

Ecclesiastes 12 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE
To go directly to that verse

- Ecclesiastes 12:1
- Ecclesiastes 12:2
- Ecclesiastes 12:3
- Ecclesiastes 12:4
- Ecclesiastes 12:5
- Ecclesiastes 12:6
- Ecclesiastes 12:7
- Ecclesiastes 12:8
- Ecclesiastes 12:9
- Ecclesiastes 12:10
- Ecclesiastes 12:11
- Ecclesiastes 12:12
- Ecclesiastes 12:13
- Ecclesiastes 12:14

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES					
The Search for Significance					
The Quest for Contentment					
The Pursuit of Purpose					
Exploration			Exhortation		
All is Vanity	Vanity of Doing	Vanity of Having	Vanity of Being	Using Life Well	Source of True Living
Eccl 1:1-18	Eccl 2:1-26	Eccl 3:1-6:12	Eccl 7:1-9:18	Eccl 10:1-11:10	Eccl 12:1-14
Declaration of Vanity	Demonstration of Vanity		Deliverance from Vanity		
Subject	Sermons		Summary		
Fickleness of Life Versus Fear of the Lord					
Place: "Under the Sun"					
Decades of Searching (in the days of King Solomon) circa 936BC					
King Solomon Author					

Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, "I have no delight in them";

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:1 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;

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them":

NET Ecclesiastes 12:1 So remember your Creator in the days of your youth— before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you will say, "I have no pleasure in them";

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:1 κα μν σθητι το κτ σαντ ς σε ν μ ραι ς νε τητ ς σου ως του μ λθωσιν μ ραι τ ς κακ ας κα φθ σωσιν τη ν ο ς ρε ς ο κ σιν μοι ν α το ς θ λημα

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:1 And remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the days of evil come, and the years overtake thee in which thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:1 So remember your Creator in the days of your youth: Before the days of adversity come, and the years approach when you will say, "I have no delight in them";

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, "I have no pleasure in them";

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them"--

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:1 Don't let the excitement of youth cause you to forget your Creator. Honor him in your youth before you grow old and say, "Life is not pleasant anymore."

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember also thy Creators in days of thy youth, While that the evil days come not, Nor the years have arrived, that thou sayest, 'I have no pleasure in them.'

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember your Creator while you are still young, before the bad days come, before the years come which, you will say, give you no pleasure;

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember your creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come, and the years draw near when you will say, "I have no pleasure in them";

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when you will say, "I have no pleasure in them";

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come And the years approach of which you will say, I have no pleasure in them;

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember your Creator when you are young, before the days of trouble come and the years catch up with you. They will make you say, "I have found no pleasure in them."

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:1 Let your mind be turned to your Maker in the days of your strength, while the evil days come not, and the years are far away when you will say, I have no pleasure in them;

- **Remember:** Ec 11:10 Ge 39:2,8,9,23 1Sa 1:28 2:18,26 3:19-21 16:7,12,13, 1Sa 17:36,37 1Ki 3:6-12 14:13 18:12 2Ch 34:2,3 Ps 22:9,10 Ps 34:11 71:17,18 Pr 8:17 22:6 Isa 26:8 La 3:27 Da 1:8,9,17 Lu 1:15 2:40-52 18:16 Eph 6:4 2Ti 3:15
- **while:** Ec 11:8 Job 30:2 Ps 90:10 Ho 7:9
- **when:** 2Sa 19:35

Related Passages:

Psalms 119:9 Beth. How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word.

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.

Isaiah 46:4 Even to your old age I will be the same, And even to your graying years I will bear you! I have done it, and I will carry you; And I will bear you and I will deliver you.

2 Timothy 3:15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to **give you the wisdom** that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Luke 12:20-21 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' 21 "So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

THE CALL FOR YOUTH: DON'T WASTE THE SUNRISE

This verse marks a major transition from the joy and warnings of chapter 11 to the sobering portrait of aging and death in Ec 12:2–7.

