

## Ecclesiastes 12

### Do It Now

As we begin the last chapter of Ecclesiastes let me remind you of the four major points of the last two chapters: 1. Life is an adventure – live it by faith, 2. Life is a gift – enjoy it, 3. Life is a stewardship – live it for the glory of God and 4. Life is short – therefore serve God now. This is what the last chapter is all about, serve God, do it now, before it's too late.

We don't serve God because He needs something from us. Acts 17 tells us that God is not served by our works as though he needed anything "since He gives to all life, breath and all things."<sup>1</sup> We serve God by loving Him and obeying Him and in return our lives are filled with His grace, power and love.

Here in the last chapter of Ecclesiastes the call to serve God now is made specifically to young people. Someone has said that youth is for pleasure, middle age is for business and old age is for religion. That is a frightful delusion. We need to love and serve God now, for our own wellbeing, because tomorrow is never guaranteed. So let's begin.

Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth,  
Before the difficult days come,  
And the years draw near when you say,  
"I have no pleasure in them":  
(Ecclesiastes 12:1)

Remember your Creator. Think carefully about your Creator. Live in His presence daily. Seek to discover His greatness and glory now. Learn what your Creator requires of you and desires for you. Do it now while you are young before it's too late. Ecclesiastes 12:1 is Solomon's version of Matthew 6:33: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness [and all that you need] shall be added to you."

And I think it is interesting that Solomon does not say remember God, but remember your Creator. Dear young person, dear mature person, dear senior citizen why are you here? Why do you have life? Why do you feel joy and seek love? It is not because you are a cosmic accident evolved from the ancient primordial ooze. You have a Creator, Yahweh, the one true God. And you

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 17:25

become a whole person when you seek to love Him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. Do it now.

While the sun and the light,  
The moon and the stars,  
Are not darkened,  
And the clouds do not return after the rain;  
(Ecclesiastes 12:2)

Love God and serve Him now while you have your health and your strength. Love and serve God before you are too old and too weak. The next few verses provide us with one of the most colorful descriptions of old age and the awful weaknesses that are a part of aging before we die.

In the day when the keepers of the house tremble,  
And the strong men bow down;  
When the grinders cease because they are few,  
And those that look through the windows grow dim;  
(Ecclesiastes 12:3)

The keepers of the house are your arms and hands. One day they will lose their strength and they will shake. I'm getting there, because even now I often have a very difficult time opening pickle jars! The strong men are your shoulders that will one day be bowed over. The grinders are the teeth that you will lose. And the windows are your eyes that will grow dim and weak. As you age you have to keep holding things further away to see them.

When the doors are shut in the streets,  
And the sound of grinding is low;  
When one rises up at the sound of a bird,  
And all the daughters of music are brought low.  
(Ecclesiastes 12:4)

The doors refer to your lips. When you lose your teeth your lips fall into your mouth—the doors are shut. And the grinding of food is low, because with no teeth you have to mush your food with your gums. Then one wakes up when the little birds start chirping at 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning. This already happens with me! The daughters of music being brought low is a reference to increasing deafness in old age. You have to keep turning the volume up on the TV and radio.

Also they are afraid of height,  
And of terrors in the way;  
When the almond tree blossoms,

The grasshopper is a burden,  
And desire fails.  
For man goes to his eternal home,  
And the mourners go about the streets.  
(Ecclesiastes 12:5)

Here we are told of the fears of old age. We are afraid of heights like climbing stairs or a ladder. The hairs on our head turn white like almond blossoms—unless you have no hair. Even small things like grasshoppers seem heavy to carry. And desire fails. That means our passion for sex comes to an end. It may be a great comfort to some of you that this is mentioned last on the list!

Then you die and go to your eternal home, or more accurately from the Hebrew, your final home in this age. In other words you will be in the grave. But let's think about eternity for a moment. Where will you be in eternity? Unless Jesus Christ returns in our life time all of us will die and be placed in the grave. But after that, after the resurrection and the judgment, where will your eternal home be?

Will you reject God and perish forever in the blackness of non-existence, consumed in the Lake of Fire, which is the second death?<sup>2</sup> Or will you accept God's offer of life through Jesus Christ and live forever in the paradise of His kingdom?<sup>3</sup> In John 7 Jesus Christ said,

Most assuredly I say to you, the hour is coming...  
when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God...  
all who are in the grave will hear his voice and come  
forth—those who have done good to the resurrection  
of life and those who have done evil to the resurrection  
of condemnation.  
(John 7:25, 29)

To do good, is to believe what God has said about His Son, Jesus Christ and to trust in Christ for salvation. To do evil is to reject what God says about Christ. And this coming day of reckoning will happen to everyone, whether we believe it or not.

