

Life's Final Word

Ecclesiastes 12:8-14

“Ecclesiastes begins with vanity but ends with victory when we take God into account.” - Wiersbe

Remember: Every day is a bad day. Realizing the randomness and brevity of life frees us to *enjoy life*.

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Big Idea: Life under the sun is vanity, but in Christ we have victory; therefore, we trust Christ, our Shepherd and Judge.

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. (Ecc 12:8-14 ESV)

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The End of the Matter: Life's Final Word

1. Life's an enigma (v. 8).
2. But ... The Shepherd gives wisdom (vv. 9-11).
3. So ... Beware of empty pursuits (v. 12).
4. Because ... Judgment is coming (vv. 13-14).

1. Life's an enigma (v. 8).

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The vanity of life should drive us to God.

- i. Life is a vapor/vanity (James 4:13-14).
- ii. All creation groans for redemption (Rom 8:20-21).
- iii. Christ gives meaning to life (1Co 15:14-20).

Vanity ... *hevel*

- i. The teacher uses *hevel* 38 times in 12 chapters.
- ii. Life is *hevel*: Temporary, Meaningless, Empty, Smoke, Breath, Enigma, Absurdity ...
- iii. Temporary (Job 7:16, 9:29; Ps 39:5-6; Prov 31:30).
- iv. Lacks substance (Job 23:14).
- v. Idolatry, and Idols (Deut. 32:21; 1 Kgs 16:13, 26; Ps 115:8).

In the *confusion of life*, God remains.

- i. God provides food, drink, and work (2:24).
- ii. Every person lives in God's sight (2:26).
- iii. God's deeds are eternal (3:14).
- iv. God empowers people to enjoy life (5:19-20).
- v. God approves of our enjoyment (9:7).
- vi. God judges every deed (12:13–14).

Let life's mystery drive you to Christ (1Co 15:14f).

- i. Do not chase what cannot last (Mk 8:36; Mt 6:24).
- ii. Prioritize relationships over possessions.
- iii. Invest in eternal things.
- iv. Live with urgency.

2. The Shepherd's wisdom endures (vv. 9-11).

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The Wise Shepherd gave great wisdom.

- i. True wisdom is from God (vv. 1:16 ; 12:11-14; 1Kgs 3:12f).
- ii. There's only one Shepherd, and it's not Ecclesiastes (v. 11b; Ps 23; Ezk 34; Jn 10:11f).
- iii. God's wisdom cannot be undone, it's firmly fixed (v. 11).

Live in God's wisdom.

- i. Submit to Scripture even when it challenges you.
- ii. Listen to the Shepherd: read, meditate, and obey.
- iii. Participate in fellowship. God speaks through others.

Don't resist the Shepherd's goad. When stung by Scripture's correction, remember it is for your good.

Fix your identity firmly in God's truth, not shifting cultural "wisdom."

Trust the Bible's permanence in a world of shifting opinions.

3. Beware Empty Pursuits (v. 12)

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.

- i. Do not make rules where God has not (v. 12; Rev 22:18-19; Matt 15:8-9).
 - i. We're not free to command where God has remained silent.
- ii. "God's Word gives enduring wisdom; man's endless words only exhaust."
 - i. We can spend so much time learning that we forget to live and enjoy life.
 - ii. "Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh."
- iii. The teacher does not despise learning—he himself pursued knowledge—but he warns against endless searching apart from God.
- iv. "Study can weary the body, but it cannot satisfy the soul." - Weirsbe
- v. An endless pursuit of human wisdom exhausts, but divine revelation gives life.
 - i. Even in divine revelation we can focus so much on learning things that we forget to apply them, live them.

God's Word endures; man's *endless words* exhaust.

- i. Pursue excellence, but don't make success your savior.
- ii. Avoid pride; you're not God.
- iii. Balance knowledge with worship/living.

Beware of becoming "overfed but undernourished" spiritually. It's good to go to church and study, but take time to digest it and apply it to your life.
Make God's word most important in your life, more important than the other information the world throws at us.

4. Judgement is coming (vv. 13-14; Jn 14:17).

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Whole duty of man, literally “this is the whole of man.” The word duty is inserted to help us read, but muddles the meaning.

Judgement is coming.

- i. Fear God (v. 13 cf. 3:14; 5:7; 8:12-13; Rom 3:18; Heb 10:26-31).
- ii. Keep his commandments (v. 13; Rom 12:1).
- iii. God will bring every deed into judgement (v. 14; 2 Cor 5:10-11).
- iv. Nothing stays secret from God (Heb 4:13; 1Ti 5:24-25).
- v. We don’t know when the judge will come (1Th 5:2-6; 2Pt 3:8-10).
- vi. Invite accountability into your life. Your choices matter.
- vii. Obey God. Not from fear, but love (Rom 8:1).
- viii. Examine your life. What would you not want exposed? Repent.
- ix. Use judgment as motivation for holiness and mission.

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- ii. Examine your life. Repent from your sins.
- iii. Use judgment as motivation for holiness and mission.

“The only way life makes sense is to view it in light of God’s judgment.”

– MacArthur

Jesus bore the futility of the curse,
making *victory* not *vanity* the last word.