William Barrick - Ecclesiastes 12 **Life Under a Setting Sun** - In conclusion, the Preacher determines to fear God, obey God, and enjoy life (Eccl 9:1–12:14). Continuing the book's grand finale (Eccl 11:9–12:7), Solomon transitions from the enjoyment of "**seeing the sun**" (Ec 11:7) to the approach of death. Assuming temporal existence for mankind "under the sun," "he broadens the range of his observation to include God, who is above the sun, and death, which is beyond the sun." (See Estes, [Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms - Page 373](#)) When the wise contemplate death, they find all aspirations to grandeur and gain exposed as illusory visions of their own arrogance. **Brown** says of such contemplation, that it "purges the soul of all futile striving and, paradoxically, anxiety.....The eternal sleep of death serves as a wake-up call to live and welcome the serendipities of the present." (Borrow [Brown, Ecclesiastes, 108](#).) Just as the setting sun signals the end of a day, so aging signals the approach of the close of one's life. Preparation for the end of life must begin even in youth. "**Before**" in Eccl 12:1, 2, 6 sets up a time-oriented series of statements that favor understanding the text as a description of the time of death, rather than merely a depiction of the process of aging. (Borrow [Fox, Qohelet and His Contradictions](#), 286) The first seven verses of this chapter comprise one long sentence. (Whybray, [Ecclesiastes](#) online) If someone were to read it aloud as one sentence, he or she would be "out of breath" by the end" (Borrow [Huwiler - Ecclesiastes, 215](#).)—a play on the key word **hebel**, which can also mean "breath," as well as "vanity," "futility," or "fleeting." However, the interpreter would be remiss to focus too much upon death in this section. Both preceding (Eccl 11:9) and subsequent (Eccl 12:14) contexts identify God's judgment as the real focus. (Borrow [Kelley, The Burden of God, 142](#))

Remember (**zakar**) **also your Creator** (**bara'**; Lxx - **ktizo**) - Solomon shifts commands from **rejoice** and **remove** sorrow to **remember, remember** your Creator before it's too late. **Remember** is a command and in the Septuagint is **mimnesko** in the **aoist imperative**, a command meaning "Just Do It!" and ultimately a command that selfish sinners (all of us) cannot obey in our own strength but calls for [dependence on the Holy Spirit to obey](#). I would submit that the implication is that the only ones who can truly obey this command are believers in the Old and New Testament! Note that **remember** is not just a mental recall, but involves actions calling on us to actively honor, obey, and live in relation to our **Creator**. To remember means pay attention to and consider with the intention of obeying. The idea is to live daily with God-consciousness, recognizing His ownership, your dependence, and your call to obey and glorify Him.

NET NOTE on **remember** - The imperative זָכֹר (zekhor, "Remember!") is a figurative expression (metonymy of association) for obeying God and acknowledging his lordship over one's life (e.g., Num 15:40; Deut 8:18; Pss 42:6–7; 63:6–8; 78:42; 103:18; 106:7; 119:52, 55; Jer 51:50; Ezek 20:43; Jonah 2:7; Mal 4:4). The exhortation to fear God and obey his commands in 12:13–14 spells out what it means to "remember" God.

Keith Krell - To "**remember**" doesn't mean to jog one's memory. Rather, the verb "to remember" (**zakar**) is a command that involves a wholehearted commitment to love, serve, and fear God.⁴⁷⁸ God's expectation is that "remembering" Him translates into action. We must live as stewards who will give an account to our Creator.⁴⁷⁹ The phrase "**evil days**" refers to sickness, sorrow, senility, and eventually dying.⁴⁸⁰ God commands us to remember Him in our youth because He wants the best days of our lives.

*In a life full of fleeting pleasures,
only your Creator gives lasting meaning.*

Bob Utley - "**Creator**" This is a form of the Hebrew word *bara* (BDB 135, KB 153, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, Gen. 1:1). It is exclusively used to describe God as the One who creates! It is interesting that the PARTICIPLE is PLURAL (cf. Job 35:10; Ps. 149:2; Isa. 54:5), which relates to (1) the "us" passages in Genesis (cf. Gen. 1:26,27; 3:22; 11:7), (2) the general name for God as creator, *Elohim*, which is PLURAL (see [SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY](#), C.), found throughout Genesis 1-2:3, (3) the "us" passage of Isa. 6:8.

