

Wisdom that Remembers - Eccles 12:1-14

Introduction – From the beginning of life, through youth, to old-age and death, “*vanity of vanities, all is vanity*” (1:2, 12:8). If we have been following the argument, we have seen that this is not a statement of despair. It is wisdom for life, for enjoyment, for working hard, for working with wisdom, for sacrificing with great and a fierce joy, for an unshakeable faith in our Creator and Shepherd whose ways are inscrutable and beautiful.

Remember Now Your Creator (vv1-2) – Childhood and youth are vanity (11:10) and so we were exhorted to enjoy our youth in all its vanity under the sun. This is important because the way we learn to enjoy the vanity of old age is through enjoying the vanity of our youth (12:1), “*before the difficult days come...*” This is directed to all of us, for the most part, wherever we are in life, for if we have more years to come then these are the years when “*the sun and the light, the moon and the stars, are not darkened...*”

The Days of Your Youth – Our culture worships youth and this idol consumes and destroys us because we cannot remain forever in this temple; our age will eventually exclude us. To enjoy its vanity is to handle it like the wind. It is not to be scorned for its vanity; it is to be enjoyed in its vanity, while one has it. What do you like? Is it lawful? Then enjoy it now for you will not always be able to.

The Fall of a Great Mansion (vv3-5) – Solomon likens the aging of our bodies with great poetic license, at times comparing it to the slow deterioration of a great but unprotected, decaying estate.

Keepers of the House – the arms and hands tremble with feebleness or palsy.

Strong Men Bow Down – legs are bent, knees totter.

Grinders Cease – as the teeth fall out.

Hard to See – the eyes begin to lose their sight.

Doors are Shut – possibly the lips folding in on themselves for lack of teeth.

Sound of the Grinding is Low – only soft foods are eaten.

Sound of the Bird – easily awakened, up early.

Daughters of Music – but cannot hear or appreciate the sound of music for lack of hearing.

Fear of Heights – fear of stumbling, slow to respond.

Almond Tree – white hair.

Grasshopper is a Burden – or the legs have a hard time getting around.

Desire Fails – sexual desire leaves and the aphrodisiacs won’t help.

His Eternal Home – This can be understood literally.

Remember Now Your Creator (vv6-7) – Solomon first uses obscure images of earthen vessels that describe the destruction of our own earthen vessels returning as well to the dust – becoming the dirt from which we came. And then, at the end of this is the plain teaching that our spirit will also return, but to God who gave the dust its spirit by His breath (Gen 2:7).

What’s the Point? (v8) – Your youth was (or is) a mist. You are to enjoy it – and remember it and the Creator of it, for He will also bring you to decay and death. And where will you find the joy in that? Remember, the youth cannot enjoy their vanity unless God gives it. The old cannot weather their sunset years with joy and hope either, unless God gives it. The death-culture of our youth today is evidence of the lack of the gift of God. Laws for euthanasia are evidences of the same lack. Summer vacation is upon us. Our youth must learn from Solomon what it means to never be bored. Our middle-aged years are upon many of us and old age upon some. We must cease our grasping at air-brushed lies, enjoy the wife of our youth in every decade, and trust God who gives grace at every turn of life.

A Carefully Planned Argument (vv9-12) – Solomon had carefully put this argument together and in order (v9), and his words are acceptable, delightful, upright, and true (v10). There is no possible way that this is a book of despair for those who have read and listened carefully to the Preacher. These words are to be taken like goads (or cattle-prods, or shock-collars) redirecting the way we think and live. They are to be like well-driven nails that will settle us into this truth no matter the winds of life that come (v11). Either these Words will admonish and teach us, or we will seek wisdom elsewhere, and in the making of those books, there has been no end, but much weariness (v12). Solomon led his household in such wisdom and the Queen of Sheba exclaimed, “*Happy are your men and happy are these your servants who stand continually before you and hear your wisdom!*” (1 Kings 10:8). The man who leads his life and his home according to the wisdom of Ecclesiastes will hear the same praise.

The Conclusion of the Whole Matter (vv13-14) – This is our portion and our all, and everyone who receives it receives joy from His hand. This is inscrutable. To fear God is to find there is nothing else to fear. To keep His commandments (in this way) is to love God and do what we want, for what else could we possibly want? These are the works which He prepared for us (Eph 2:8-10). It is the gift of God.