

# What am I Here For?

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*Ecclesiastes 12:13-14*

## INTRODUCTION

- A. John's family stands beside his casket and gaze down at his lifeless body.
  - 1. They remember how he yearned as a teenager to make a million dollars before he was thirty, and they remember how he did it before he was twenty-five.
  - 2. They remember how when he was thirty-five he bought his own publishing company.
    - a. They remember how he turned that publishing company into a multi-billion dollar success story overnight.
    - b. They remember all that that success bought them.
      - 1) They remember the large — no, the enormous — house they were able to build when the publishing company took off.
      - 2) They remember the million dollar Christmases, the new cars for straight A's, and all the luxurious vacations they took.
  - 3. John lived the good life until a drunk driver took him from this world.
    - a. John never darkened the door of a church, except the day that his daughter married and today, the day his family will bury him.
    - b. John is in Torment.
      - 1) He had all that this life had to offer and then some, but that is over and gone.
        - a) He has no hope, and throughout all eternity, he shall be tormented day and night.
        - b) His heirs will take his fortune and do with it as they see fit, the new CEO of the publishing company will run the business the way she sees fit, and John will soon be forgotten.
      - 2) The words of Jesus ring true: "What profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Mt. 16:26).
- B. There is going to come a day when each one of us will leave this world.
  - 1. We're going to leave behind everything for which we have labored and worked — the house, the cars, the bank accounts, the mutual funds, and everything else.
  - 2. Since everything we see is temporary, including ourselves, why are we even on this earth? What's the point of getting up of a morning if we're just going to die and leave everything anyway?
- C. That question plagued Solomon.
  - 1. In the Book of Ecclesiastes, he attempts to give some sort of answer to that question. He describes in detail his attempts to find meaning in this life.
  - 2. We want to examine those attempts this morning and break them into two parts: The Meaninglessness of Life and the Meaningfulness of Life.

## THE MEANINGLESSNESS OF LIFE

- A. Solomon begins the book by exclaiming the meaninglessness of life: "Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity" (1 :2).
  - 1. The Hebrew term for "vanity" has the basic meaning of "wind" or "breath." The term is used of things that are fleeting, that will not endure.
    - a. The word was used as a designation of false gods — In speaking of Omri, the author of Kings wrote, "He walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in the sins which he made Israel to sin, provoking the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger by their idols" (1 Ki. 16:26).
    - b. The term was also used to express the exasperation of individuals: "I loathe my life; I would not live for ever. Let me alone, for my days are a breath" (Job 7:16).
  - 2. In light of the term's usage, we should probably understand "vanity" in this passage as meaning that which is fleeting, that which comes to nothing.
    - a. Solomon says, in essence, "Everything in this world just passes away; there is nothing that remains. There's nothing that's going to last. Life is useless."
    - b. When Severus, Emperor of Rome, was dying, he said, "I have been everything; and everything is

nothing.”

B. Solomon illustrates this truth throughout Ecclesiastes.

1. Solomon asks, “What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?” (1:3).
  - a. Solomon says, “Look, you don’t really get anything from all the work you do; you die and you leave it all.”
  - b. We know how uncertain and temporary riches can be.
    - 1) “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal” (Mt. 7:19).
    - 2) “We brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world” (1 Tim. 6:7).
  - c. When we die, what have we gained for all our work?
    - 1) We leave our worldly possessions to family, and they might feud over them. Is it worth getting caught up in those things?
    - 2) Illustration about the lady gathering jewels at Pompeii, Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations, #10656.
    - 3) Solomon did not care for that thought at all (2:18-23).
2. Solomon found that pleasure is meaningless (2:1-11).
  - a. You know why Solomon found pleasure to be vanity.
    - 1) Moses chose “rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin” (Heb. 11:25).
      - a) Granted, there are many pleasures in this life that are not at all sinful.
      - b) Yet, even those non-sinful pleasures are fleeting, even they will not endure.
    - 2) “She who is self-indulgent [leaves for pleasure] is dead even while she lives” (1 Tim. 5:6)—thus, pleasure takes us far from God.
    - 3) Illustration about the tribe in Africa, Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations, #9371.
  - b. Pleasure is vanity; pleasure comes to nothing.
3. Solomon found life to be meaningless because all people die.
  - a. 2:14-17.
  - b. We are all going to die.
    - 1) One of the favorite euphemisms for death in the Old Testament is to “go the way of all the earth.”
      - a) David said to Solomon, “I am about to go the way of all the earth” (1 Ki. 2:2).
      - b) Since everyone in this world days, the biblical writers could refer to death as “the way of all the earth.”
    - 2) “It is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment” (Heb. 9:27).
  - c. Since we’re all going to die, why bother with life?

C. This morning’s message, I must admit, has been quite disheartening.

1. Life is, in many respects, meaningless — why bother working, amassing wealth, enjoying ourselves since we’re all going to die and leave everything?
2. Solomon does not give us a totally bleak picture of our existence; he closes Ecclesiastes on a high note.

## **THE MEANINGFULNESS OF LIFE, 12:13-14**

- A. “The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man,” v. 13.
1. Solomon says, “Here’s my conclusion about the meaning of life.”
    - a. Solomon was an extremely wise man, and he had searched all over for life’s meaning as had the philosophers of his day and even our own day.
    - b. Solomon had searched and searched and searched: “I the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I applied my mind to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven” (1:12-13).
  2. Solomon’s conclusion was this: “Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.”
    - a. We must fear God.
      - 1) The term “fear” means to revere, to honor.
        - a) “Everyone of you shall revere his mother and his father” (Lev. 19:3).
        - b) “Praise the LORD. Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his

