

TO LIVE IS CHRIST**Conclusion of the Matter****Ecclesiastes 11:1—12:14**

“Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” Ecclesiastes 12:13

Day 1: Read Ecclesiastes 11:1–6.

1. Verses 1–6 pile up a variety of images to put over a single message. What is it?
2. What do you think is meant by the metaphor in verse 1? Even if the exact image is a bit obscure (bread on water?), what kinds of personal action seem to be endorsed here?
3. Read verse 2 in the light of Luke 16:9. How might Jesus’ counsel in Luke shed light on the enigmatic Ecclesiastes verse?

Day 2: Read Ecclesiastes 11:1–6.

4. What two pictures in verse 3 (clouds raining and trees falling) have in common? Can human beings control “random” acts of nature?
5. Restate verse 4 in your own words. Since there are not always perfect conditions for launching an enterprise, what does today’s passage recommend that we do?
6. Verse 5 reinforces the idea that there is a limit to human understanding and control of the universe. What directive for action does the Teacher derive from this observation? (vs. 6)

Day 3: Read Ecclesiastes 11:1–6.

7. Apply the Teacher’s counsel on this matter to your own life.
 - a. Does the uncertainty about the outcome of human endeavors lead you to paralysis?
 - b. What are some areas in your life where you should take more risks and more decisive action?
 - c. Why is it “safe” for us children of God to take certain “risks”? (Heb. 13:5b-6)

Day 4: Read Ecclesiastes 11:7—12:8.

8. The Teacher now turns to youth, and commends the enjoyment of it—but with what cautions?

9. Why is it important to “remember your Creator” (12:1) and his final judgment on your actions (11:9) while you are young? Would you think this consciousness of God’s oversight dampens youthful enjoyment or has a positive effect?

10. Ecclesiastes 12:1 says that days are coming for all of us when we will say, “I find no pleasure in them.” Discuss how the various lyrical images in verses 2–7 illustrate this diminishing of pleasure.

Day 5: Read Ecclesiastes 12:9–14.

11. In the original Hebrew, verse 13 is clipped and emphatic (“All is heard. End of the matter.”), the better to highlight the point. What are the twin duties of man, according to 13b?

12. The last verse of the book of Ecclesiastes—regarding God’s personal surveillance and judgment of every single human deed—may at first not seem comforting. But how does it in fact overturn the despair of the theme of “meaninglessness” of life that ran through the Teacher’s words?

13. Ecclesiastes belongs, in the end, to the Old Testament, a time of shadow, a time before Christ. How does the word we have today from God surpass that of Ecclesiastes? (Discuss Heb. 1:1–3.)

14. Cite one helpful thought you will take away from our study of Ecclesiastes, or one way that it has benefited you personally.