

The Final Word—Summed Up

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

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Introduction:

Wouldn't it be great if someone would just tell us what this is all about?

- I mean, here we are, each of us, a little tiny speck on what to us to be a huge ball that scientists tell us is hurtling through space at over 100,000 kms per hour while it spins us around at about 1500 kms per hour...
 - And apparently this ball, that is so huge to us, is itself only a speck in a whole galaxy of solar systems,
 - And this galaxy is but a tiny part of a whole array of galaxies...
- We have no control over any of this—none of us were consulted about it...
 - Yet, if things were changed with the earth's orbit just a little tiny bit we would all immediately die...
- And to each one of us, even if we say it isn't, our little life as a speck is very, very important to us—
 - Yes, the people who try to deny the importance of their existence often seem to be the ones who are the most concerned about it.

And sadly, the majority of people haven't a clue what life is really all about.

- Wouldn't it be great if someone who knew would just tell us!

Well I want to tell you that someone has!

- His name is Solomon, and he was given wisdom from God—not only ordinary human wisdom, but also prophetic wisdom that God had revealed to him.
 - He calls himself the preacher, and he tells us that he, along with other wise men, have truth that comes from one Shepherd—
 - It originates with God.
- And in Ecclesiastes, he has worked hard to tell us what life is all about!
 - I have preached to you from this book over the last several months...
 - And today we come to what Solomon himself tells us is the final word about the whole matter...
 - He speaks truth as a prophet from God...truth that we can stake our lives on.

Please turn to Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 and let's take a look at what he says.

- It is a very short reading today, but it is extremely important because it sums up everything about man:
 - Ecclesiastes 12:13—
 - Give careful attention, for this is the word of the living God:

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. ¹⁴ For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.

May the Lord impart wisdom to us through His holy and infallible word.

I. This is the ultimate conclusion about life—about all that we are.

A. You see that Solomon says that this is the conclusion of the whole matter!

1. It is the conclusion of all that he has been talking about—which has been the meaning of life in this crazy world.
 - It is a huge subject—and a terribly important subject, and here he is giving us the final word on the matter.
 - He is summing up everything there is to know about the subject in a concise, straightforward manner which we will examine in a moment.
2. You see at the end of verse 13, he stresses... **“This is man’s all”**
 - This has been variously translated, but the idea seems to be that Solomon is summarizing what we are all about as human beings...
 - When you boil everything down, this is what man is all about.
 - As Charles Bridges puts it, “it is his whole happiness and business – the total sum of all that concerns him – all that God requires of him
3. This is a supremely important matter because if you get this wrong, you get everything wrong.
 - If you have a true God-given *reason to be* and you miss it, then you miss everything.
 - Your whole life becomes almost completely worthless—useless—meaningless.
 - Your whole life is a waste.
 - Perhaps one of the most astonishing things is how little most people concern themselves with this question!
 - If we miss what we are meant to be about, our whole life is terribly shallow and useless...

➤ This seems like a terrible thing to say about people—and it is terrible...

B. But this is really what Solomon has been saying all along in Ecclesiastes.

1. Right from the start, Solomon told us that everything under the sun is vanity.
 - a. Consider—
 - In chapter 1, verses 2 and 3, he says,
 - **Ecc 1:2-3: “Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher; “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” ³ What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun?**

- And then he has gone on, speaking about riches, achievements, learning, pleasures, and everything being vanity...
 - He does not say these things are wrong—some of them are very fine things—it is just that they are all vanity...
 - And then in the final chapter—in chapter 12, verse 8, he spells it out again:
 - **Ecc 12:8: “Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher, “All is vanity.”**
- b. We have seen that the word translated **vanity** (*hebel* in the original), means a vapour or a breath...
- It is a tiny bit more than nothing, but not much more!
 - Solomon has been driving this point very hard.
 - Your life is worthless *under the sun*—if God is not in the picture.
 - The reason that all is vanity, as we have seen, is because you are going die anyway.
 - You have what you have for maybe seventy years and then you die and it is all lost
 - The wise person who lives prosperously in the world dies the same as the fool...
 - And the man who amasses great wealth has to leave it all for the grave...so what if he has a big house when he is buried...
 - We all end up in the grave and that is why all that we do under the sun is vanity...
 - Even if we help others, what have we accomplished—because they are going to the grave too.
 - All is vanity and striving after the wind.
 - If God is not in the picture, what does any of it profit?
 - That is what Solomon has shown us...
- c. And I suppose that this is why many people hate this book...
- especially people who are secularists and have nothing but what they have in this world...
 - They read Ecclesiastes and they think, “What an awful thing to say about man.”
 - It is a little too much to handle—it is too honest—too blunt.
2. But my friends, this needs to be heard!
- a. It is not as if Solomon says this to no purpose!
- He is not a desperate unhappy man who is just complaining for the sake of complaining.
 - His goal is to make us see that life is worthless if it is not lived for God so that we will see that we *ought* to live for God.

