

Message #41**Ecclesiastes 12:6-8**

There is a subject which shows up time and time again in the book of Ecclesiastes. It is a subject that haunted Solomon—it is the subject of death. As Solomon moved this way and that way searching for meaning and fulfillment, he was constantly aware that time in his own life was running out and eventually he would die and so would everybody else.

We can certainly say from a study of this book that Solomon was no pessimist. He believed life should be lived and enjoyed. He believed life could have and should have meaning and fulfillment. But he also was a realist and he certainly knew life “under the sun” would eventually end and it would end by death.

In this book he clearly established that all die (2:14-16; 3:19-22; 9:3). He also established that death cannot be avoided (3:2; 6:6; 7:17; 8:8, 12-13; 9:11-12). He also realized that death had certain advantages over life (4:1-3; 7:1-2).

THE REALITY OF DEATH SHOULD MOTIVATE US TO KEEP GOD AT THE CENTER OF OUR LIVES SO WE CAN LIVE A LIFE THAT IS MEANINGFUL, NOT EMPTY.

We may exercise all we want; we may diet and carefully guard our fat and calorie intake. We may have one surgery after another to repair this or that. None of this will stop the fact that we will still die. To spend our life in a depressed rut when life “under the sun” is so short is something Solomon did not want and neither did God. Death is a reality and if we can use this reality to keep God at a proper place, life can and will be a positive experience.

THOUGHT #1 – Solomon’s metaphors that describe death. **12:6**

In this verse Solomon uses three different metaphors which are all designed to describe life as it ends. Each metaphor presents a picture of irreversible destruction, symbolizing the suddenness and finality of death. Also, each illustrates a different type of life taken in death. Many believe Solomon is picturing the human body with the cord being the spinal cord, the bowl being the skull and the wheel being the circulatory system.

Metaphor #1 - The silver cord and the golden bowl. **12:6a**

In this picture a golden bowl is hanging by a silver cord in some house. Obviously, this was not the norm for rarely would one be wealthy enough to dangle a golden bowl by a cord made of silver. Solomon could have done this but not many others could.

The word “broken” carries with it the idea of being broken down (Gesenius, p. 779). The passive form of the verb indicates this breaking down was caused by someone other than the thing it happens to. In other words, God breaks it down.

The picture here is of a life that seems to shine bright. The person here is very successful, wealthy and prominent. It doesn't matter, their life will end. God will break it down and once the cord of life is cut by God, life "under the sun" is gone.

Now carefully notice Solomon's point—remember God before this happens.

Metaphor #2 - The pitcher by the well. **12:6b**

The metaphor, with the one that follows, is one that conveys the idea of a deep well which features some apparatus for drawing water. What is pictured in this part of the verse is that of a pitcher which is by the well, which is shattered.

Truth is life really is as fragile and as helpless as a clay pitcher by the well and when it is broken it can no longer function. It can no longer fulfill its purpose on earth and it no longer has an opportunity to respond.

Metaphor #3 - The wheel at the cistern. **12:6c**

When the wheel at the cistern is crushed, it ceases motion, movement and purpose. The wooden wheel was designed to lower a bucket into the deep cistern so water could be drawn. When the wheel was crushed it could not accomplish this.

So it is when God calls life to an end. Motion, movement, purpose and accomplishment stops. What is done is done and nothing from that point on can be changed.

THOUGHT #2 – Solomon's definition of death. **12:7**

Here is about as good a statement about death as you will find in the Bible—death is the separation of the physical part of a person from the immaterial part of a person. At the moment of death the body is separated from the spirit. The body stays here and becomes dust. The spirit goes into the presence of God where it faces some form of judgment.

Sooner or later our bodies begin to deteriorate with age (12:1-5) which becomes a prelude to our death.

THOUGHT #3 – Solomon's conclusion about life. **12:8**

Without God at the core of one's life, life is empty, it is all vanity.

Why is this text here?

- 1) To get people regardless of age to turn to God, because the end of life will come suddenly.
- 2) To warn all about the aging process which is a prelude to death.
- 3) To show that laying up treasures in this world is futile for they will be crushed.

- 4) To prove that no matter how long one lives or how shining one may be, death will come suddenly without fail.
- 5) To establish that life after death is real and one should live life now in such a way that he is ready to meet God.