

EPILOGUE

ECCLESIASTES 12:9-14

⁹By way of a postscript. Being an exponent of wisdom, Qohelet taught the people knowledge. He listened and pondered. He also edited many proverbs. ¹⁰Qohelet sought to find attractive words, and wrote words of truth correctly.

¹¹The sayings of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings that are applied by a herder.

¹²Of anything beyond these, my child, beware. There is no end to the excessive amount of writing that's around, and much talking wearies the body.

¹³The end of the matter; all has been heard.

Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone.

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

The author of this epilogue speaks of Qohelet's work, and commends the scroll to his readers as being attractive and reliable (verses 9-10).

In verse 11 he goes on to speak of wisdom teachers in general. Their teaching is meant to goad us into living good lives. The image is of spikes or nails attached to the end of sticks and used to prod animals. That is how the herder (Qohelet in this context) uses the sayings of the wise.

In verse 12 the author advises against adding to the text as presented. Such a warning was traditional (compare Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Sirach 42:21; and in the New Testament, Revelation 22:18-19). It is a way of guaranteeing the reliability of the text as presented in the scroll.

Verse 13 may have been the end of the text, with the rest added by a later editor.

Qohelet does speak of the fear of God (see 3:14; 5:6; 8:12-13). However nowhere does she speak of obeying God's commandments. This does not contradict anything in the text of Ecclesiastes, but it does point to this being something tacked on by a later scribe.

Qohelet knows that God is the judge (3:17; 11:9), but leaves the judgment in the area of mystery: it is beyond our comprehension. This makes verse 13 also appear to be a later editor's attempt at 'clarification'.