressor, but he who hates unjust gain will prolong his days.
- b. Wealthy - **Amos 4:1** (ESV) — <sup>1</sup> “Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, ‘Bring, that we may drink!’
- c. Law (courts) - **Amos 5:12** (ESV) — <sup>12</sup> For I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins—you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate.
- d. Religion - **Matthew 23:23–24** (ESV) — <sup>23</sup> “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. <sup>24</sup> You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!
- e. Employers - **Deuteronomy 24:14** (ESV) — <sup>14</sup> “You shall not oppress a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your brothers or one of the sojourners who are in your land within your towns.
- f. Realtors & banks - **Micah 2:2** (ESV) — <sup>2</sup> They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them away; they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance. . . . **Ezekiel 22:12** (ESV) — <sup>12</sup> In you they take bribes to shed blood; you take interest and profit and make gain of your neighbors by extortion; but me you have forgotten, declares the Lord GOD.
- g. Businesses - **Hosea 12:7** (ESV) — <sup>7</sup> A merchant, in whose hands are false balances, he loves to oppress.

**Amos 4:1–2** <sup>1</sup> “Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, ‘Bring, that we may drink!’ <sup>2</sup> The Lord GOD has sworn by his holiness that, behold, the days are coming upon you, when they shall take you away with hooks, even the last of you with fishhooks.

#### 5. Why God Hates Oppression

- a. No doubt God's holiness & justice
- b. One of the greatest examples oppression ever was Christ
  - 1) **John 15:25** - But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: ‘They hated me without a cause.’
  - 2) **Psalm 69:20** - Reproaches have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none.
  - 3) **Isaiah 53:3** - He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and

**acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.**

### **C. APPLICATION**

#### 1. *Christian Solidarity International* (CSI)

- a. Swiss-based, international, Christian human rights organization (1977)
  - 1) Campaigns for religious liberty and human dignity
  - 2) Assists victims of religious persecution, victimized children and victims of catastrophe.
- b. Not long ago CSI listed 50 countries where the government harasses &/or persecute Christians.
  - 1) Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia & other Middle East countries
  - 2) BUT also in our hemisphere - > 25 pastors are killed in Colombia every year
- c. One of the key passages of the organization is,

**Isaiah 1:17 - learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.**

- e. Another good life verse is

**Proverbs 31:8-9 - Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. <sup>9</sup> Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.**

#### 2. Am I My Brother's Keeper?

**Genesis 4:9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?"**

- a. Since beginning of human race - these questions have been asked over and over
  - 1) God ask - WHERE IS YOUR BROTHER? WHAT'S GOING ON IN YOUR WORLD?
  - 2) We respond - AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER? - AM I RESPONSIBLE?
- b. What is my (our) responsibility to others - especially to the oppressed?
- c. One of the great stories of the NT deals with this subject - story of certain Samaritan - **Luke 10:25ff**
- d. Christ judges men based upon how respond to the oppressed - **SEE MT 25:31-46**

#### 3. To Oppressed - Look to Christ

4. To Believers - Church - In a world of oppression - some oppressed soul should say - *"I LOOKED FOR HELP - FOR SYMPATHY - FOR UNDERSTANDING - FOR RELIEF - AND I FOUND CHRIST IN THE COMPASSION AND LOVE OF HIS PEOPLE."*