- b. He is telling us so that we can escape a life of total vanity!
 - You should not get angry with a doctor who tells you that you have a terrible sickness that needs to be looked after...
 - Not if it is true!
 - You should thank him—especially if there is a cure available!
- c. It is here at the conclusion that Solomon makes it perfectly clear, just in case anyone has missed it,
 - that he is not saying that life has no significance for no reason...
 - He is saying it so that we might find true meaning above the sun—outside the things of this present world.
 - As human beings, we were made for eternity, but we are disconnected from eternity (as far as we can see it) if we do not consciously live in relation to God.

TRANS> Consider and absorb what Solomon says our life is all about.

- Let's look at what he says and let it soak into us—
- It is God's word and it needs to become ours.

II. He says that we are to fear God.

- This is much more than mere conscious awareness of God...
- A. What does it mean to fear something in the sense that Solomon uses it here?
- Essentially, you fear whatever you suppose to have the power to hurt you.
1. That is true, is it not?
 - If you are afraid of heights,
 - it is because you know that falling from a high place is able to harm you—even to kill you.
 - If your daughter is afraid of a bully at school,
 - it is because she knows that the bully has the power and perhaps the will to hurt her.
 2. Of course fear can sometimes be of things that are more abstract...
 - For example, a person may fear being put to shame...
 - This might cause a young man to work out really hard because he does not want to be embarrassed on the ball field...
 - Or it might cause a businessman to give up everything in order to succeed in his business—because he fears failure.
 3. Fear often explains things that would otherwise be unexplainable...
 - a. Suppose you have a young woman who keeps falling into the arms of unworthy men who abuse her—
 - She flirts with them and almost seems to set herself up for abuse.
 - You see her going from one low-life to another...but why?

- She does it because she fears being rejected—she fears loneliness—she is desperate for attention...
 - And she has discovered how easy it is to get certain men’s attention, so she keeps throwing herself on them.
 - b. Suppose you have a man who keeps going into debt...
 - Now it may be that the whole reason he does this is because he fears being looked down on—
 - He wants to be seen in a suit he can’t afford and in a car that he can’t afford—so he keeps extending his credit...
 - Such a man might even resort to stealing—all because of fear that people will think that he does not measure up.
 - Of course, it might be that he goes into debt just because he loves cars and has no self-control—
 - but even then, you could say that he fears going on through life without that car...
4. When we talk about fear, it is important to understand that sometimes fear can be a great comfort to us.
- For example, with the little girl and the bully...
 - If her daddy is with her, she does not fear the bully anymore because she fears her father more...
 - Not that she thinks her father is out to hurt her, but because she believes that he could hurt her a lot more than the bully if he wanted to...
 - And that if the bully tries to hurt her, her father will deal with him—he will be able to deal with him!
- So the thing you fear is the thing you believe has power to hurt you.
- B. This is the way the word *fear* is constantly used in the Bible.
1. The Hebrew word that is used here in Ecclesiastes 12:13 is *yare*, and if you scan through its usage in the rest of the Old Testament,
 - you will find that it is almost always used of being afraid of something that has the power to hurt you.
 - The New Testament’s word is *phobos*, and it is used in the very same way—
 - We get the word *phobia* from this word.
 2. I get a little of tired of those preachers who labour hard to assign a different meaning to this word.
 - a. They will often point out that it means *reverence*,
 - and so it does,
 - but that does not mean that it no longer refers to that which has the power to hurt you!
 - You revere someone *because* they have the power to hurt you.

