

Study of the Book of Ecclesiastes
Remember Now Thy Creator
Ecclesiastes 12:1-7

1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; **2** While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: **3** In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, **4** And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low; **5** Also *when* they shall be afraid of *that which is* high, and fears *shall be* in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: **6** Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. **7** Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

OUTLINE

- (1) Reality (v1c cf. v2-5a)**
- (2) Reasoning (v1b cf. v5b-7)**
- (3) Resolve (v1a)**

INTRODUCTION

During the Watch Night Service of 2015, the message was “Remember Now Thy Creator”. That was when we begin the study 5 months later on 18 May 2016 we began the study of the book of Ecclesiastes during our prayer meeting. Tonight is the 40th message in this series. It is good to do a recap.

King Solomon is the writer of this book. He writes this in his old age, in the evening years of his life as a personal testimony to all posterity to teach the futility of worldly ambitions and desires in life apart from God.

In short, a godless life doesn’t satisfy the human soul as our Lord Jesus says in Mark 8:36-37 “*For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*”

The word “Ecclesiastes” simply means “Preacher”, one who had gathered wisdom to speak about life. In the introduction it was given to us the credentials of Solomon, why is his message worthy of our attention.

He testified that God has given him the opportunity to experience it all, being king in Jerusalem during the golden age of Israel, he had at his disposal great resources to experiment, pursue and see this worldly life which he called life “under the sun” or life “under heaven”.

The fruitlessness and futility of worldly ambitions and desires without God is depicted by the word “vanity” which he carefully chose to use and repeat throughout the book to epitomize such a life.

In his introduction in verses 2-3, he lamented, “**2** *Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. 3* *What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?* Eccl 1:2-3 (KJV)” Can there be any real value and meaning in man’s labour on this earth apart from God? The answer is no. Why you may ask?

This word “vanity” means “vapour” or “breath”. This world’s ambitions, desires and pursuits Solomon concluded give no real satisfaction to the soul for when we breath our last breath, that’s it, we leave behind the fruits of all our labour, cannot bring with us. Hence, he is teaching this concept that anything that is of real value must be eternal. What is of value must be able to last. The truth is that this worldly life and its pursuits, like a vapour, like the morning dew, evaporate in no time when the sun is up, when this life is over. This he described is life “under the sun”.

We live in an age where the common people live like the kings. With the advancement of technology in air travel, communications and industrialization, we can have a quality of life that perhaps only kings in the past will experience. With the rise of China and Asia in the next decades if the Lord tarries, we will perhaps see many opportunities for career advancement in every field like never before. The world that we live in has become a global village. Christians are confronted with this world’s value system daily. How will we respond to these?

Three thoughts: The Reality (v1c), The Reasoning (v1b) and The Resolve! (v1a)

(1) The Reality (v1c cf. v2-5a)

- *when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them...(v1c)*

2 *While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: 3* *In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, 4* *And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low; 5* *Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail...*

Solomon paints for us the reality of the end of a man’s life. He becomes weak, his teeth are few, eating becomes a burden, the eyes grow dim, the eyes slowly loses its strength – he needs a cataract operation soon he needs a magnifying glass, his hands and feet grow weak, and they tremble like the Parkinson’s disease, the old man suffers from insomnia, the voice is crackling and unsteady, and singing a song is out of the question, they develop acrophobia, that is, they

are afraid of height, whether ladders, views from tall buildings, or plane rides, and terrors are in the way. They have lost self-confidence, are afraid to go out alone, or to go out at night, the blossoming almond tree is generally taken to picture the white hair, first in rich profusion, then falling to the ground (v5), the grasshopper is a burden, that is, even the lightest objects are too heavy for the old person to carry.

Desire fails in the sense that natural appetites diminish or cease altogether. Food no longer has flavour or zest, and other basic drives fizzles out. Sexual vigour is gone. This degenerative process takes place because man is going to his long-lasting home of death and the grave, and soon his funeral procession will be moving down the street.

Ecclesiastes 7:1-4 *A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth. 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. 3 Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. 4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.*

Ecclesiastes 12:7-8 *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. 8 Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.*

He speaks of the brevity of life. How we all must die. None can escape.

(2) The Reasoning (v1b)

- while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh...

5 ...because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: 6 Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. 7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

And so, the advice of the wise man is to remember the Creator before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.

He did not say it directly in Ecc. 2:14-16, we have seen how Solomon presents for us an ultimate impasse in life that no wisdom seem to be able to overcome or conquer – the sting of death.

2:14-15 *The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all. 15 Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity.*

2:16 *For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool.*

Can I be wiser in the light of this inevitable event that will happen to both the wise and the fool? On earth, the wise man is no more remembered than the fool, with time man forgets even great men and how the wise man have to die even as the fool. So he lamented, what is the difference? Therefore he concluded that he was disillusioned with life as he pursues life with an earthly perspective.

As he looks at this life on earth, the inevitability of death makes life “*meaningless*” lamented Solomon. The wise man and the fool cannot escape death. He says I tried to live wisely and I tried to live foolishly and even to go after madness. If the wise and the fool will have to die anyway is there a difference whether you are a wise man or a fool?

