

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

"Lessons On Life"

Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:7

Introduction

1. The argument of Solomon is that all is vanity (1:2, etc.). He reached that conclusion by a survey of all that this life has to offer. It ends with a bubble.
2. There is evidence that Solomon learned much from life. He evidences this in giving many helpful maxims (7:1-11:8). While much of this is open to question, it does provide material which a man felt he had learned from experience (2:12).
3. Now the conclusion of the book is about to be given (12:8-14). But before giving that, Solomon makes a strong appeal to youth. It is his persuasion that life has something to offer before the sunset days. When those days arrive, a host of changes take place. This is the thrust of the present section. Two major items are advanced:

1. AN APPEAL TO YOUTH 11:9-12:1.

a. To rejoice v. 9.

Two verbs are used to express a joyous experience for youth. The former means to be glad, while the latter signifies to enjoy good. What the heart requires or the eyes perceive--let that be enjoyed. Youth is not restrained from pleasure. However, they are enjoined that God will hold them accountable for their behavior. The term "judgment" is not to be diminished.

b. To remove v. 10.

The call here is for both grief (or anger) and evil to be removed from one's life. This is given in the light of possible future judgment. The explanation is indicated that childhood and youth are vain. It suggests that these are periods where foolish things are done.

c. To remember 12:1.

The accent on "youth" is evident by its repetition. The thrust of this verse is a call to remembrance of the Creator. Because youth is transitory, it is important to respond to Him at this time.

2. A DESCRIPTION OF AGE 12:1-7.

a. Generally

Solomon sees old age as a time when "evil days" arrive and "evil years" have drawn near. The pleasures of youth will no longer be enjoyed. From this basic statement, he explains old age in symptomatic terms. It is a time when the sun, light, moon, or stars will be darkened and the clouds return after rain. This is a description of weakness

in which one's senses have become dull. Clear thought, memory, and sharp apprehension are gone.

b. Progressively. A long list of specific items are now given to show the progressive deterioration of things for older people. Three areas of concern are mentioned:

1) Work v. 3. This series includes the fact that the older people cannot work. So they have keepers for the house. They cannot labor, but rather bend under it. Grinding is a thing of the past. It is a time of darkness and oftentimes people are not recognized.

2) Emotion v. 4. Noise affects the elderly, so doors are closed even when grinding sounds are low. Even a bird's chirping wakens the older person, hence those who sing must lower their voices.

3) Activity v. 5. A variety of circumstances are difficult for older folk. A small hill seems like a mountain. The almond tree is suggestive of white hair, their red blossoms turn white and fall to the ground as snowflakes. While the grasshopper may note that even a fly on the wall offends the elderly, it may also indicate that the back of the pelvic area or the coxa is unable to support standing and motion, hence the body moves with difficulty. While the thought of sexual desire may be latent in the phrase "desire shall fail him," it may also be a reference to the appetite. This would be taken from the translation of the Hebrew to mean the caper berry, an appetite berry. Finally, he has one foot in the grave (the long home or everlasting house). In fact, the mourners stand in the street, suggestive that the undertaker stands in the neighborhood of the older person's home so that he would be on hand to offer his services. The gamut has been run--from people who take care of an elderly person's home to his grave!

c. Consummatively vv. 6, 7.

The separation of the life principle from the body is described as "the silver cord loosed, the golden bowl pitcher and the wheel broken." The death rattle has come. Life has been dissolved. There is nothing left to do but have the body return to dust and the spirit return to God, the Creator (v. 7).

Conclusion Youth is a time of opportunity and enjoyment. It is also a time to remember the Creator. When old age comes darkness has set in. Deterioration comes and ends in death. So life is a circle which leads to Solomon's famed conclusion of all being vanity (v. 8). If this is all that one can say about life, it is a miserable experience. But there is a life to be gained in Christ. Paul has it right: "To live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).