- b. In Deuteronomy 5, God shows that the reason He revealed Himself in such a terrifying way at Mount Sinai (with earthquake and lightening and threats that even made Moses quake in fear)...
 - was in order that His people might fear Him.
 - He is not talking about some kind of reverence devoid of terror that here is a being that can destroy me!
 - In speaking of the peoples' response of fear, the LORD says:
 - **Deut 5;29, 'Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!'**
 - He is glad for the fear and hopes that they will have it forever.
- c. In the New Testament, Jesus uses *fear* this way when He tells His disciples to fear God instead of man...
 - He is sending them out to preach, and He is warning them that they will meet up with hostile people, but He says:
 - **Mt 10:28: And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.**
 - Do you see what He is saying?
 - Your heavenly Father can hurt you a whole lot more than any man can—so fear the One who can cause the greatest harm!
- 3. Look, the preachers who try to change the meaning of the word fear are making an important point...
 - It is true that it is not good for us to have a slavish fear of God that causes us to avoid Him...and that is what they are concerned about...
 - We are not to look at Him as we would at the bully that might come to cream us for no reason...
 - but we are to constantly see our LORD as the One who has more power to hurt us than anyone else...
 - And who in fact can and will and does crush all of His enemies—not for no reason, but in justice that cannot be faulted...
 - If you want, you could say that we fear Him because He has the power to do whatever He wants with us...
 - Because the outcome of our lives is in His hands!
 - He has the power to do whatever He wants with us...
 - He can ruin us in Hell forever or bless us in heaven!
 - Of course, people don't like this—they'd rather be in control or have nothing in control—
 - But I have to break it to you....
 - That is not an option...

- C. In Ecclesiastes, Solomon is trying to free us from deception—from fearing the wrong thing!
- From thinking that the most important thing is how much wealth you have, or how much pleasure, or how much worldly wisdom, or how much sex.
 - You can make the great mistake of living for what does not matter in the end—for what only lasts as long as God gives it to you...
1. A lot of people go through life without even thinking about what matters.
 - a. They just latch onto something temporal and they pour their whole lives out for that thing—again, riches, sex, honour, morality, pleasure, even drugs...
 - Sometimes they get so attached to something that they give up things that, if they had thought about it, they would not have sacrificed...
 - Like the 60 year old man who has a lot of riches, but realizes he does not even know his children who are now out of the house...
 - he is stuck with a big bank account, a failed marriage, and children who have little interest in hanging out with him.
 - He pursued riches because he thought they would make him happy—he feared life without them—
 - but now he realizes that he missed what was better—he should have feared losing his wife and children.
 - b. But of course the greatest tragedy is to live your whole life as if *God Almighty* is irrelevant!
 - To be a person who does not fear the living God!
 - That is to live your whole life in vain!
 - That is to miss your whole reason for existing!
 - It is to miss everything—because all you have in this world will soon be separated from you and then none of it will matter.
 2. You need to face the truth about your Creator!
 - a. In the final analysis, He is the only One to fear—the only One to live for!
 - It is not your wife or your husband or your success or your riches or your sex that has the final power to bless you or curse you...
 - All of those things are things that God has the authority to give to you or to take away from you!
 - It only makes sense to fear Him, doesn't it?
 - Of course it does!
 - b. The problem with us is that in our sinful fallen condition, we ignore God!
 - If you would stop ignoring Him, you would fear Him—
 - You would see clearly that He is the One thing to be reckoned with in your life!
 - Nothing else really matters.
 - Gaining His grace and His favour is all that matters!

- c. Really, when you get down to it, to know Him *is* to fear Him...
 - 1) You see that He is awesome in the truest sense of the word.
 - 2) You see that He is one who gave you everything that you now have and everything that you ever will have.
 - 3) You see that He is holy and pure—without any corruption at all...there is no moral reason to reject Him...
 - 4) You see that He is an avenger and a judge of sin who will not leave the guilty unpunished...
 - 5) You see that He is intimately involved with us—that all things are open and naked before Him.
 - 6) You see that He is lovely and beautiful, one who is greatly to be desired and very satisfying to know.
 - 7) You see that that He is altogether wise—beyond questioning...
 - 8) You see that He is merciful and gracious, full of love and compassion toward us when we turn to Him...
 - 9) You see that He has supreme majesty and rules over all...
- d. So I urge you to spend time getting to know Him!
 - Make use of the means of grace—read the word, hear the word, pray to Him, seek Him, sing psalms to Him!
 - You have let other things catch your eye, but because of your sin, you have not looked upon Him...
 - You don't fear Him as you should because you don't know Him as you should...
 - That needs to change!
 - Purpose in your heart right this minute that it will change!
 - Purpose in your heart that you will seek Him—that you will stop ignoring Him...
 - This is what matters most of all—this is your life—your destiny...
 - **Fear God!!!**

TRANS> But there is more to Solomon's summary...

