

Message #40

Ecclesiastes 12:1-5

Solomon had spent many years searching for meaning and fulfillment and had wasted much of his life because God was not at the center of it. Solomon learned without God at the center of life, life was lonely, empty and meaningless. With God at the center of one's life, life can be fulfilling and meaningful. Solomon wanted young people to realize that life is fleeting.

THOSE WHO ARE YOUNG NEED TO KEEP GOD AT THE CENTER OF LIFE FOR ONE'S LIFE WILL QUICKLY AGE AND ONE'S STRENGTH, ABILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES WILL SOON BE GONE.

This series of verses is really a contextual follow-up to 11:10. In that verse Solomon speaks of the fact that life is fleeting and the prime of life will soon be gone. In these verses Solomon describes what happens when the prime of life does flee.

Now **verse 1** gives us the key; Solomon wants young people to keep God at the center of life so they don't wind up with a meaningless existence when they get to be older. The words "evil days come and years draw near" refer to a young person growing old, nearing death.

Metaphorical Description #1 - The shining glory begins to darken. **12:2a**

The elderly person loses his ability to shine like he once shined and he no longer sees things as clearly as he once did.

Metaphorical Description #2 - The dark clouds roll in one after another. **12:2b**

When one gets older many things begin to fall apart. Seasons of rain are no longer replaced by sunshine, but by other clouds which soon become another season of rain.

Metaphorical Description #3 - The watchmen of the house tremble. **12:3a**

The first two metaphors in this verse refer to men and the last two refer to women.

The point here is that when a man ages, he isn't the strong protector he once was.

Metaphorical Description #4 - The mighty men stoop. **12:3b**

As men age their strong bodies deteriorate. They lose some strength and they lose some mobility.

Metaphorical Description #5 - The grinding women stand idle. **12:3c**

The words used here are in the feminine form. They refer to women who are no longer able to compete in the work force, attrition due to old age or some incapacitation.

They are few because old age and sickness do not permit them to excel and be as consistent as they once were.

Metaphorical Description #6 - The women looking through windows grow dim. **12:3d**

The words “grow dim” have been interpreted in at least three ways: 1) Women who are older are not seen very often in windows because they seldom go near them; 2) Women who are older do not sit long at a window and as soon as it becomes dark they shut the curtains so you cannot see them; 3) Women who are older start losing their eyesight and cannot see well out of the windows.

Metaphorical Description #7 - Doors on the street are shut. **12:4a**

The Hebrew word “doors” is plural, which speaks of great doors or double doors. I view the phrase as referring to places of great opportunity for success. For one older the doors are shut. Not many companies want to hire one older. Opportunities are far and few between.

Metaphorical Description #8 - The sound of the grinding mill is low. **12:4b**

There are very few elderly people working at the grinding mill. In fact, very few elderly even hear of job opportunities.

Metaphorical Description #9 - One arises at the sound of a bird. **12:4c**

An older person awakens at any little noise and has a difficult time sleeping through the night.

Metaphorical Description #10 - Older women sing softly. **12:4d**

Even those women who love to sing and have sung from their youth begin to lose their strength in their vocal chords as they age. They no longer can hit the notes, they no longer have the tone and volume that they did when younger.

Metaphorical Description #11 - Older men are afraid. **12:5a**

As we age we can lose the fearlessness we once had. When we are young we are not afraid of anything or anyone. We are willing to take risks no matter how dangerous. As we age that all changes.

Metaphorical Description #12 - Older people are like almond tree blossoms. **12:5b**

Almond tree blossoms are pink blossoms which quickly become white. This metaphor pictures the rapidity of age and gray hair.

Metaphorical Description #13 - Older people are like grasshoppers. **12:5c**

A grasshopper has stiff joints, is all bent over and cannot bear much weight.

Metaphorical Description #14 - Older people are like ineffective caperberries. **12:5d**

Caperberries were used in the Middle East as an artificial stimulant to provoke one's appetite. Commentators believe this has reference to food and sex.

The final episode that hits the elderly is death (**12:5d**). All of these things described in these verses teach us that we are getting weaker and weaker until we finally die and then we go to our eternal home. We leave our friends and family to mourn.

Remember, this is written to young people about older people. The key here is to keep God at the center of one's life when young. That does not mean some of these things won't happen, but it does mean that death can be understood in light of a life that counted for God and was full of meaning and fulfillment.