

THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER

Introduction:

1. The book of Ecclesiastes records the “wisdom” of Solomon as he sought for meaning and purpose in life without the wisdom of God.
2. It was the great experiment of his life – and serves as a powerful warning to all mankind.
3. Without God, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.
4. Thus, Solomon came to a proper conclusion that is worthy of study by all.

- I. The Conclusion Reached by Man’s Wisdom (Ecclesiastes 12:8)
 - A. Coming to the end of Solomon’s great experiment, one finds the same words with which he began – “‘Vanity of vanities,’ saith the preacher; ‘all is vanity.’”
 - B. However, these words are stated in a different context and present a vastly different message.
 - C. The end of Solomon’s experiment comes in 11:8.
 1. Here he declared the repeated yet empty conclusion of human wisdom – that man should rejoice in his life, for it is brief and dark.
 2. He summed up by saying, “All that cometh is vanity.”
 - D. A change takes place in 11:9.
 1. Again, Solomon instructed men to rejoice in their lives.
 2. However, he stated that one’s rejoicing is to be done in relation to and in respect of the judgment of God.
 3. Life is to be lived and enjoyed, but not as the end of man’s existence.
 4. All must remember that there is life beyond the grave!
 5. All must remember that there is a God to whom one must give account.
 - E. Thus, the statement of 12:8 emphasizes the vanity of this life in relation to eternity (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:18; Hebrews 12:2).
- II. The Benefit of Solomon’s Experiment (Ecclesiastes 12:9-12)
 - A. Solomon was able to use the wisdom given him by God to teach knowledge to the people.
 1. His experiment and his experiences led him down many paths that were dead ends.
 2. Yet, he was able to write of these to teach and to warn others.
 - B. In fact, he searched throughout the wisdom of man to try and find words of truth.
 - C. He learned that this kind of searching produces weariness of the flesh and many writings of men (cf. Proverbs 14:12; Jeremiah 10:23).
 - D. In fact, man needs only one book – the Word of God.
 - E. The truth that Solomon recorded by inspiration revealed true wisdom which would admonish those who would receive it.
 1. Words of wisdom are like goads – they hurt if you kick against them (cf. Acts 9:5; 26:14).
 2. Yet, they are also like well fastened nails – true, sturdy, and reliable.
 3. Though they serve both purposes, they come from one Shepherd.

Ecclesiastes 12

- III. The Conclusion Reached by God's Wisdom (Ecclesiastes 12:12-13)
 - A. Now the time has come to hear the conclusion of Solomon's experiment.
 - B. Fear God.
 - 1. This is a reverence for God that motivates one to hear and accept His wisdom (Proverbs 1:7).
 - 2. Genesis 22:12; Exodus 1:17; Acts 4:19-20
 - C. Keep His Commandments.
 - D. This is the whole of man.
 - E. Every work will be judged.