

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 8TH, 2019 // BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

Ecclesiastes 12 speaks of the reality of aging and death, the necessity of trusting God's Word, and our responsibility in applying God's truth to our lives.

THE DUST RETURNS TO THE EARTH (ECCLESIASTES 12:1-8)

Solomon has now reached the end of his sermon on the greatest question of life- "is life worth living and if so, what's the point?"

- He's settled for us that "life under the sun" isn't worth living because nothing on earth can satisfy the human soul and death is an inevitable reality that erases all progress we might think we make.
- But with God, we can find meaning and satisfaction in life and we can enjoy His gifts.

Now as he concludes his sermon, he tells us to "remember also your Creator in the days of your youth" (vs. 1) before the aging process takes over.

- Calling us to remember our Creator isn't passive, it involves action- it involves trusting Him, obeying Him, and walking with Him.
- This pursuit of God is the most important quest you could ever devote your life to.

You can't afford to put off a real, committed relationship with God until you're older.

- Your greatest regrets in life will come from you not living life with God at the center.
- When God and His wisdom aren't guiding you and your choices- you'll make a lot of stupid, sinful, and painful decisions.
- Those choices will have repercussions for the 30 years of your life- or longer!

Now is the time to remember our Creator because the longer we live the less opportunity we have to do so.

- If we live long enough, the day is coming for all of us when our bodies begin to shut down and our minds begin to weaken.
- Verses 3-7 give us one of the most poetic descriptions of old age and death found anywhere in literature.

"Keepers of the house..."-- Trembling arms & hands. **"Strong men are bent..."**--Legs, knees, and shoulders weaken and you walk bent over. **"Grinders cease..."** --Loss of teeth. **"Windows are dimmed..."**--Vision deteriorates. **"Doors are shut..."**-- Hearing loss or closed mouth. **"Rise up..."** --You wake up early with the birds, and wish you could sleep longer. **"Song brought low..."** --Voice weakens **"Afraid..."** --The world becomes a fearful and fast moving. **"Almond tree..."** --If you have any hair left, it turns white, like almond blossoms. **"Grasshopper drags himself..."** --Like a grasshopper at the close of summer, slow moving. **"Desire fails..."** --Sexual & sensory desire fails. **"Going to his eternal home..."** --Death & eternity feels more like home to you than this world.

The "silver cord" (vs. 6) may refer to the spinal cord, "golden bowl" the head, the "pitcher" the heart, and the "wheel at the cistern" the digestive organs- eventually all of these things will fail.

- Our bodies "return to dust" and our "spirit returns to God who gave it" (vs. 7).
- Since aging is inevitable, it's a great vanity to live just for life "under the sun" (vs. 8).

Death and aging were never part of God's original plan, but we live in a cursed, fallen, broken world where it's inevitable.

- This text is painful, depressing, and heartrending, but it's intended to stir us to lift up our eyes to what's beyond the sun.
- Remember eternal, all powerful, transcendent Creator God NOW- so aging and dying become a doorway into eternity with God.

WORDS OF DELIGHT (ECCLESIASTES 12:9-12)

What Solomon has been repeating in different ways throughout his sermon is that everything is meaningless apart from God.

- What he wants us to realize is that this world is broken, life down here on earth is meaningless, and this is intended to drive to us back to God in repentant, trusting faith.
- So Solomon begins to explain why he wrote this book and some of the characteristics of it.

These words are described as pleasing, true, convicting, and wise (vs. 9-10).

- Solomon's wisdom was supernatural (1 Kings 3:11-12), and his writings were "given by one Shepherd" (vs. 11)- it was divinely inspired.
- God gave us this book as a means to lift our eyes up beyond life "under the sun".

God's Word (but specifically Solomon's writings) is compared to "goads" and "nails" (vs. 11).

- Goads are sharp sticks used for prodding cattle. God's Word spurs us to faithful obedience and "afflicts the comfortable". It prods us to pay attention and pursue truth if we become stagnant, complacent, or sinful. Sometimes we need to be poked!

Comparing God's Word to "nails firmly fixed" suggests that applying His Word to our lives produces stability.

- Those who consistently yield to God's Word won't find themselves "tossed ...by the waves... by every wind of teaching" (Eph. 4:14).
- We have a God given standard for truth and we have a firm foundation in the storms of life (Matt. 7:24-27).

We're warned of "anything beyond these" in verse 12.

- It's not telling us that it's wrong or dangerous to read other books besides the Bible.
- It's warning us of the danger of getting immobilized by the endless study of various viewpoints, philosophies, and theories on literally everything under the sun.
- There's "no end" of making many books (vs. 12).

Education, reading, studying, and critical thinking are all excellent and worthy pursuits in life.

- But don't ever permit man's knowledge to rob you of God's wisdom- don't test God's truth by "many books" written by humans, test humanity's books by the truth of God's Word.
- When God's Word becomes our ultimate and absolute standard for truth, we have a Shepherd to guide us and a Rock to anchor us.

THE END OF THE MATTER (ECCLESIASTES 12:13-14)

The "end of the matter" (the conclusion) of Solomon's sermon on the meaning of life is found in three exceptionally simple points of application- fear God (vs. 13a), obey Him (vs. 13b), and live in light of God's impending judgment (vs. 14).

- These are the things we're told to do so that we can be satisfied, thrive, and find joy & meaning in this life.

"FEAR GOD" (VS. 13A)

- The "fear of the Lord" is the attitude of reverence and awe that God's people show Him because they love Him and respect His power and greatness.
- If we truly fear Him, we'll pay attention to His Word and obey it.
- If we truly fear Him, we won't flirt or play around with sin- we'll put it to death.

"KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS" (VS. 13B)

- God created life and He knows how it should be managed more so than you or I.
- His Word gives us commands on how we're to manage money, handle relationships, enjoy sexuality, and live out our lives each day.
- Someone who truly fears the Lord will want to spend time daily in Scripture, getting to know the Father better and discovering His will.

Obedience to God isn't possible unless we know God's commands in Scripture.

- Obedience to God isn't burdensome (1 John 5:3, Matt. 11:28-30)- it's a joy and an honor!
- Once we taste of the joys and delights of obedience, we fully realize the bitterness and emptiness of sin and rebellion. The good life is one that trusts and obeys God.

"BE READY FOR THE FINAL JUDGMENT" (VS. 14)

- We're all going to die, and we must all stand before God (Heb. 9:27).
- Solomon reminds us that "God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil" (vs. 14).
- God will not only judge our actions ("every deed"), he'll judge our thoughts ("every secret thing") and not a single thing will escape His searchlight.

If you know Jesus Christ as your Savior, then your sins have already been judged on the cross, and "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

- You won't be judged for sins, but you will stand before the "bema seat" of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10) to give an account and receive rewards for faithful service to Christ.
- This is a time of examination and accountability.

But if you die having never trusted Christ, you will face judgment at His throne for every sinful deed, every wicked thought, and every hidden self-serving motivation.

- Nothing will escape the searchlight of His judgment.
- There will be a penalty to pay and that is eternal separation from God (Rev. 20:11-15).
- But ultimately hell is something that YOU choose for yourself- if you don't want God in this life, than you'll have no part of Him in eternity.

If we live with an awareness of God that will motivate us to live a life of holiness and meaning.

- Living for what comes AFTER "life under the sun" is the only way to truly be alive!
- If you faith in Jesus, then you can be satisfied, no matter what God may permit to come in your life.

LIFE. (1 JOHN 5:12, JOHN 10:10)

In Jesus, we can find the kind of REAL life we're all searching for through a real, trusting relationship with Him!