In the days of your youth, before the evil days come Don't wait until you're old, tired, or regretful. Start walking with God early, while your heart is still tender and your life still full of choices. Life will get harder so youth is the time to seek and serve your Creator, while strength and clarity are yours.

Keith Krell - Three times in this section (Ec 12:1, 2, 6) Solomon uses the word **before**.⁴⁷² His clarion call is for you and me to live life to the fullest before old age and death comes.

NET NOTE on **before** - The temporal adjective בֵּינִי ('ad, "before") appears three times in 12:1–7 (vv. 1b, 2a, 6a). Likewise, the temporal preposition בֵּי (bet, "when") is repeated (vv. 3a, 4b). These seven verses comprise one long sentence in Hebrew: The main clause is 12:1a ("Remember your Creator in the days of your youth"),

while 12:1b–7 consists of five subordinate temporal clauses (“before ... before ... when ... when ... before ...”).

NET NOTE on **evil** - The adjective רָעָה (ra’ah, “evil”) does not refer here to ethical evil, but to physical difficulty, injury, pain, deprivation and suffering (e.g., Deut 31:17, 21; 32:23; 1 Sam 10:19; Neh 1:3; 2:17; Ps 34:20; 40:13; 88:4; 107:26; Eccl 11:10; Jer 2:27; Lam 3:38); see HALOT 1263 s.v. 4 רָעָה.b; BDB 949 s.v. רָעָה 2.

Bob Utley - in the days of your youth This is a chronological beginning point (i.e., young person still at home, pre-marriage). In Judaism a person is not responsible to keep the law until a period of training and personal commitment (i.e., bar mitzvah, bat mitzvah). From this time forward covenant believers are responsible to God for their actions. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY](#) Notice that Wisdom Literature informs all stages of life, but starts with young people (cf. Eccl. 11:9). Chapter 12 moves from the opening days of spiritual responsibility throughout life until old age and death. In every state (1) before evil days, Eccl. 12:1, (2) before old age, Eccl. 12:2 and (3) before time of death, Eccl. 12:6 believers must remember God! Faith is to be lifelong. **Evil days** In Hebrew this means sickness, sorrow, or here, senility (cf. 2 Sam. 19:35). This term (BDB 949) basically means “evil,” “misery,” “distress,” or “injury” (cf. Eccl. 2:21; 5:12,15; 8:11; 11:8,10). See note at Eccl. 9:12.

And the years draw near when you will say, “I have no delight in them”- There will come a time, if you delay, when life no longer brings pleasure, and it may be too late to turn back joyfully to God.

As **Michael Eaton** says “The Preacher has constantly described the life of faith as one of enjoyment (2:24–26; 3:12f., 22; 5:18–20; 9:7–10; 11:8–10). Now he presents another aspect: where God has been neglected, the capacity for joy will be lost. The passing years will press the unheeding reader to self-confessed (you will say) despair.” (Borrow [Ecclesiastes](#))

*Remembering one’s **Creator** involves more than mere memory or acknowledgment.*
*For the Hebrew writers, **remember** involves action*

Bob Utley - “I have no delight in them” The deterioration of the physical body robs life of joy. Remember Qohleth’s repeated admonition of “enjoy daily life now” (i.e., Eccl. 2:24-26; 3:12,13,22; 5:18; 8:15; 9:7-9).

Davis - “In Scripture, the words translated by NASB as “**no delight**” (ayin chephets) appear in combination only seven times, as follows: of a dowry that is not desired (1 Sam 18:25), of a vessel that is not desired (Jer 22:28; 48:38; Hos 8:8), of worship that does not please God (Mal 1:10; Eccl 5:4), and of old age (Eccl 12:1). Considering only these verses, we discover that that which does not delight is that which is insufficient, not special, of no significant value, unacceptable, or that which is accompanied by misery and is incapable of producing any real or

The Tragedy of Delay - This is not a guilt trip—it’s an invitation: Don’t wait to turn to God when your heart is hard, your strength is gone, and your memory is fading. Remember Him when: You’re strong. You’re dreaming. You still have a future to shape. Because old age is not a time to start building—it’s a time to reap what’s been sown.

