

October 17, 2021

“Growing Old With Wisdom”
Lesson 7 of Unit

Ecclesiastes 11:9-10
Ecclesiastes 12:1-7, 13

Intro

We lose a lot of things as we age. Our bodies don’t move quite as fast or as smoothly as they once did. The pains that used to be momentary now last a lot longer. Our eyesight and hearing get worse, our teeth may get replaced with ones we take out at night, and the dreams and plans we had may get changed or even shelved permanently. But there is one thing that doesn’t have to be lost: wisdom.

As we apply ourselves to God’s word and His wisdom, we gain and grown in wisdom. This growth in wisdom has two beneficiaries: ourselves and others in our worlds. We can pass on what we have learned to someone younger who is willing to hear it and benefit from it.

Today’s passage is the second (and last) passage from Ecclesiastes in this study. Solomon is documenting his quest for meaning and significance in life in this book.

Read Ecclesiastes 11:9-10

1. vs. 9: The “young man” addressed here is generic; the advice fits anyone, male or female
The advice also applies to any time period, or any place of living
God’s principles are universal to the life of people

Solomon appears to be advocating a “do what you want” lifestyle

He reminds youths to remember that God is aware of all we do

God will judge everyone for their actions

He reminds them of this, to encourage them to choose actions wisely

See Rom. 14:10-12 and 2 Cor. 5:10

2. vs. 10: Solomon encourages younger people to consider their lives in two areas

Heart and body

The heart includes our thoughts and our emotions

Solomon says “banish anxiety”

What do the young worry about? The same things all youth worry about...

Friends/popularity, wanting to try new things, having “things”, money

Better than these things is contentment

When one is happy with what they have, anxiety is banished

He also says to “cast off the troubles of your body”

Again, what body troubles do the young have?

Issues with looks (which connects to anxiety)

Improper fearlessness (“nothing will happen; I’m young”)

Solomon warns that “youth and vigor are meaningless”

“Meaningless” is connected here to something passing, unlasting

Read Ecclesiastes 12:1-7, 13

3. vs. 1: The word “remember” here is more than just recalling something

It means to be aware of a situation, and to have a desire to do something for the other .
person involved, or for the situation

In Gen. 2:24, God “remembers” His people from their cries

He hasn’t forgotten them; he’s about to do something for them

Solomon is telling youth to “remember your Creator” in the same way

Be aware of Him, of what He’s done, of the relationship He wants with them

Do this while you are young

As a good path to begin certainly

To enjoy things as a youth that can’t be done in “the day’s of trouble”

Adults don’t do or enjoy the same activities (in general) as youth

Do things with God when young that you won’t be able to do when older

4. vs. 2: Solomon begins a series of “word pictures” for the next four verses

These images describe the physical problems of growing old age

The first is that sun and moon and stars grow dark

The end of a day as an image is like the end of life

Things are heading increasingly toward the end of a time period

The second is the “clouds return after the rains”

The idea here is that one storm follow another; there is no “better” after the storm

This is typical of older age, as physical challenges mount one on top of another

5. vs. 3: “the keepers of the house tremble”

The body is referred to as a house in several places in Scripture

Job 4:18-19, 2 Cor. 5:4, 2 Peter 1:13-14

The “keepers” of the body may refer to the hands and arms

They are the parts that protect, defend, etc

They are also the parts that tend to tremble when older

Parkinson’s disease, etc

“the strong men stoop”

Even those who were once strong lose that strength as they age

It is common for older people to walk in a stooped fashion because of this

“the grinders cease”

This is probably referring to teeth

In Solomon’s time it would have been more common to have lost teeth in age

In our time, more people have retained their teeth from good dental care

“the windows grow dim”

This is likely talking about the eyes

A well-known saying is “The eyes are the windows to the soul”

Eyes are known in Scripture and literature as “windows”

As we get older, our vision tends to get a little dimmer

Cataracts, new glasses / prescriptions

6. vs. 4: These next two verses talk about some changes in actions as well as body changes

“the doors to the street are closed”

This suggests not going out as often as one did when younger

This could be because of the physical limitations mentioned earlier

These make activity difficult

Many older people don’t drive or walk at night—it’s harder to see well

“the sound of grinding fades” / “...rise up at the sound of birds”

This phrase seems to be referring to hearing issues

Sometimes older people have a hard time hearing things

Sometimes the smallest noise can wake them up (“rise at the sound of birds”)

The second phrase could also refer to sleeping patterns

We tend to wake up a little earlier as we age

We “wake up with the chickens”

7. vs. 5: “when men are afraid of heights / dangers in the streets”

As we get older, we tend to get more risk-averse

Climbing ladders, getting on roofs, etc

As our bodies age, we understand our inabilities to move smoothly

No one wants to get embarrassed by falling or tripping in public

We become more aware of potential dangers, due to our decreasing abilities

“almond tree blossoms” / “grasshopper drags himself along”

Almond blossoms have a silver-grey appearance

This is likely a reference to grey hair in our older ages

Grasshoppers are always quick and lively

To see one “dragging” itself shows it not to be quick anymore

This is likely a reference to slower, even stiffer, movements in age

“desire is no longer stirred”

The Hebrew text is literally “the caperberry fails”

This fruit in OT times was considered to stimulate sexual desire

This desire also diminished with age

8. vs. 6: This set of images in verse 6 has multiple possible interpretations

One is that the body is being described again

“silver cord” is the spinal cord; “golden bowl” is the brain

“pitcher” is the heart; “wheel” is the circulatory system

A second is that these are items which are valuable/useful but fragile

The golden bowl is the place where lamp oil is kept

The lamp is suspended by a cord or chain

If the cord breaks, the lamp drops and smashes

The pitcher / wheel are items used in drawing water

If cord (the rope) is needed; if it breaks, no water is gathered

If the pitcher or the wheel are broken, no water is gathered

A third explanation is these are daily activities than are no longer done when one is dead

Whatever is exact meaning of each item is, the overall message is clear

Life will end at some point

Prepare now by living a life without regrets—“Remember him”

9. vs. 7: Our bodies return to dust (to the ground) when we die

Our spirits go back to God

We were created out of dust with a spirit in Gen. 2:7

10. vs. 13: Here is Solomon’s conclusion:

“Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”

Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes to process thoughts about this life and faith

His conclusion is clear—we have one main purpose in life, and it revolves around God

Apart from God, life has no viable purpose or reason

Application: Solomon’s explanations about old age and its effects could be compared to the warnings of Jacob Marley to Ebenezer Scrooge in “A Christmas Carol.” Marley warns Scrooge of the coming visit of three ghosts, and Scrooge heeds their warnings and is a changed man.

Solomon’s words are also warnings about being aware of the realities of this life: there will be aging, loss of physical skills and abilities, and then death. He admonishes us to take stock of our lives, and recognize our Creator and serve Him while we can make that choice. When we follow God’s wisdom and counsel for our lives, we will then be able to look back over our lives without regrets. That will be a good feeling.

Prayer: Father God, we recognize that we age and will die, but You are the same forever. Thank you that this is also true of Your Word and Your promises; they are the same forever. As physical changes occur to us, help us remain true to that which doesn’t change. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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