

## The Final Four

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

### I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. Last Saturday in Houston, Texas the NCAA basketball tournament came down to *The Final Four* in which four teams (Oklahoma, Villanova, North Carolina, and Syracuse) competed against each other to see who would advance to the championship game last Monday (won by Villanova).
2. As I was watching those games, I couldn't help but think that the phrase "*The Final Four*" would make a really good sermon title; it has somewhat of a dramatic ring to it...don't you agree?
3. **2** So what I'd like to do is to capitalize on that phrase (*The Final Four*) to make a few suggestions to us of some things that have a spiritual application.
  - A. As I see it, our existence boils down to four simple things.
  - B. So, for the next few minutes, let's talk about *The Final Four* things we will ever do.
  - C. As always, I will give you book, chapter, and verse for the things I will say.
  - D. Jot them down, take them home with you, and study for yourself whether these things are so.

### II. DISCUSSION:

#### **One of our "Final Fours" will be...**

##### I. **3** Our death:

- A. Bummer! But it is a fact whether we like it or not, none of us are going to make it out this alive!  
**Heb. 9:27:** "...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:"
  - (1) Have you ever walked through a graveyard and read the headstones?
  - (2) Did you ever wonder about the lives they might have lived?  
**Eccl. 9:5:** "For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten."
  - (3) Ditto for the old dairy farmsteads in Michigan.
  - (4) Someday that will be me...what "legacy" will I leave? How will I be remembered? Will I be remembered?
- B. Death doesn't respect wealth, fame, education, or social standing. It is the great equalizer.
- C. It is the common and sure fate of all men; that's why the preacher said:  
**Eccl. 7:2:** "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart."
- D. Failure to contemplate our own death, our own mortality is foolish: **Job 30:23:** "For I know that You will bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living."  
"And come he slow, or come he fast, it is but death who comes at last." Sir Walter Scott  
"Death is a friend of ours, and he that is not ready to entertain him is not at home." Sir Francis Bacon
- E. We have two choices concerning our death:
  - (1) Die in sin: **Jn. 8:24:** "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." (Rev. 20:6; participate in the "first resurrection"; "the second death has no power") ("Born once, die twice; born twice, die once.).
  - (2) Die in the Lord: **Rev. 14:13:** "Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, 'Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'"

- F. Even though death is inevitable, death is NOT the end! That is why it is so important for us to have the proper perspective:

**2 Cor. 4:16-18:** *“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

**2 Tim. 4:6-8:** *“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”*

### **Another of our “Final Fours” will be...**

#### **2. 4 Our resurrection:**

- A. When we die we have the assurance of being raised from the dead:

(1) Job hoped for the resurrection centuries ago: **Job 14:7-15a**

(2) Paul informs us about our resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:

**1 Cor. 15:51-53:** *“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed — 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”*

- B. Old Testament references:

**Isa. 25:8:** *“He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken.”*

**Dan. 12:2:** *“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.”*

- C. New Testament references:

**Jn. 5:28-29:** *“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29 and come forth — those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”*

**Acts 24:15:** *“I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.”*

- D. Pie in the sky? Our resurrection is guaranteed by the resurrection of our Lord:

**1 Pet. 1:3-4:** *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,”*

**1 Cor. 15:20-22:** *“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”*

- E. When? On the last hour of the last day! **Jn. 5:28-29; Jn. 11:24:** *“Martha said to Him, ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.’”*

(1) Well, that is so far in the future; it will never come!

(2) Not so! **Jas. 4:14:** “For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.”