William Barrick Solomonic Advice (Eccl 12:1–7) - Just when one might expect either “**Remember death**” or “**Remember darkness**,” Solomon surprises readers with “**Remember your Creator**.” (Borrow [Lohfink, Qoheleth](#), 137) **Creator** (*bara*) is actually a plural form in the Hebrew—a typical means of expressing majesty and superiority. Solomon’s choice of this title “is not by accident. It both looks back to the creation narrative, which plays so prominent a role in Ecclesiastes, and maintains the perspective of wisdom that a joyful life is found through adherence to the principles built into the creation.”⁸ What Solomon has to say in these verses is for every man, woman, and child on the planet. Before one can “**remember**” the **Creator**, he or she must believe that “there is a **Creator** Who made us, not some naturalistic process of evolution.” (Morris, *The Remarkable Wisdom of Solomon*, [Ecclesiastes 12](#)) The Hebrew word (*bara*) for **Creator** involves a root that never takes a human being as the subject. Only God creates, as far as the Old Testament writers are concerned. Remembering one’s **Creator** involves more than mere memory or acknowledgment. For the Hebrew writers, **remember** involves action, (Borrow [Kaiser, Ecclesiastes](#)) or allowing the objects of remembrance to “shape one’s perspective in the present.” (Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes*, 346.) First, we must “drop our pretence of self-sufficiency and commit ourselves to Him.” (Borrow [Kidner, 100](#)) If an individual neglects serving the Creator in intentional obedience to His Word, “the capacity for joy will be lost.” (Borrow [Eaton, Ecclesiastes. 148](#).)

Before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, “I have no delight in them”- NLT = “Honor him in your youth before you grow old and say, “Life is not pleasant anymore.” **Days of trouble** refers to old age, with its hardships and decline. There will come a time—if you delay—when life no longer brings pleasure, and it will be too late to turn back joyfully to God.

William Barrick - “**Before the evil days come**” (Eccl 12:1) relates to the previous mention of “**the days of darkness**” in Ec 11:8+ and stands in contrast to “**the days of your youth**” (Ec 12:1a). Both refer to times of misery and trouble. The previous reference deals with the bad times throughout one’s lifetime; the second refers to the end of life. The threefold occurrence of “**before**” (Eccl

12:1, 2, 6) in these concluding verses of Ecclesiastes emphasizes the brevity of life and the finality of death. (Fredericks, Ecclesiastes, 238)

"The Best Time to Know God Is Now" Don't believe the lie: "I'll follow God later." Later might be too hard. Later might never come. The best time to know, love, and serve Your Creator is: While your heart is open to the Gospel. While you can still shape your course. Start young with Christ. Stay close to Christ. End well in Christ. God wants your heart early—not just your leftovers. Youth is not a time to forget God, but to form a foundation in Him. Delaying your devotion leads to regret and diminished joy. Old age brings sorrow unless it's preceded by godly purpose.

