

THE CONCLUSION
Ecclesiastes 12:9 - 12:14
1/22/17

Ecclesiastes is God's inspired account of Solomon's journey to find purpose and meaning in life.

Solomon struggled with the same questions most of us do:

Why am I here?

Where am I going?

Does my life have any meaning?

Am I really accomplishing anything significant or of lasting value?

Mark Twain: "The world will lament you for an hour and then forget you forever."

Solomon tried to find meaning and happiness in life the same ways most people try today. He sought them:

In sensual pleasure and material possessions

In a bottle, fun and entertainment, and sexual relationships

In wisdom and learning, in his work and in his wealth

In the end Solomon found that everything is temporary and that nothing brought him lasting happiness.

He found that significance and satisfaction can only be found when we bring God and eternity into the picture.

Our passage last week taught that God wants us to enjoy life as a gift from Him and to take Him into account in all we do.

This week our passage tells us to:

1. Listen to God's Words of Wisdom. 12:9-12

a. God used Solomon to write many proverbs. vv. 9-11

The **Shepherd** is God.

◆ He used Solomon and other Biblical writers to record His inspired truths about life.

Proverbs are wise pithy truisms about life.

Read examples from Proverbs 14-31

- **Goad-** God's Word prods us to go in the right direction.

Psalm 23:4 . . . Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

- **Masters of these collection are like well driven nails**

◆ They are secure and stable people.

b. Don't be overly devoted to other books. v. 12

- There are more than a million new book titles published around the world every year.
- In 2013 there were 304,912 new book titles published in the United States alone.

- ◆ You would have to read 835 books per day just to keep up.
- ◆ There is no end to the number of ideas that people come up with.
- This verse doesn't mean that we shouldn't read other books.
 - ◆ It can be interesting to investigate the various ideas people come up with.
 - ◆ But an excessive devotion to books is futile and wearying to the body.
 - ◆ It is not wrong to read them, but it is often a waste of your life and time.
- It is God's Word and His commandments that count.
 - ◆ It is God's Word and His commandments that we will be held accountable for.
 - ◇ Do not be like the person referred to in 2 Timothy 3:7 who is *"always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."*
 - ◇ Don't be like the person on Facebook who wrote: *"I would rather have a mind opened by wonder than one closed by belief."*

2. Fear God and keep His commandments, for God will bring every act to judgment. 12:13-14

This is the fifth time that we are told to fear God in Ecclesiastes.

God made us and has every right to hold us accountable.

The message of Ecclesiastes is NOT that nothing matters.

The message of Ecclesiastes is that EVERYTHING MATTERS.

Because God exists and will one day hold us accountable for what we do, EVERYTHING MATTERS.

- ◆ If there is no God nothing matters.
 - ◇ Life is temporary and meaningless
 - ◇ There is no right and wrong
 - ◇ There is no hope
- ◆ Because God exists everything matters.
 - ◇ There is right and wrong
 - ◇ There is hope in this life and the life here after
 - ◇ We can rejoice and enjoy the good things that God gives us.
- ◆ What we do matters.

1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord.

One day each of us will stand before God in judgment. (whether you believe in Him or not)

Matthew 12:36 "But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.

1 Corinthians 4:5 . . . *but wait* until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men's* hearts. .

The message of Ecclesiastes is not that nothing matters, but that everything does.

- Everything we think, say, and do has eternal significance.
 - ◆ It will matter how we use our time.
 - ◆ It will matter how we spend our money.
 - ◆ It will matter what we do with our bodies.
- Most important, it matters what you do with Jesus.
 - ◆ Those who ignore or reject Christ will appear at the Great White Throne Judgment and will be thrown in the Lake of Fire because their names are not in the book of life.
 - ◇ Revelation 20:14-15
 - ◆ Christians will appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ to receive rewards or loss of rewards
 - ◇ 1 Corinthians 3:10-15
 - ◇ 2 Corinthians 5:9-10

3. A Summary of Ecclesiastes

a. Meaning and happiness cannot be found in this life apart from God.

- Money and material possessions don't provide happiness.

Dr. Edward Diener (University of Illinois) summarized his scientific findings in one short sentence.

 - ◇ "Materialism is toxic to happiness."
 - Sexual pleasure doesn't produce lasting happiness.

Time Magazine: "When sex is pursued only for pleasure . . . or to fill a void . . . in the soul, it becomes elusive, impersonal, and ultimately disappointing."
- Fame and fortune fail to bring happiness.
 - ◆ **New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady** on 60 Minutes after winning his third Super Bowl said, "Why do I have three Super Bowl rings and still think there's something greater out there for me? I mean, maybe a lot of people would say, 'Hey man, this is what is.' I reached my goal, my dream, my life. Me, I think, '. . . It's got to be more than this.' I mean this isn't, this can't be what it's all cracked up to be."
 - ◆ **Lee Iacocca** (Ford, Chrysler, etc.) writes in his book *Straight Talk*, "Here I am in the twilight years of my life, still wondering what it's all about . . . I can tell you this, fame and fortune is for the birds."
 - ◆ Elvis Presley, Michael Jackson, Prince, etc. found the same thing.
 - Philosophy and learning apart from God lead to nihilism and hopelessness.

Famed philosopher Bertrand Russell and the great scientist Albert Einstein issued a joint statement just two days before Einstein's death. In it they confess that "those who know the most are the gloomiest about the future." **Zacharias p. 54**

 - ◇ If there is no God, there is no purpose, no meaning, no hope

- b. We are not able to understand everything that happens in this life. 3:11; 7:23; 8:16-17
- c. Even though we can't understand all that happens, we can be assured that God is in control. 3:11a; 9:1
- d. God wants us to enjoy life. 3:12-13, 22; 5:18-19; 8:15; 9:7-9
- e. While enjoying of life, don't sin. Fear of God and recognize that He will judge. 3:16-17; 12:14
- f. Meaning and happiness cannot be found when we only look "under the sun". They are found when we bring God and eternity into the picture.
 - When you are in a frantic pursuit of happiness nothing brings lasting joy.
 - When you gratefully recognize that the good things of life are a gift from God, they bring joy.

4. Facing the Facts

- a. God has designed us to be empty without Him.

Blaise Pascal: "There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus"

- ◆ Nothing else will satisfy.
- ◆ Nobody else can fill that void.

- **Augustine:** Our heart is restless until it rests in You.

- b. We are not getting any younger. We are all going to die. The most important thing you and I can do before we die is to be reconciled with our Creator.

Romans 5:8-10 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

2 Corinthians 5:18-21