(3) Its so easy to let time slip away! *Time* (by Pink Floyd): **5**

*Ticking away the moments that make up a  
dull day*

*Fritter and waste the hours in an offhand  
way.*

*Kicking around on a piece of ground in  
your home town*

*Waiting for someone or something to show  
you the way.*

**\*\*Tired of lying in the sunshine staying  
home to watch the rain.**

*You are young and life is long and there is  
time to kill today.*

*And then one day you find ten years have  
got behind you.*

*No one told you when to run, you missed  
the starting gun.*

**6***So you run and you run to catch up with  
the sun but it's sinking  
Racing around to come up behind you  
again.*

*The sun is the same in a relative way but  
you're older,  
Shorter of breath and one day closer to  
death.*

**\*\*Every year is getting shorter; never seem  
to find the time.**

*Plans that either come to naught or half a  
page of scribbled lines*

*Hanging on in quiet desperation is the  
English way*

*The time is gone, the song is over,  
Thought I'd something more to say.*

(4) We've got to be ready NOW! **1 Thess. 5:4-6:** “But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. **5** You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. **6** Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.”

**Another of our “Final Fours” will be...**

3. **7** Our judgment:

A. When Christ comes again it will signal the beginning of the Final Judgment.

**Psa. 9:7-8:** “But the LORD shall endure forever; He has prepared His throne for judgment. **8** He shall judge the world in righteousness, and He shall administer judgment for the peoples in uprightness.”

**Psa. 98:9:** “For He is coming to judge the earth. With righteousness He shall judge the world, and the peoples with equity.”

**2 Cor. 5:10-11a:** “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. **11** Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;”

B. Judgment is coming, everyone will be included, it will be just, it will be final – no appeals, no pardons, no parole: **Rev. 20:11-15**

(1) Use it as motivation for us to do good! (Rody: “judgment is coming!”)

(2) Young people: Don't try to put it out of your mind!

**Eccl. 11:9-10:** “Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; Walk in the ways of your heart, And in the sight of your eyes; But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment. **10** Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, And put away evil from your flesh, For childhood and youth are vanity.”

**2 Pet. 3:10-11:** “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. **11** Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,”

- C. Do you ever contemplate standing before God in judgment? As sure as the sun came up this morning and will go down tonight, we all will face the judgment...alone, completely alone!

**Rom. 14:10b-12:** "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. I I For it is written: 'As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God.'" 12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God."

**Eccl. 12:13-14:** "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. 14 For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil."

### The 'final' of our "Final Fours" will be...

#### 4. **8** Spending eternity somewhere:

- A. Only two options: Heaven or Hell! Matt. 25:41-46 (**Matt. 25:46:** "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.")
- (1) Portrait of hell: (**Lk. 16:23:** "...being in torments in Hades...") Mk. 9:44-48 ("Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched."); **Rev. 14:11a:** "And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night,"
- (2) Portrait of heaven: **Rev. 5:8-14; 21:1-5**
- B. Have you ever tried to wrap your mind around the concept of eternity?
- (1) I've always had difficulty with the phrase "spending eternity."
- (2) How can you "spend" something that has no end?
- (3) Spend: def. "to pay out, disburse, or expend; dispose of; to pass (time) in a particular manner, place...; to use up, consume, or exhaust" (Dictionary.com).
- (4) So, you can't "spend" eternity! It is just forever!
- C. Read song *Where Will You Spend Eternity*:

Where will you spend eternity?  
This question comes to you and me!  
Tell me, what shall your answer be?  
Where will you spend eternity?  
Eternity! eternity!  
Where will you spend eternity?  
Many are choosing Christ today,  
Turning from all their sins away;  
Heav'n shall their happy portion be;  
Where will you spend eternity?  
Eternity! eternity!  
Where will you spend eternity?

Leaving the straight and narrow way,  
Going the downward road today,  
Sad will their final ending be,  
Lost thro' a long eternity!  
Eternity! eternity!  
Lost thro' a long eternity!  
Repent, believe, this very hour,  
Trust in the Savior's grace and power,  
Then will your joyous answer be,  
Saved thro' a long eternity!  
Eternity! eternity!  
Saved thro' a long eternity!

### III. CONCLUSION: **7**

1. The Final Four comes around once every year (i.e., March Madness).
2. Our personal Final Four will only come once.
  - A. We can bury it into the back of our mind and pretend it will never come; but it will come!
  - B. We can try to dismiss it from our mind, but that will only provide us with temporary relief.
4. Why not face it and be ready for it?!

**2 Cor. 6:2:** "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

Adapted from an original sermon by Ryan Thomas.