- He not only says, "Fear God," but
 - "Fear God and keep His commandments!"
 - When you fear Him, you really can't help but keep His commandments...

III. When you fear God, you will keep His commandments.

- The two go hand in hand.
 - The one does not really exist without the other.
- A. For the God-fearer, everything becomes, "How can I please Him? How can I obtain His grace? How can I gain His favour?"
 - 1. When you fear God, the most terrifying thing ever is to have God against you!

- You know something of His holiness and His wrath against sin and you know how helpless you are before Him if He comes against you in His fury.
 - You see that you are sinner, of the lost and fallen race of mankind...
 - You see that you are guilty and in need of rescue...
 - You see all of this before the day of final judgement...
 - And when you do, nothing matters to you more than to gain His grace and favour—that He would have mercy upon you.
2. You become like Jacob when he wrestled with the LORD and declared,
- “I will not let you go unless you bless me!”
 - Jacob poured all of his strength into seeking the Lord’s favour instead of in resisting Him—which he knew would be fruitless.
 - Nothing else mattered other than gaining God’s blessing...
 - And the LORD commended him for this and changed his name to Israel because he had prevailed with Him...
 - Jacob became a pattern for us in fearing God...
 - Because we fear Him, we must, must, must, have His blessing!
 - We refuse to go on without it!
3. And look, it is not that we must manipulate the LORD...
- For He is the one who enables us to fear Him in the first place...
 - We never would have feared Him if He had not put His fear in our hearts...
 - That is one of the ways the new birth is described...
 - In Jeremiah 32:40, the LORD says:
 - **Jer 32:40 ‘And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me.’**
 - But when He does this—if you are not yet reconciled to Him—
 - You will be like Jacob—you will not let Him go until He blesses you!
 - And because you fear Him, you will continue to seek His blessing for you and your children as long as you live...
 - Nothing else will matter to you because you will see rightly that nothing else does matter!

B. And the LORD has told us plainly how we can please Him.

1. He has given us the commandment to repent and believe the gospel.
 - He has promised eternal life—eternal blessing—eternal favour to you if you will do that!
 - a. To repent means that you turn from your sins...
 - If you fear God, you can’t be content with your sin...
 - You can’t go on doing things you know to be wrong.

- You have to deal with it!
 - You have turn from your sin—even if you fall into it, which we do, you can't just sit there without repenting.
 - You have to deal with it—you have to go to those you have wronged and make it right...
 - You have to confess your sins to the LORD.
- b. And of course believing the gospel means believing the good news about Jesus Christ.
- God commands you to do this!
 - He sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sins—to atone for our sins so that we could be pardoned!
 - Jesus bore the wrath and curse of God for all that the Father has given Him!
 - And God commands all men everywhere to believe the Gospel.
 - You are to receive Jesus and rest upon Him for the complete forgiveness of your sin as He is offered in the gospel...
 - Otherwise, you would have to pay the penalty yourself and that will take you forever!
 - If you have the least shred of the fear of God,
 - you could not bear to go on for another minute without the pardon that comes through Christ crucified.
2. And if you are truly living a life of repentance and faith in the gospel,
- If you are obeying this great command to repent and believe the gospel,
 - You will go in the way of all of God's commandments...
 - You will delight to know what pleases Him.
 - You will devote your whole life to pleasing Him.
 - You will be filled with gratitude for the gospel and for the pardon you have received...
 - And you will want to please the LORD in all your ways.
 - You will meditate on His commandments so that you can do them.
 - You will pray with the apostle in Colossians 1:9-11:
 - **Col 1:9-11: that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power...**
 - Because of Jesus Christ and His saving work, it will be possible for you to live a life that pleases God...
 - a commandment keeping life...
 - And this will be your great desire—
 - This will be what matters to you because, as Solomon tells us, this is the whole of man—this is what we are about.