*Remember your Creator* before the silver cord  
is loosed,  
Or the golden bowl is broken,  
Or the pitcher shattered at the fountain,

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<sup>2</sup> Revelation 20:14, 15

<sup>3</sup> Revelation 5:9, 10

Or the wheel broken at the well.  
7 Then the dust will return to the earth as it was,  
And the spirit [or breath of life] will return to God who  
gave it.  
(Ecclesiastes 12:6, 7)

These are all images of death. The nervous system no longer functions. Your brain stops working. Your heart no longer beats and the blood no longer circulates. And at your last breath life is gone.

“Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher,  
“All is vanity.”  
(Ecclesiastes 12:8)

For the last time in his message Solomon declares the brevity and emptiness of life without God. Life under the sun, without God is a tragic life wasted. What a waste to live without ever knowing your Creator or to never discover why you are here. Remember now your Creator while you are young! It is difficult to find answers to life when you are old, not many do.

And moreover, because the Preacher was wise,  
he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered  
and sought out *and* set in order many proverbs. 10 The  
Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and *what*  
was written was upright—words of truth.  
(Ecclesiastes 12:9, 10)

Solomon sought out wisdom concerning the meaning and purpose of life so he could learn himself and then pass it on to others. He spoke the truth in love, telling it like it is.

The words of the wise are like goads, and the words  
of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one  
Shepherd.  
(Ecclesiastes 12:11)

Goads and nails are shepherd's tools. The goad is a stick used to move reluctant animals. And the nails are spikes in the ground to which an animal that might wander off was tethered. The wise words of Scripture help to keep us safe and moving in the right direction.

And further, my son, be admonished by these.  
Of making many books *there is* no end, and much

study is wearisome to the flesh.  
(Ecclesiastes 12:12)

This doesn't mean that we should never read or write a book. There are a lot of good and inspirational books and authors. But regarding the many philosophies of life don't test God's Word by the many books people write. Test all that is written by what is said in Scripture.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:  
Fear God and keep His commandments,  
For this is man's all.  
(Ecclesiastes 12:13)

The old King James Version reads, "Fear God and keep His commandments for this is the whole duty of man." That almost captures the heart of the original Hebrews, but not fully. There is no word for "duty" in the text. The verse should read, "Fear God and keep His commandments for this is man's wholeness." To believe in and love and obey God is the secret of being a whole person.

When Solomon look at life under the sun, all of life was broken and fragmented, painful and frustrating. But when he understood life from God's Word all that was broken was healed. In Psalm 107 we read that God 'sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from all their destructions.'<sup>4</sup> God created life and He knows how it should be lived. I don't understand why more people do not believe this to be true.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:  
Fear God and keep His commandments,  
For this is man's all.  
<sup>14</sup> For God will bring every work into judgment,  
Including every secret thing,  
Whether good or evil.  
(Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14)

We cannot hide from God even if we want to hide. He knows everything that happens. He knows every thought of our hearts and every word spoken. And all of the illusions by which people seek to convince themselves that there is no God, or that the Bible doesn't matter, will one day be totally stripped away.

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<sup>4</sup> Psalm 107:20

One day unbelievers will stand at the great white throne judgment.<sup>5</sup> They will be judged according to their works and all will be convicted of falling short of the glory of God.<sup>6</sup> And since they rejected God's offer of life they will perish forever in the second death.

We believers will be judged at the Bema of Christ.<sup>7</sup> We will be judged on how we lived our lives as Christian men and women. A life built on faith, hope and love will be rewarded. A life focused on anything else will suffer loss.<sup>8</sup>

Ecclesiastes does not end with a promise of grace, but with a warning of judgment. Nevertheless, in the power and wisdom of God it can point us to the only man who is fully whole—Jesus Christ. Into this vain life Jesus was born. Like us he suffered all its frustrations, temptations and sufferings.<sup>9</sup> But Jesus did more than this too. He loved God and obeyed Him and then sacrificed his life for our sins, “the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God.”<sup>10</sup> And if you trust in Jesus Christ for salvation then this encouragement from Scripture is for you.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast,  
immovable, always abounding in the work of the  
Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.  
(1 Corinthians 15:58)

All that is vanity in life is overcome through Jesus Christ. Rejoice!

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<sup>5</sup> Revelation 20:11-15

<sup>6</sup> Romans 3:23

<sup>7</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:10 – the words “judgment seat” in this verse is the Greek word Bema. The Bema was the stand where judges evaluated athletes in the ancient Olympics and gave out awards. Believers will never be punished for sins because Jesus Christ paid the ultimate price for our forgiveness.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:10-15

<sup>9</sup> Hebrews 4:14-16

<sup>10</sup> 1 Peter 3:18