Remember (record, mention) ([02142](#)) [zakar](#) The first use of zakar is wonderful for it says "God remembered Noah" remembering His covenant (Ge 6:18), declaring later "I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 "When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." (Ge 9:15-16) Similarly we see "that God remembered Abraham" and for that reason (based on covenant), He spared Lot from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Ge 19:29). When Israel was in bondage in Egypt "God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." (Ex 2:24, 6:5, cp Lev 26:42, 45, Ps 98:3 [lovingkindness = covenant term] Ps 105:5, 106:45, 109:16, Ezek 16:60) Moses interceded for Israel asking God to "remember" the Abrahamic covenant and pass over their stubbornness, wickedness and sin (Dt 9:27) Thus we see these many of the early uses of zakar speak of God's good memory (so to speak - for His memory is perfect) is based on the fact that He is in covenant with those He recalls to mind. If you are like me and from time to time think God has forgotten you, recall to mind that you are in covenant with Him (New Covenant) and on that basis He will (forever) remember you! I love Hezekiah's prayer "Remember now, O LORD, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart and have done what is good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly." (2Ki 20:3) King David called on the people - "Remember His wonderful deeds which He has done, His marvels and the judgments from His mouth...Remember His covenant forever, The word which He commanded to a thousand generations." (1Chr 16:12, 15) Nehemiah repeatedly called on God to remember in his prayers (Neh 1:8, 4:14, 5:19, 6:14, 13:14, 13:22, 29, 31). I think Nehemiah gives us a good "template" to imitate when we make petition to the Most High God! I love David's prayer to God not to forget and then to remember (Ps 25:6-7). Korah gives us a great pattern to imitate when we are downcast in Ps 42:4, 6. Many of the psalms (see 49 uses below) speak of either men remembering God (often in form of a prayer) or of God remembering men (e.g., Ps 78:35, 39) Ps 78:42 is a warning to all believers = "They did not remember His power, The day when He redeemed them from the adversary." Have you been saved? Then you have experienced His power! And doubtless there are countless other instances we could all remember (if we chose to!) in which His great power has been palpably present to enable or deliver us! Lord, give us ready recall of Your past power in our life that we might apply it to our present circumstances. Amen

[Keith Krell](#) - Young people, one of the worst moves you can make is to forget your Creator in the days of your youth. This leads to bad choices that can forever affect your life. If you don't walk with God in your high school and college years, the choices you make in a college, a spouse, and a vocation may not be the ones God wants you to make. If you don't believe me, ask Solomon. Initially, Solomon loved God. He was the son of David and the builder of the temple. He asked for wisdom above any other gift. He started well but got off track. He eventually refused to remember his Creator in the days of his youth. Gradually, over the course of time, he made little compromises that resulted in disaster. He cultivated relationships with ungodly women and these ungodly women led him into idolatry. Even though he had everything this world has to offer (i.e., wine, wealth, wisdom, women, and work), he was miserable. It was all hebel.[481](#)

But if you **"remember your Creator in the days of your youth"** you will be set up for decades to come and into eternity. You will abstain from sexual immorality and marry a godly spouse. You will select the right college for you to attend. You will choose the vocation that God has created for you to do (Eph 2:10). You will make the right financial decisions. You will not have to overcome various vices and addictions. You will have a love and a commitment to the local church.

Some people have insinuated that our church focuses too much on children and youth. Whenever I hear this, I strive to tell folks that this is indeed what we are attempting to do. We prioritize children and young adults because we want to be preventative. We believe that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. It's not that we don't love adults, but many adults are set in their ways. They have the broken marriages, addictions, and bad attitudes. Our goal is to keep these things from happening to our young people. We are thinking of the church of the 21st century.

However, you may be saying, "I have wasted my youth. Is there any hope for me?" The answer is, "YES...if you begin to remember the Lord TODAY!" It is a grave mistake to say, "I'm going to wait until I get older to begin serving the Lord." Relatively few people turn to the Lord in their old age. I understand there's a sign on the Trans-Alaska Highway that says, "Choose your rut carefully; you'll be in it for the next 200 miles!"[482](#) So today you must choose whether or not you're going to remain in your rut. God will give you a new

lease on life if you say, "I want to remember you." Of course, you can't turn back the hands of time, but you can live while you are dying.

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR Ecclesiastes 12:1-2

Have you ever stopped to consider how many young people in the Bible did something significant for God?

- Joseph, sold into slavery at age seventeen by his brothers, rose to become one of the rulers of Egypt and later saved his people in a time of famine (Genesis 37).
- Gideon was just a young man when the Lord used him to rescue Israel from the Midianites (Judges 6-7).
 - David was a teenager tending his father's sheep on the hillsides of Bethlehem when he rose up and slew Goliath (1 Samuel 16-17).
- Joash became king of Judah at age seven; he reigned for forty years and led the people in a major refurbishing of the Temple (2 Kings 12).
- Uzziah became king of Judah when he was sixteen years old; he reigned for fifty-two years and was counted as one of the great military leaders of the Bible. At one point, he led an army of 307,500 fighting men (2 Chronicles 26).
- Hezekiah became king of Judah at the young age of twenty-five and was Judah's greatest king; he reigned for thirty-one years (2 Kings 18-20).
- Josiah became king of Judah when he was only eight years old; he reigned for forty years and led the nation in a mighty religious revival (2 Kings 22-23).
- Daniel was taken captive as a teenager by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. God honored Daniels convictions, and he entered the king's service (Daniel 1).

