The Conclusion of The Matter
Ecclesiastes 12:9-14 (NKJV)

Today we come to our final message in this wonderful series from the Book of Ecclesiastes. Please open your Bibles to Ecclesiastes 12.

Throughout this whole book, Solomon has been on a journey, a journey to “Find Meaning In This Meaningless World.”

He searched for meaning in WORK, and didn’t find it.

He searched for meaning in POWER, and didn’t find it.

He searched for meaning in MONEY, and didn’t find it.

He searched for meaning in EDUCATION, and didn’t find it.

He searched for meaning in WINE, and WOMEN, and PLEASURE, and MATERIAL THINGS, and didn’t find it.

VANITY! says Solomon! All of this is VANITY! It is MEANINGLESS! Its nothing more than “chasing after the wind.”

And so now as Solomon draws near to the end of his life-long journey, what conclusion does he reach about the meaning of life here on earth “under the sun?”

Let’s look at today’s text and find out. Please follow along with me in your Bibles as we read Ecclesiastes chapter twelve, verses 9-14.
ECCLESIASTES 12:9-14 (NKJV)

9 And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs.

10 The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and what was written was upright—words of truth.

11 The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd.

12 And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh.

13 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.

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INTRODUCTION
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ILLUSTRATION: In his book, Searching For Heaven on Earth, Dr. David Jeremiah gives this humorous introduction to this final paragraph of Ecclesiastes. He writes......

“So you finish the course. What happens? Final exam!

There’s King Solomon at the front of the classroom, passing everyone a copy of the exam. “Let’s test your wisdom,” he intones. Use a number two pencil, and keep your eyes on your own scroll.
This test is going to cover all twelve chapters of Ecclesiastes. You’ll be asked about life, death, pleasure, suffering, food, work, money, poverty, wisdom, foolishness—and pretty much everything under the sun.

“That’s a lot of material!” you whisper in a panic to the fellow in the next seat. “What if I don’t have a clue?” “Whenever you don’t know one, the probable answer is “vanity,” your friend whispers back.

“Works every time! When I’m stumped I just write: “Life is filled with such questions that can't be answered. This too is vanity.” The Teacher likes that one.

You mutter, “I hope he was serious when he said that true wisdom is realizing how much we DON’T know. If he sticks to that one, I'll get an A.”

(Searching For Heaven on Earth by Dr. David Jeremiah, p.301, Integrity Publishers, Nashville, TN, Copyright 2004)

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If you remember in the very first message in this series I told you everyone in the world falls into one of two categories. There are those who are WISE and there are those who are FOOLS.

In that message, I told you wisdom doesn't have anything to do with one's education or one's I.Q. but rather, one's response to GOD.

In these closing verses of Ecclesiastes, Solomon reveals three ways we can gain godly wisdom.
First of all......

I. **We Gain Godly Wisdom Through INSTRUCTION.** (v.9)

9 And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs.

1. None of us are born with wisdom. They don't teach **WISDOM 101** in school. You could earn college degrees from Harvard and Yale and Princeton and come away from those schools with a great education, and still not have wisdom. In fact, most people will leave this world the same way they came in, and that is not have the slightest clue as to the true meaning of life.

2. It is impossible to truly gain wisdom without being instructed in the word of GOD.

3. Remember Solomon got his wisdom directly from GOD. God promised Solomon He would give him whatever he asked for, and Solomon asked for WISDOM.

Over the course of his lifetime as he sought for the meaning of life “under the sun” Solomon picked up many wise, proverbial sayings. And in the twilight years of his life, **I Kings 4:32** tells us Solomon wrote down three thousand proverbs that we now find recorded in the Old Testament.
4. And as his years began to fade away, verse 9 tells us Solomon dedicated his remaining days to teaching the Jewish people all the wisdom he had learned.

5. I want you to listen to how Solomon introduces these proverbs. This is from Proverbs 1:2-6 in the New Living Translation.

PROVERBS 1:2-6 (New Living Translation)
2 Their purpose is to teach people wisdom and discipline, to help them understand the insights of the wise.  
3 Their purpose is to teach people to live disciplined and successful lives, to help them do what is right, just, and fair.  
4 These proverbs will give insight to the simple, knowledge and discernment to the young.  
5 Let the wise listen to these proverbs and become even wiser. Let those with understanding receive guidance  
6 by exploring the meaning in these proverbs and parables, the words of the wise and their riddles.

6. Boy, if we can glean all those wonderful benefits from reading and studying and meditating on those proverbs, it seems to me that all of us would be very wise to do it!

7. I want to encourage you to read from the Book of Proverbs each day. The Book is neatly laid out in thirty one chapters, so reading a chapter a day you can read through the whole book in a month; and there's one extra chapter for months with 31 days.
But not only do we gain godly wisdom through INSTRUCTION......

Secondly......

II. We Gain Godly Wisdom Through INSIGHT (v.10-12)

10 The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and what was written was upright—words of truth.

11 The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd.

12 And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh.

1. Here at the conclusion of this book, Solomon is telling us the insight and forethought that went into his writing of Ecclesiastes.

2. He didn't just write down the very first thing that came to his mind. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, he deeply reflected on the words he would say, realizing God would use His words to give insight to the generations that would come after Solomon.

