

06/11/13 - The Wisdom of Fearing God

RG AUDIO 061113

Ecclesiastes 12:1-14

The most distinctive emphasis of Israel's sages was the advice: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom."*

Most of Ecclesiastes is marked by gloomy cynicism. From bitter experience the Teacher had learned that everything in life was "meaningless." Only by remembering our Creator all our lives?from youth into old age?do we find life's meaning.

Thus, the teacher's parting advice is: "Fear God and obey his commandments, for this is what it means to be human" (12:13, author's translation). The word "duty" has no basis in either the original Hebrew or the Greek translation of Ecclesiastes 12:13. The simple point is that no one can live a fully human life who does not respect and obey God.

Christians do not live in terror of God. But we have learned that God cannot to be taken lightly. Our creator deserves our healthy respect. His commandments are not just good advice. To defy them is as foolish as trying to defy gravity.

*Ps. 111:10; Prov. 9:10; compare Job 28:28; Pss. 19:9; 34:11; Prov. 1:7; 2:5; 10:27; 14:27; 15:16; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17

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