The point must not be missed: God has always used young people to get His message to the world. He still does today. As I think about the next generation of Christian teenagers, I wish I could guarantee them a long life and much happiness. But I can't promise them that. If they decide to live by faith, there are no guarantees. Some of them may not live for seventy years. Some of them may be called of God to serve Christ halfway around the world. Some of them may end up great heroes of the faith; some of them may end up among those who suffer for Jesus Christ.

To any teens and young adults reading these words, I cannot promise you an easy road if you decide to follow Jesus Christ. But I do promise this: If you "remember your Creator in the days of your youth," you will be blessed and you won't be sorry. You will discover that the life of faith is full of adventure, and you will be glad you weren't a couch potato but dared to make a difference in the world.

Lord, I don't want to remember You only when I'm dying. Help me to do it now, while it matters, and for the rest of my life. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- What does it mean to you to say that God is your creator?
- What would it look like if you were to truly "remember" God this week? In what areas are you most tempted to "forget" the Lord?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Deuteronomy 8:17-18; Matthew 6:33; and Romans 12:1-2.

Ecclesiastes 12:2 before the sun and the light, the moon and the stars are darkened, and clouds return after the rain;

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:2 While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:2 While the sun and the light, The moon and the stars, Are not darkened, And the clouds do not return after the rain;

NET Ecclesiastes 12:2 before the sun and the light of the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds disappear after the rain;

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:2 ως ο μ σκοπισθ λιος κα τ φ ς κα σελ νη κα ο στ ρες κα πιστρ ψωσιν τ ν φη
π σω το στο

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:2 While the sun and light are not darkened, nor the moon and the stars; nor the clouds
return after the rain:

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:2 before the sun and the light are darkened, and the moon and the stars, and the clouds
return after the rain;

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:2 before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds
return after the rain,

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:2 before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds
return after the rain;

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:2 Remember him before the light of the sun, moon, and stars is dim to your old eyes, and
rain clouds continually darken your sky.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:2 While that the sun is not darkened, and the light, And the moon, and the stars, And the
thick clouds returned after the rain.

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:2 before the sun and the light grow dim and the moon and stars, before the clouds return
after the rain;

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:2 before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds
return with the rain;

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:2 before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds
return after the rain;

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:2 Before the sun is darkened. and the light, and the moon, and the stars, while the
clouds return after the rain;

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:2 Remember your Creator before the sun, the light, the moon, and the stars turn dark,
and the clouds come back with rain.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:2 While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, are not dark, and the clouds
come not back after the rain;

- the sun: Ec 11:7,8 Ge 27:1 48:10 1Sa 3:2 4:15,18
- nor: Ps 42:7 71:20 77:16

BEFORE THE LIGHT FADES

before the sun and the light, the moon and the stars are darkened, and clouds return after the rain- There is disagreement on the interpretation of this verse. Note the time phrase "before" which is a continuation of the previous verse that advocated that youth remember their Creator and years draw near that appears to point to advancing age. If one interprets in this context, it would seem most reasonable to see verse 2 as a metaphorical description of advancing age. Thus here Solomon uses the language of fading light and recurring storms to describe how joy, clarity, and vitality wane as death approaches.

Walter Kaiser summarizes some of the interpretations of Ecc 12:2 - One view sees verses 2–6 as a description of an approaching Palestinian storm that puts a stop to all business and causes all (masters, servants, men, women, and children alike) to quake. The second and more probable view, if a single interpretation of the analogy is to be used, is that the imagery of a decaying and unprotected house pictures the progressive decay that is coming on the bodily members.