- C. Solomon reminds you in verse 14 that everything matters because God is going to judge everything—
- He is going to evaluate whether you have kept His commandments or not.
 - Ecclesiastes 12:14 says:
 - **Ecc. 12:14: For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.**
1. With God in the picture, instead of everything being vanity, everything becomes vitally important!
 - Everything matters because nothing goes unnoticed with God!
 - His judgement is very comprehensive...
 - It includes things that are hidden from your parents, your spouse, your brothers and sisters at church...
 - None of these things are hidden from God.
 - If you truly fear God, you realize that!
 - You don't live differently in secret than you live before others because you fear God more than you fear others...
 - Is that true of you?
 - Do you live consciously before God?
 - Look, I know you sin and that you sin greatly—but do you deal with it before God?
 - Do you deal with it even if nobody knows about it but you and God?
 - Young people, does sin only get addressed when your parents find out?
 - If that is so, then it shows that you don't fear God!
 - God is way more important than your parents—you should fear Him more than you fear them!
 - You need to repent—it is of the utmost importance!
 - God is going to judge everything.
 - Everything matters!
 - Don't say it doesn't because it does!
 - You are living a lie if you pretend that it doesn't matter.
 - Don't you fear God?
 - Don't you know who He is?
2. He is going to judge every work including every secret thing.
 - And let me tell you, that judgement day will be to you either the most wonderful day ever or the most abysmal day ever.
 - a. If you are a sincere God-fearer—a true disciple of Jesus Christ who is resting in Him for salvation and earnestly following Him...
 - It will be a very excellent thing to have God reveal all that is wrong with you to you...

- It will be humbling to be sure, but in a wonderful way...
- Because it will be His showing you what is wrong with you in order that you might change!
- In that day, you will see His glory as you have never seen it before, and in the light of that glory,
 - You will see clearly and plainly all that is wrong with you...
 - It will disgust you—but it will be the end of those ways...
 - Because in that day, Jesus will give you the grace to see how wrong those ways are and to live for Him forever more!
 - You will see all the filth, but you will be free of it from then on!
 - You will be glad that you have been able to see it all so clearly that you may henceforth do what pleases the LORD!
- b. But if you come to this judgement and you are not in Christ—if you are not a true God-fearer—
 - Then you also will see clearly everything that is wrong with you...
 - And worst of all, you will see how wrong you were to ignore God—
 - And to avoid His saving grace in Christ...
 - You will see how foolish you were to live for vain things and to ignore God.
 - Solomon sums you up in Proverbs 1:20-33—
 - **Proverbs 1:20-33: Wisdom calls aloud outside; she raises her voice in the open squares. ²¹ She cries out in the chief concourses, at the openings of the gates in the city she speaks her words: ²² “How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? For scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge. ²³ Turn at my rebuke; surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you. ²⁴ Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out my hand and no one regarded, ²⁵ because you disdained all my counsel, and would have none of my rebuke, ²⁶ I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes, ²⁷ when your terror comes like a storm, and your destruction comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. ²⁸ Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but they will not find me. ²⁹ Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, ³⁰ they would have none of my counsel *and* despised my every rebuke. ³¹ Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled to the full with their own fancies. ³² For the turning away of the simple will slay them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them; ³³ but whoever listens to me will dwell safely, and will be secure, without fear of evil.”**
- c. You will lose everything if you ignore the counsel that Solomon has given us in Ecclesiastes!
 - Absolutely everything! This world is only a vapour!
 - You are a fool if you live as if God is irrelevant...because He is not!

- No my friend—He is to be feared!
 - Fear God and keep His commandments—nothing else matters.
- You will gain everything if you receive the counsel that Solomon has given us in Ecclesiastes!
 - Absolutely everything!
 - Everything matters!
 - Your labour in the LORD is not in vain.
 - It all matters because God is God.
 - Do you fear Him?
 - If not, then it is high time you did!
- Yes, you can come to Jesus Christ now!
 - It does not matter what you may have done—He calls you to come and be saved...He has a pardon for you...
 - He is the One who died and He is able to save you.
 - It is not about what you do—it is about trusting in what He has done!
 - This is everything—absolutely everything—the all of man!
 - You can have it all through Jesus Christ.
 - He is a complete Saviour.