Solomon is teaching us the concept of value and meaning in life. If death ends everything, he is right to conclude that he “*hated life*” in verse 17. What difference does it make anyway!

But dear friends, death doesn’t end all. If we take a peek at the end of the book, Solomon revealed to us that there is such a truth as God’s judgment.

This Solomon will reveal right at the end of this book, that death does not end all, “*hear the conclusion of the whole matter, Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*”.

Solomon tells us that every man perishes one day. Whether you are wise or foolish, you have to die, in other portions he mentioned whether wealthy or poor, man or animal all have to die. Then what is the difference? Is there any difference? No, there is no difference by the standards of this world’s wisdom. If there is no wisdom that conquers death, this earthly life is a big disappointment.

We said this before and it is worth repeating. This word “*vanity*” means “*vapour*” or “*breath*”. This world’s ambitions, desires and pursuits Solomon concluded give no real satisfaction to the soul for when we breath our last breath, that’s it, we leave behind the fruits of all our labour, we cannot bring with us. He is teaching this concept that anything that is of real value must be eternal. What is of value must be able to last.

When death comes it puts a stop to man’s earthly ambition, man’s ambition is rudely interrupted. It seemed that man is left without choice, there is a lack of a better option, when death strikes. That is why he laments is there no difference between the wise and the foolish seeing that both must also die? Any difference between the rich and the poor, man and beast, when all must die! If we speak of this temporal life, everything is the same at the end. That is why it is vain and empty. Why strive so hard then? He was clearly discouraged if he pursues to the end the logic of life under the sun.

Dear friends, anything of value must be able to last. If it does not last then what is the point of pursuing it? We will be disappointed by it. This was the disappointment that Solomon wanted to convey.

He said “17 Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous (evil, distress, misery) unto me: for all is vanity (vain, empty, transient, disappoints, it just cannot satisfy) and vexation of spirit (a frustrating and distressing effort). Eccl. 2:12-17 (KJV)

Steve Jobs (founder of Apple Corporation), like King Solomon, hated life because he saw that he could not carry his achievements with him at his death when he was all hooked up with tubes all over him.

And with all his wealth, power and might, he could not buy time. If he could use his earthly resources to buy life he would have spent every dime he has to prolong his life. But he was without choice when death knocks.

Solomon was clearly discouraged when he pursued to the end the logic of life under the sun. He says he hated life, what is the use of living this life when everything is so transient.

Thank God Solomon was given heavenly wisdom to know that death does not end all. Hebrews 9:27 “...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”

(3) The Resolve (v1a)

- Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth...

Young people should remember their Creator... before the sunset time of life, when the days are difficult and cruel and the years are totally lacking in pleasure and enjoyment.

Bridges observed, “Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long. (Prov. 23:17; Psalm 16:8). Yet there is one season of special application – *the days of thy youth*. Here, however, the great enemy meets us with the ungodly adage – “Youth for pleasure – age for business – old age for religion.” Let the devil have the prime, and God the dregs. Time enough to think of religion, when we are old – **when we can serve the world no longer. Now is the time for pleasure – to see as much of life as we can. Religion will come in course.” Frightful delusion! The delusion of him who “is a liar, and the father of it.” (John 8:44).**”

He further challenged his listeners, “Who then shall have the present now – the only sure part of life? If any man can shew a better title to youth than God, let him bring it. Meanwhile the call is: **Let manna be gathered early in the day. Let youth’s days be choice days – choosing days. O! what a mercy – when the two masters are claiming our service – to be enabled to make the choice – not as the slave of sin – but the happy child of God – the youthful witness for His name!** This is the bright star in the dark night of a miserable world...**If thou wilt have God to pity and help thee in evil days, thou must**

serve Him in thy good days. Old age, with all its train and retinue of weakness and infirmities, will come...Since old age will be evil days, lay up as many graces as thou canst to sweeten it - as many comforts as thou canst to strengthen thine heart against the evil of it."

The aspiration of every young person should be that which is expressed in the following lines:

Lord, in the fullness of my might,
I would for Thee be strong;
While runneth o'er each dear delight,
To Thee should soar my song.

I would not give the world my heart,
And then profess Thy love;
would not feel my strength depart,
And then Thy service prove.

I would not with swift winged zeal
On the world's errands go:
And labour up the heav'nly hill
With weary feet and slow.

O not for Thee my weak desires,
My poorer baser part!
O not for Thee my fading fires,
The ashes of my heart.

O choose me in my golden time,
In my dear joys have part!
For Thee the glory of my prime
The fullness of my heart.

— Thomas H. Gill

Old age is the time when the lights grow dim, both physically and emotionally. The days are dreary, and the nights are long. Gloom and depression settle in.

This is a prayer that the new generation would re-evaluate their value system. Whether it will stand the test of time.

CONCLUSION

- (1) Reality (v1c cf. v5b-7)
- (2) Reasoning (v1b cf. v2-5a)
- (3) Resolve (v1a)

Amen.