

Ecclesiastes 12:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

Analysis

The Preacher's final statement grounds the previous verse's imperatives in eschatological reality: 'God shall bring every work into judgment' (Hebrew 'mishpat,' judgment/justice). The comprehensiveness is staggering—'every work... every secret thing... whether good or evil.' Nothing escapes divine scrutiny; all hidden deeds, thoughts, and motives will face evaluation. This isn't merely future speculation but present motivation: awareness of coming judgment should shape current behavior and priorities. The phrase 'secret thing' (Hebrew 'ne'elam,' hidden/concealed) indicates that human courts, which judge externals, are incomplete—only God's judgment penetrates to hidden realities. This sobering conclusion prevents the book's 'eat, drink, and be merry' passages from devolving into hedonism; enjoyment of God's gifts occurs within the framework of moral accountability.

Historical Context

The doctrine of final judgment permeates Scripture but evolved in clarity through progressive revelation. Old Testament saints had limited understanding of afterlife judgment (Sheol was shadowy), but texts like Daniel 12:2-3 anticipated resurrection and judgment. Ecclesiastes bridges practical wisdom literature and apocalyptic eschatology. Jesus taught extensively about final judgment (Matthew 25:31-46), emphasizing that secret acts and inner motives matter eternally. Paul declared that 'we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ' (2 Corinthians 5:10), echoing Ecclesiastes. The Reformation emphasized that

believers face judgment for rewards, not salvation (justified by faith alone), yet judgment remains comprehensive and real.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 – Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 – God's love and salvation

Romans 1:17 – The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 – Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does believing that all your secret thoughts, motives, and actions will be brought into judgment affect your daily choices?
2. Does the doctrine of final judgment produce paralyzing fear or motivating reverence in your life, and what might that indicate about your understanding of God's character and grace?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	אַתָּה	כָּל	מְעַשׂ	הַ	יְמִינָה	בְּאֶלְ�הִים	יְבָא	בְּמִשְׁפָּט	לְעַל
H3588	H853	H3605	every work		For God		shall bring	into judgment	H5921
		H4639		H430		H935		H4941	
כָּל	מְעַלְמָה	אָם	וְבָט	וְבָט	וְבָט	וְבָט	וְבָט	וְבָט	וְבָט
H3605	with every secret thing	H518	whether it be good		whether it be good		H518	or whether it be evil	H7451
	H5956			H2896					

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 5:10 (Judgment): For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Romans 2:16 (Judgment): In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

Matthew 12:36 (Judgment): But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

1 Corinthians 4:5 (Judgment): Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

Ecclesiastes 3:17 (Judgment): I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.

Ecclesiastes 11:9 (Judgment): Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

Matthew 10:26 (Parallel theme): Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.

John 5:29 (Evil): And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

Psalms 96:13 (Judgment): Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.