Michael Eaton says "The general idea is clear: the common Old Testament imagery of light and darkness represents the fading capacity for joy. Similarly, the returning clouds refer probably to a continual succession of sorrows. Leupold cites similar imagery in Ezekiel 13:11–13; 38:22. It underlines the inevitability of the problems of old age. 'Even if the storm ceases another one will come soon' (Jones)—a fact easier to appreciate in countries which have a distinct rainy season."

Wycliffe Bible Commentary on Eccl 12:2 - The imagery in this and the following verses has led to a variety of interpretations, but the majority of commentators take the passage as an extension of the author's advice to his readers to enjoy their youth. These verses are probably, then, an allegory on the decay of old age and the approach of death. The figures of the **sun**, the **light**, the **moon**, the **stars**, and the **clouds** depict old age as a storm that gathers and obscures the light and the heavenly bodies, so that

there is no warmth or brightness, that is, no enjoyment of life. (Borrow [Wycliffe Bible Commentary](#))

MacArthur says it signifies "Youth is typically the time of dawning light, old age the time of twilight's gloom."

Derek Kidner - There is the chill of winter in the air of verse 2, as the rains persist and the clouds turn daylight into gloom, and then night into pitch blackness. It is a scene sombre enough to bring home to us not only the fading of physical and mental powers but the more general desolations of old age. There are many lights that are liable then to be withdrawn, besides those of the senses and faculties, as, one by one, old friends are taken, familiar customs change, and long-held hopes now have to be abandoned. All this will come at a stage when there is no longer the resilience of youth or the prospect of recovery to offset it. In one's early years, and for the greater part of life, troubles and illnesses are chiefly set-backs, not disasters. One expects the sky to clear eventually. It is hard to adjust to the closing of that long chapter: to know that now, in the final stretch, there will be no improvement: the clouds will always gather again, and time will no longer heal, but kill. (Borrow [The Message of Ecclesiastes: A Time to Mourn, and a Time to Dance](#))

This verse has led to some absurd interpretations even by an OT commentator as respected as Delitzsch who saw allusion to the spirit, the light of self-examination, the soul and the five senses!

Keith Krell - This refers to the fading capacity for joy and excitement. It also points to the repetitive gloom faced by the elderly.

I think **Donald Glenn** has an accurate comment on this passage - Using a wordplay on the word "troubles" in Ecclesiastes 11:10 ("the troubles of your body"), Solomon advised responsible living in one's youth, before the days of trouble come, that is, the days of old age whose troubles he figuratively depicted in 12:2-5, the years in which he said they would find little or no pleasure." The miseries of old age ("the days of trouble," v. 1) and the approach of death (vv. 6-7) are likened to recurring rainstorms. As clouds often block out the light of the sun, the moon, and the stars, so old age is a period of diminishing joy (light) and increasing gloom (dark), heralding the approach of the long night of death. This obviously alludes to the earlier figurative use of light and darkness to depict life and death (11:7-8). This allusion would have been obvious to the ancient Hebrews who held a more dynamic view of death than people have today. Any decrease in the vitality of a person, even a young person, was viewed as the onset of death (cf., e.g., Pss. 18:4-5; 88:3-5). (Borrow [The Bible knowledge commentary](#))

William Barrick - **The Gathering Storm** (Eccl 12:2) The second "before" (Eccl 12:2) speaks of "the sun and the light, the moon and the stars" being darkened. Mention of "light" causes confusion for some interpreters, but in the creation account "the light" (Gen 1:3-5) existed separate from sun, moon, and stars (Ge 1:14-16). Thus Solomon demonstrates his awareness of the Genesis account and puts some of its concepts to work for him in speaking of the Creator and the approaching death of a human being, one of the Creator's creatures. Whether a reader understands the verse as a description of a storm or the coming of death, the context inevitably links the text to death. A gathering storm **might** depict the suddenness of death, "setting forth the fear, melancholy and desolation which grip a household upon which death has cast its shadow." (Leahy in [Zuck](#)) The returning clouds **might** symbolize the repetitive occurrences of calamities and sorrows. (Borrow [Eaton](#)) (ED: NOTICE BARRICK'S USE OF "MIGHT" WHICH IS AN EXPRESSION OF UNCERTAINTY. THIS IS A VERSE ONE WOULD BE WELL ADVISED NOT TO BE TOO DOGMATIC UPON!)