3. When Solomon says “The Preacher sought to find acceptable words” he is describing the style and literary beauty of this wonderful book.
In this book we find such poetic phrases as...

- “To everything there is a season.”
- “God has placed eternity in the hearts of men.”
- “Cast your bread upon the waters.”
- And “Remember your Creator in the days of your youth.”

Some of the greatest writers in history have noted the beauty and style of Ecclesiastes as one of the greatest pieces of literature ever written.

4. But Solomon didn’t just write Ecclesiastes for our reading pleasure, he wrote it to reveal the truth. He says in verse 9, “What was written was upright—words of truth.”

5. After going through this study of Ecclesiastes, I think all of us would agree, Solomon tells us the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in this book. He didn’t make this stuff up! He lived it! He experienced it! And he simply tells it like it is!

He tells us the truth about GOD. He tells us the truth about ALL THE WORK WE DO on earth. He tells us the painful truth about GROWING OLD and DYING. He tells us the truth about MONEY, and MATERIAL THINGS, and WORLDLY PLEASURES.
7. Notice the imagery Solomon uses in **verse 11**. He compares his writing of Ecclesiastes to a shepherd using a goad or a stick with nails in it to prod his sheep along. The shepherd “pricks” or “stings” the sheep for just a moment to get it off the wrong path and steer it towards the right path.

8. That is exactly what Solomon does in Ecclesiastes. This Book is just like a shepherd's goad or prod with pointed nails sticking out of it.

And time after time throughout this book Solomon “pricks” us and “prods” us with the truth. He tells us........

   **Chasing after MONEY** is meaningless........**Chasing after MATERIAL THINGS** is meaningless........**Chasing after WORLDLY PLEASURES** is meaningless........**DON'T WASTE YOUR LIFE GOING DOWN THESE PATHS!**

   If you and I will heed Solomon's **valuable insights** in this Book, we will **gain invaluable wisdom** on how to live our lives here on earth.

**We Gain Godly Wisdom Through **INSTRUCTION**

**We Gain Godly Wisdom Through INSIGHT**
III. We Gain Godly Wisdom Through **INSPIRATION** (vs. 13,14)

13 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.

1. Throughout this Book we have traveled with Solomon on his journey to “Find meaning in this meaningless world.”
   And now he has reached his **final destination**.

2. When Solomon says, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter” he is saying, “Here is what I've discovered.... Here is what life on earth is really all about.

   Life isn't about **making as much money** as you can or **accumulating as many material things** as you can......or **enjoying as many of life's pleasures** as you can.

   Life isn't about **stopping global warming or saving the planet**. Life isn't about **going green......or saving the rain forest or the humped back whale**.
Life is about GOD! It is about FEARING God, and OBEYING God, and HONORING God, and WORSHIPING God, and PLEASING God, and LIVING for God here on earth, so we can one day live with God forever in heaven.

And if you miss that, you miss the whole meaning of life!

3. There is something else Solomon has concluded, and that is everything ISN'T meaningless! He says in verse 14, “For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.”

Throughout the whole Book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon has been telling us “all is vanity” and “everything is meaningless.” In fact, Solomon uses those terms “vanity” and “meaningless” 38 times in the twelve chapters of this book.

But now, Solomon is acknowledging when this life is over we will be judged by GOD, which means everything DOES matter!

It will matter how we used our time, whether we wasted it on foolish pleasures or wisely worked hard for the LORD.
It will matter what we did with our money, whether we foolishly spent it on ourselves, or invested it in God's eternal kingdom.

It will matter what we did with these physical bodies, whether we foolishly destroyed our bodies with wild, sinful living, or took care of our bodies as the temple of God.

EVERYTHING WILL MATTER...Every deed, good or bad....big or small....will matter when we stand before the LORD to give an account for our life.

4. And the ONE thing that will matter most is WHAT YOU DID WITH JESUS CHRIST.  (P A U S E )

One day every knee is going to bow, and every tongue is going to confess that Jesus is Christ to the glory of God.

The question is, will you meet JESUS as your Lord and Savior or will you meet JESUS as your righteous Judge?

Will you meet JESUS in TRIUMPH? Or will you meet JESUS in TERROR?
Will you hear JESUS say, “Well done good and faithful servant” or will you hear Him say, “Depart from me you worker of iniquity, for I never knew you?

5. You see, the day that you yield to the Holy Spirit's inspiration and conviction and surrender your life to Jesus Christ, you become one of the wisest people on earth.

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CONCLUSION

SMITH MAGAZINE, an on-line community that celebrates the joy of storytelling invited readers to submit six-word memoirs that describes their lives. Over 800,000 people responded with brief biographies. One man describes his life this way: “Sweet wife, good sons, I'm rich.” Another wrote, “Sixty. Still haven't forgiven my parents.” One woman wrote: “He says nagging. I say reminding.”

How would Solomon have described his life in six words? Perhaps when he was a young man he might have written: “God has given me great wisdom.” But in his later years, he might have written: “Should have practiced what I preached.” But in the end, Solomon summarized life with these six, powerful words: FEAR GOD AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS.

When all is said and done, life comes down to this one thing: WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH JESUS? Will you be a fool and reject His free gift of eternal life or will you make the wisest decision you'll ever make and accept Him as your Lord and Savior? FEAR GOD AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS! That is the meaning of life in this meaningless world!