



Ecclesiastes 12

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Ecclesiastes 12.

(A brief overview of the main topics).

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

Ecclesiastes is a brilliant book that gives an overall view of human life on earth, but in having said that, a spotlight should be shone upon the truth that there will always be individual exceptions and contradictions to the general laws that apply to the collective observations of the human population as a whole. God has designed the universe this way so that no human whether righteous or wicked can find out their future or know what will happen to them tomorrow (Eccles. 7:14). Ecclesiastes contains reflections of an elderly man called, "the Preacher" as he considers questions concerning meaning in life. The Preacher looks back and sees the futility and brief, passing of life and its meaningless (i.e. the vanity of it) even if it is spent chasing after the good things this life can offer, including wisdom, work, pleasure, and wealth, the Preacher comes to this conclusion because no matter how satisfying these things maybe for a time death is certain to end this satisfaction and the enjoyment of them. The sentiment of the following two verses echo throughout the book:

- By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return (Gen. 3:19).
- The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit (the life) returns to God who gave it (Eccles. 12:7).

The book concludes that only by living life with reverence and holy respect toward God the Creator and doing-good to others does life make sense. This is because those who live in this manner can enjoy God's good gifts on earth and will be delivered from death to eternal life and rewarded for the good, they have shown toward others.

Vanity: the word vanity comes from the Hebrew word (*hebel*). From Strong's Concordance it means emptiness, something fleeting and short lived and carries the idea of something being transient, brief and passing or of something unsatisfactory and meaningless.

The Preacher: based on the following words of verse one:

- The Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem (Eccles. 1:1)

And the following words of chapter two:

- I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. ⁵I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. ⁶I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. ⁷I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. ⁸I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the children of man. ⁹So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem (Eccles. 2:4-9).

It is traditionally accepted by most that "the Preacher," is Solomon during the tenth century B.C.

NOTE: for information of people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

- **Ecclesiastes 12:1-14** ¹ Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, “I have no pleasure in them”; ² before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain, ³ in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look through the windows are dimmed, ⁴ and the doors on the street are shut—when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low— ⁵ they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along, and desire fails, because man is going to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets— ⁶ before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, ⁷ and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. ⁸ Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity. ⁹ Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care. ¹⁰ The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth. ¹¹ The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. ¹² My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh. ¹³ The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. ¹⁴ For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

Advice to youth: enjoy it while they have it.

Eternal wisdom: remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the day of death comes and you go to you eternal home.

All is vanity: mankind is made from the dust and all dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit (the breath of life) returns to God who gave it and in this sense without God all that is achieved under the sun is vanity because everyone dies and returns to the dust.

MAN’S LOT IN LIFE

After observing the world around, him the author of Ecclesiastes concludes the only good thing a man or woman who denies God has in this life is to work, eat, drink and be joyful, for the few days God has given them to live under the sun.

- There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity. ¹⁵And I commend joy, for man has no good thing under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun. (Eccles. 8:14-15).

The writer is saying that bad events happen to the righteous, who according to our sense of justice do not deserve to be afflicted with hardships, grief and sorrow, and that good things happen to the wicked who do not deserve fortune and prosperity. Because of these observations the author of Ecclesiastes determines, “all is vanity on earth,” we would say, “the earth is full of injustices.” After observing these apparent injustices, he concludes that the best thing for those who chose to live without God, is to work, eat, drink and be joyful, all the days of their life that God has given them on earth, because when they breathe their last breath there is no more, but the darkness of the grave. (Eccles. 8:14-15).

SUMMARY OF ECCLESIASTES

All of the preachers searching for wisdom to find and understand God brought him to the following summary. No matter how wise a person maybe or much a person may study and spend time seeking to

understand the work of God and His ways that is done on the earth they will not find it out. There are too many contradictions and exceptions to the general rules and laws of any given event or thing.

- God has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end (Ecclesiastes 3:11).
- In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him (Ecclesiastes 7:14).
- Then I saw all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However, much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out (Ecclesiastes 8:17).

The LORD has designed the universe this way so that no human whether righteous or wicked can find out their future or know what will happen to them tomorrow. The Preacher concludes that without God all is vanity (meaning brief, passing and meaningless) because the righteous and the wicked, the wise and the foolish all end up in the grave and are forgotten. After all the Preachers searching to understand life on earth and God's ways, he comes to the following two conclusions: -

1. To live with reverence and respect toward God.
2. To do no harm to another human.

He ends by saying this is the whole duty of every man and woman and that God will take every open and secret deed into judgment whether good or evil.

Without eternal life all that comes is meaningless, because no man or woman has power over the day of death (Eccles. 8:8) it comes to all and the days of darkness will be many (Eccles. 11:8)

FOOTNOTE

It is interesting to notice that the Preachers search to understand life on earth and understand God's ways led him to the following two conclusions, firstly, to live with reverence and respect toward God and secondly to do no harm to another human especially since the only two commandments that Jesus gave to those who desire to follow him is to:

1. Love the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their mind (Matt. 22:37).

Jesus said this is the great and first commandment (Matt. 22:37-38) and the second is: -

2. Love your neighbour as yourself (Matt. 22:39-40).

Upon two commandments Jesus said all the law and the prophets depend (Matt. 22:40) and that there is no other commandment greater than these two (Mark 12:31). James the brother of Jesus wrote, "If you really fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself, you are doing well" (James 2:8) and concerning God's law Paul said, "The whole law is fulfilled in one word: You shall love your neighbour as yourself," (Gal 5:14) and that love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13:10). To, love your neighbour as yourself, means do not deliberately do harm to other humans. No sane person deliberately does things to inflict pain on themselves, loving others as you love yourself is not about feeling some warm and fuzzy emotion towards others, it is about not hurting others as you would not hurt yourself. The thing God hates the most is when we do

harm to another person, physically, financially, sexually, emotionally or spiritually and the thing God loves the most is when we do good to others. It is interesting to notice that the major crime that God points out in Noah's time and one of the main reasons for the flood was because of all the violence in the land.

- Micah wrote: "What the LORD requires of mankind is to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with their God" (Micah 6:5-10).
- Isaiah says: "The LORD loves justice, hates robbery and wrong doing" (Isaiah 61:8).
- Jeremiah said: "Those who know God practise steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, because it is in these things that God delights" (Jer. 9:24).

The great prophets Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah clearly show the law is about doing-good to others and protecting them from harm and hurt and the Preacher in his search to understand the meaning of life on earth and understand God's ways came to the same conclusion.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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