

DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS

by

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Eleventh Week - Sixth Day

WHO WROTE ECCLESIASTES?

*"The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem."
Ecclesiastes 1:1*

Can there be any doubt that Solomon is the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes? Is it not plain on the very face of it? Throughout it contains circumstances applicable only to Solomon, and at the very outset the writer introduces himself as "the Preacher, the son of David, king of Jerusalem." No other son of David than Solomon was king of Jerusalem, or as he afterward says more fully, "king over Israel in Jerusalem."

Nevertheless, the authorship of no other sacred book has been more strongly contested than Solomon's authorship of Ecclesiastes; and the nature and number of the objections that have been advanced form a monument of microscopic ingenuity in criticism. However, since the objections have been satisfactorily disposed of by Mr. Holden and others and the old and generally received notion of Solomonic authorship remains substantially unshaken, we shall not enter into these objections here.

Some reader will ask how such a position against Solomon's claim to the authorship of the book can be maintained in the face of the declaration with which it begins. The answer is accounted for by the supposition that the author intended that he himself was to be understood *as representing or writing in the person of Solomon without meaning to be taken for Solomon himself*. Now if this is the case, what a pity he did not take more pains to plainly indicate his meaning and thereby prevent a misapprehension that he ought to have foreseen and which has all but universally prevailed!

Nevertheless, it is argued that the author has taken the precaution of introducing Solomon not by his proper name but by that of *Koheleth*, or "the Preacher," thus signifying that Solomon is introduced not in his personal character but as the representative of wisdom. But this falls to the ground if we can show that this title was perfectly proper to Solomon in his individual capacity. So, let us see with what degree of propriety the title of "the Preacher" can be given to Solomon.

The original word is *Koheleth*, which is also the Hebrew title of the book. The English word

scarcely conveys its exact meaning but comes nearer to it, perhaps, than any other that our language affords. It means literally *one who assembles or gathers people together*; or more particularly, one who so assembles people in order to address them or to give them instruction. The title was probably assumed by Solomon in consequence of his delivering his sage maxims and admonitions to assemblies of people who wished to profit by his instructions and who may have resorted on stated occasions to his palace.

This is not mere conjecture. In chapter 12 verse 9, Solomon's practice of teaching the people is clearly indicated: "*And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs.*" And in 1 Kings 4:34 we read: "*And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.*" That all these were instructed in private audiences is far less likely than that they heard him at meetings held periodically or occasionally for the purpose; and a custom like this would be in entire conformity with eastern usages.