

# Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/eccl/eccl-12/ecclesiastes-1213-14/>

*Solomon ends with an admonition to trust and obey God because this is what makes the most sense for our lives. God will judge all things, both hidden and visible, and He will decide whether it is good or evil, not us.*

*The conclusion when all has been heard is quite simple. Fear God and keep His commandments.* Solomon applied his substantial resources to a full exploration of human thought and experience. He sought to discover every possible avenue for success and happiness. He sought accomplishment, pleasure, power, and prestige. Since he had such great wisdom and resources, he knew he could do this experiment without losing his bearings. After all was said and done, the conclusion of that pursuit was that all is vanity, “hebel.” A vaporous mystery.

He did not find fulfillment in any of his endeavors. But he did come to a *conclusion* after *all was heard*. That *conclusion* was to *fear God and keep His commandments*. He has come full circle. After attempting to discover everything on his own, Solomon discovered the foundation for meaning lies in faith and obedience.

Humans obey what we *fear*. The key is to prioritize our fears. If we *fear* rejection above all other fears then, we will serve the opinion of others. If we *fear* poverty over the fear of all others, then we will serve our earning potential and savings account. It is good to work, and to not mistreat other people. But the major question is, “What do we *fear* most of all?”

Solomon’s answer is clear, to *fear God*. And in particular, God’s *judgment*. For *God will bring every act to judgment*. Every single *act* we do in life will fall under God’s scrutiny. And He will decide *whether* our deeds are *good or evil*. We will not decide. Other humans will not decide. God will decide. He will decide for *every act*. That means every single thing we do.

And *God* will not only bring *judgment* on *every act* that is visible, but also *everything which is hidden*. This concept is repeated in Hebrews, which states:

“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”  
([Hebrews 4:12-13](#))

This is the sixth verse in Ecclesiastes that commends the *fear of God* ([Ecclesiastes 3:14](#); [Ecclesiastes 5:7](#); [Ecclesiastes 7:18](#); [Ecclesiastes 8:12-13](#); [Ecclesiastes 12:13](#)).

The emphasis to *fear God* throughout the book shows that the life of faith is at the heart of Solomon’s presentation. The meaning of life is discovered in the *fear of God* and in obeying what He says. Solomon peppers this throughout the book and brings it home here at the *conclusion*.

*And keep His commandments* is not separate from *fear God*. The two occur in conjunction with one another. We keep His *commandments* because we believe God will *bring every act to judgment*. We know if we do as He commands, we are doing what is *good*. And if we break His *commandments*, we will be doing *evil*.

This is the opportunity of *every person*. All of Ecclesiastes’ themes—perspective, wisdom, gratitude, purpose, faith, and *judgment*—point to the opportunity we have to acknowledge God. On our own, we cannot control outcomes or make sense of all that occurs. But we can trust God and walk in obedience to Him, keeping *His commandments*. When we do this by faith, we find purpose, wisdom, and fulfillment.

God will bring *every act to judgment*. We don’t understand how the world works, but God does. He is the Judge and the Jury. He is the only one who can assess reality. We should *fear Him* and *follow His commands*, because He will decide whether what we do is *good* or *evil*.

This applies even to our *hidden* things. It does no good to try to ignore or hide parts of ourselves that might not look good in front of others. God will judge it all. Truth, rather than appearance, is God’s order. Even if the full truth and the full manifestation of truth is a vapor (“hebel”) for us.

God, unbound by time and circumstance, is able to address all matters appropriately.

The final words of Ecclesiastes emphasize that God is the arbiter of goodness. Only He knows how it all works and why. If we hold onto our compulsion to understand and kick and scream at our lack of comprehension, we will be miserable and angry. Demanding that we should be God brings frustration; it is vanity (“hebel”). But if we submit to God’s authority and worship Him as King, the mysterious vapors of life are a beautiful opportunity to live by faith and praise God (gratitude).

Life will be vaporous, but through faith and obedience, it is full of purpose. The meaning amongst the mystery/vapor is this: worship God by doing what He says. If we *fear God and keep His commandments* there is joy amongst the sorrow, peace amongst the confusion, and purpose in the mystery.

**Biblical Text:**

**<sup>13</sup> The conclusion, when all has been heard, *is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person.* <sup>14</sup> For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.**