

Study of Ecclesiastes: Chapter 12

Questions for Discussion

1. What does it mean to “Remember Your Creator?” How does this affect our attitudes and actions? Why is it important for us to do this while we are young?
(vv. 1; Ps 100:3; Matt 22:34-40)
2. What is depicted in verses two through seven? Explain the symbolism. What does the Koheleth say about these things in verse eight? (vv. 2-8; Gen 2:7; 3:19; Ps. 104:29-30)
3. What does the Koheleth say about himself? (vv. 9-10; 1:16; 2:9; I Kings 3:9-12; 4:29-34)
4. What are goads? Why are the words of wise men compared to goads? Who is the ultimate source of all wisdom? What does this say about the origin of this book?
(vv. 11; Heb 4:11-13)
5. What does the Koheleth tell the pupil to keep in mind (warning)? (vv. 12; Rev 22:18-19)
6. What does the Koheleth offer as the conclusion to his search for meaning? What do these two things mean, and why are they vital for overcoming the vanity of life “under the sun?” (vv. 13; 5:7; 7:18; Exo 20:3-11; Deu 6:5; 10:12-13; 11:1; John 14:15, 21, 23-24)
7. Why is this his conclusion? How should this conclusion influence our overall interpretation of this book? (vv. 14; Mat 25:31-46)

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Notes & Answers

- 1. What does it mean to “Remember Your Creator?” How does this affect our attitudes and actions? Why is it important for us to do this while we are young? (v. 1; Ps 100:3; Matt 22:34-40)**

Ecclesiastes 12:1 (ESV)

¹ Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, “I have no pleasure in them”;

Psalms 100:3 (ESV)

³ Know that the LORD, he is God!

It is he who made us, and we are his;

we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Matthew 22:34–40 (ESV)

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ And he said to him, “**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.** ³⁸ **This is the great and first commandment.** ³⁹ **And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.** ⁴⁰ **On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”**

- 2. What is depicted in verses two through seven? Explain the symbolism. What does the Koheleth say about these things in verse eight? (vv. 2-8; Gen 2:7; 3:19; Ps. 104:29-30)**

Ecclesiastes 12:2–8 (ESV)

² before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain, ³ in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look through the windows are dimmed, ⁴ and the doors on the street are shut—when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low— ⁵ they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along, and desire fails, because man is going to his eternal home, and

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the mourners go about the streets— ⁶ before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, ⁷ and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. ⁸ Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity.

Genesis 2:7 (ESV)

⁷ then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

Genesis 3:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.”

Psalms 104:29–30 (ESV)

²⁹ When you hide your face, they are dismayed;
when you take away their breath, they die
and return to their dust.
³⁰ When you send forth your Spirit, they are created,
and you renew the face of the ground.

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3. What does the Koheleth say about himself? (vv. 9-10; 1:16; 2:9; I Kings 3:9-12; 4:29-34)

Ecclesiastes 12:9–10 (ESV)

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.

Ecclesiastes 1:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ I said in my heart, “I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.”

Ecclesiastes 2:9 (ESV)

⁹ So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me.

1 Kings 3:9–12 (ESV)

⁹ Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?”

¹⁰ It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹ And God said to him, “Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, ¹² behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you.

1 Kings 4:29–34 (ESV)

²⁹ And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, ³⁰ so that Solomon’s wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. ³¹ For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol, and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. ³² He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. ³³ He

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spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall. He spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish. ³⁴ And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.

- 4. What are goads? Why are the words of wise men compared to goads? Who is the ultimate source of all wisdom? What does this say about the origin of this book? (v. 11; Heb 4:11-13)**

Ecclesiastes 12:11 (ESV)

¹¹ The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd.

Hebrews 4:11–13 (ESV)

¹¹ Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. ¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

- 5. What does the Koheleth tell the pupil to keep in mind (warning)? (v. 12; Rev 22:18-19)**

Ecclesiastes 12:12 (ESV)

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.

Revelation 22:18–19 (ESV)

¹⁸ I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

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6. What does the Koheleth offer as the conclusion to his search for meaning? What do these two things mean, and why are they vital for overcoming the vanity of life “under the sun?” (v. 13; 5:7; 7:18; Exo 20:3-11; Deu 6:5; 10:12-13; 11:1; John 14:15, 21, 23-24)

Ecclesiastes 12:13 (ESV)

¹³ The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

Ecclesiastes 5:7 (ESV)

⁷ For when dreams increase and words grow many, there is vanity; but God is the one you must fear.

Ecclesiastes 7:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ It is good that you should take hold of this, and from that withhold not your hand, for the one who fears God shall come out from both of them.

Deuteronomy – 4 speeches by Moses prior to the children of Israel entering the land of Canaan (1st speech talked about the failures of the first generation)

Chapter 4 – Reminds them of the Statutes, Rules, Commandments (three ways of saying the same thing)

Chapter 5 – Repeats the 10 Commandments for the current generation

Chapter 6 – Love God with ALL your heart, ALL your soul, All your Might

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (ESV)

⁴ "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ⁵ **You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.** ⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

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Chapter 10 – Loving God = doing what God commanded

Deuteronomy 10:12-16 (ESV)

¹² "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, **to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul,** ¹³ **and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good?** ¹⁴ Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. ¹⁵ Yet the Lord set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day. ¹⁶ Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.

Chapter 11 – Loving God = doing what God commanded

Deuteronomy 11:1 (ESV)

¹ "You shall therefore love the Lord your God and keep his charge, his statutes, his rules, and his commandments always.

Jesus also equated the keeping of commandments to loving God

John 14:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

John 14:21 (ESV)

²¹ "Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."

John 14:23-24 (ESV)

²³ Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴ Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.

Someone says "I just want to Love God, I don't want all that Bible stuff." This is not loving God. We can divorce Loving God from doing.

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7. Why is this his conclusion? How should this conclusion influence our overall interpretation of this book? (v. 14; Mat 25:31-46)

Ecclesiastes 12:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

Matthew 25:31–46 (ESV)

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”