

Sunday, July 18, 2021 pm

STUDIES IN ECCLESIASTES (38)

The Conclusion of the Whole Matter

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

With this lesson we come to the conclusion of our 3 year study of Ecclesiastes. We began this as a monthly lesson in August 2018. We have covered extensively Solomon's quest for the meaning of life. We have seen his conclusion that the pursuit of meaning through worldly channels is vanity. And we have seen the superiority of wisdom WITH God in the picture. In our last lesson we examined the beginning of his concluding thoughts as Solomon spoke of the need for continued instruction – including sharing your wisdom with others, and the need to keep studying yourself. We also noted that wise words are like goads – that prod us in the right direction, and “well driven nails” that establish us when properly placed and applied. TODAY, as we conclude this study, we want to notice Solomon's conclusion of the whole matter.

I. The Conclusion of the Whole Matter

- a. In that statement we find full summary – everything that has been said boils down to this. What do you do about life – if worldly pursuits are your concern? The ultimate solution is here expressed.
- b. **Fear God** – this is FIRST of these two things we are called upon to do. And it is rightly paced here.
 - i. To fear God is an attitude that leads to proper actions. The idea of fearing God is both to be afraid (a healthy awareness of what God can and will do to those who reject Him) and to reverence (show a high degree of respect for) Him.
We have discussed in times past how these words work together concerning God. AND this is something we must not forget.
 - ii. It has been addressed in Ecclesiastes – 5:6, 3:14, 8:12-13
 - iii. It is addressed in the Proverbs – Proverbs 9:10, *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”*
Proverbs 1:7, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.* The expression is found some 13 times in Proverbs alone.
 - iv. Beyond this, the idea of fearing God is found throughout the Old testament.
 - v. It is also a theme of the New Testament – Matthew 10:28, 1 Peter 2:17, Acts 17:2 & 35 – concerning Cornelius. Of course we consider Hebrews 12:28-29, 10:30-31, etc.
 - vi. WHEN we have a proper attitude toward God, then we are ready to act upon that.
- c. **Keep His commandments** –
 - i. This wording has not been used directly in Ecclesiastes, but it has been implied, especially in the later chapters (e.g., Remember your Creator (12:1), Walk prudently when you go to the house of God (5:1)
 - ii. Deuteronomy 13:4, *You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.*
 - iii. Luke 6:46 where Jesus rebuked their failure to obey Him.
 - iv. John 14:15, Jesus said to His apostles, “If you love Me, you will keep MY commandments.”
 - v. 1 John 2:3-4, *Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*
 - vi. Hebrews 5:9, He has become the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.
- d. **This is the whole duty of man** – yet another way of saying, everything we do is summarized in that –
 - i. Consider Colossians 3:17
 - ii. Also Ecclesiastes 9:10, whatever you do, do it with all your might...

- iii. The NASB says, *“this applies to every person”* – this is yet another possibility for this text, and a truth. The emphasis of this passage is the all-inclusiveness of what we need to do.
- iv. Either way is supported by what is said next...

II. Why must I fear God and keep His commandments?

a. *God will bring every work into judgment* –

- i. The Bible continually warns of coming judgment.
- ii. In the history of Israel and Judah (and other nations), we see the judgment of God. And while numerous passages were referring to these judgments (i.e. the day of the Lord), we can see in them a look to what awaits us at the end of this world.
- iii. Hebrews 9:27 - we die, then the judgment
- iv. Acts 17:30-31 – a day has been appointed when God will judge the world
- v. 2 Corinthians 5:10 – we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.
- vi. We cannot live how we want because we KNOW a day of reckoning is coming.

b. *Including every secret thing* –

- i. Concerning that day, we must understand that you CANNOT hide from God. He knows everything.
- ii. Hebrews 4:12-13 – there is no creature hidden from His sight.
- iii. Romans 2:16 – a day is coming when God will judge the secrets of men, according to His gospel
- iv. 1 Corinthians 4:5, *Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one’s praise will come from God.*
- v. Psalm 90:8, Moses said, *You have set our iniquities before You, Our secret sins in the light of Your countenance.*
- vi. Numbers 32:23 finds the warning to Israel, *“Your sins will find you out”*. Spoken of the tribes that chose to remain east of the Jordan River when Israel inherited the land of Canaan.
- vii. Isaiah 29:14-15, *Therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work Among this people, A marvelous work and a wonder; For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, And the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden.” Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the Lord, And their works are in the dark; They say, “Who sees us?” and, “Who knows us?”* And the truth was, God knows and sees
- viii. In all these passages, we find it clearly borne out that God knows the hearts. We live in times when it is easier to secretly engage in sinful conduct. Often it is piped into our homes. God knows and sees! He knows your thoughts, motives, attitudes, and what you do, even when no one is around. He knows if you are being productive with your time, etc.

c. *Whether good or evil* –

- i. A final observation about judgment in this text, is that ALL will be judged. We have seen the “all” in previous verses.
- ii. Here note Revelation 20:11-12 – books were opened
- iii. John 5:28-29 – Jesus Himself taught a simultaneous judgment of both the good and evil.
- iv. Matthew 25:31 – Jesus portrayed a separation of the sheep and goats.
- v. Many would have you believe that God will overlook our wickedness. No! It may be covered because we take care of it by obeying the gospel (Acts 22:16) OR repentance and prayer when we sin as God’s people (1 John 1:7-9). But we can NEVER presume that we are safe from God’s wrath if we persist in living ungodly lives! EVERYTHING we do is going to face His scrutiny. How will we respond?

III. Concluding thoughts

- a. IT is my hope that we have seen the relevance of this book, even today some 3000 years later. Much has changed, but man and his ways has not.
- b. In conclusion by noting some observations made in a commentary summarizing the book of Ecclesiastes. It is entitled, "Our responsibilities in Life: A study of Ecclesiastes" Consider the responsibilities God has assigned to man throughout this book:¹
 - i. To try and find joy in life – we are not expected to live miserably (Eccl. 2:24ff)
 - ii. Seek to be wise – Eccl. 2:26, "God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy...
 - iii. Worship God acceptably – Eccl. 5:1-2 – walk prudently when you go to the house of God...
 - iv. Remember God your Creator and Judge – Eccl. 11:9, 12:1, etc.
 - v. Develop a good work ethic – Eccl. 9:10 – whatever our hands find to do.
 - vi. Fear God – our text
 - vii. Recognize your personal limitations – Eccl. 11:2, 5-6 – you cannot control certain things in life.

And thus we bring our study of Ecclesiastes to its conclusion. As Solomon concluded this pursuit, I conclude by asking, Do you fear God and keep His commandments? Think about it!

¹ Retrillo, Denny PhD, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon, **Truth For Today Commentaries**. Resource Publications, Searcy, AR, © 2016. Pp. 227-228