"Light Now, Shadow Later" You may feel strong now. You may see clearly. Your world may feel full of brightness. But Solomon says: clouds will come.

The light will fade. The storms may not pass. So walk with your Creator now, while light still shines. Because the faith you form in the sun will sustain you in the storm and shadow. Old age brings inevitable decline—so live wisely before it comes. Persistent trials will come with age—don't wait to prepare. God must be remembered before strength and clarity are gone. Cultivate a walk with God that doesn't depend on how you feel. Invest spiritual truth into your memory while your mind is strong. Plan for eternity, not just retirement.

Ecclesiastes 12:3 in the day that the watchmen of the house tremble, and mighty men stoop, the grinding ones stand idle because they are few, and those who look through windows grow dim;

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:3 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,

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:3 In the day when the keepers of the house tremble, And the strong men bow down; When the grinders cease because they are few, And those that look through the windows grow dim;

NET Ecclesiastes 12:3 when those who keep watch over the house begin to tremble, and the virile men begin to stoop over, and the grinders begin to cease because they grow few, and those who look through the

windows grow dim,

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:3 ν μ ρ ν σαλευθ σιν φ λακες τ ς ο κ ας κα διαστραφ σιν νδρες τ ς δυν μεως κα ργησαν α λ θουσαι τι λιγ θησαν κα σκοτ σουσιν α βλ πουσαι ν τα ς πα ς

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:3 in the day wherein the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the mighty men shall become bent, and the grinding women cease because they have become few, and the women looking out at the windows be dark;

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:3 on the day when the guardians of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, the women who grind cease because they are few, and the ones who watch through the windows see dimly,

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:3 in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look through the windows are dimmed,

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:3 when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, when the grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim;

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:3 Remember him before your legs-- the guards of your house-- start to tremble; and before your shoulders-- the strong men-- stoop. Remember him before your teeth-- your few remaining servants-- stop grinding; and before your eyes-- the women looking through the windows-- see dimly.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:3 In the day that keepers of the house tremble, And men of strength have bowed themselves, And grinders have ceased, because they have become few. And those looking out at the windows have become dim,

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:3 the time when your watchmen become shaky, when strong men are bent double, when the women, one by one, quit grinding, and, as they look out of the window, find their sight growing dim.

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:3 in the day when the guards of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the women who grind cease working because they are few, and those who look through the windows see dimly;

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:3 in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look through the windows are dimmed,

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:3 When the guardians of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, And the grinders are idle because they are few, and they who look through the windows grow blind;

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:3 Remember your Creator when those who guard the house tremble, strong men are stooped over, the women at the mill stop grinding because there are so few of them, and those who look out of the windows see a dim light.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:3 In the day when the keepers of the house are shaking for fear, and the strong men are bent down, and the women who were crushing the grain are at rest because their number is small, and those looking out of the windows are unable to see;

- **mighty men:** 2Sa 21:15-17 Ps 90:9,10 102:23 Zec 8:4
- and those: Ec 12:2

Our body ages like a home in disrepair

IN THE DAY OF BODILY DECLINE

in the day - The question is what is "**the day**" referring to? In context, Solomon is describing the ravages that time will have on everyone who ages, which is everyone reading this note! This is "the day" when these declines become prominent. By comparing the body to a house with guards, workers, windows, Solomon dignifies the body while acknowledging its inevitable collapse. He does not mock old age—he prepares us to accept it soberly and live wisely now.

ESV Study Bible - This section contains a metaphorical description of the aging process and death. In many instances the specific metaphor is clear (e.g., in v. 3 the grinders refer to teeth), though some are more difficult to interpret. (See [ESV Study Bible - Page 406](#))

that the watchmen of the house tremble Interpreted as the arms and hands, which guard and care for the body ("house") but now

tremble with age. I am now the full-time caregiver for my wife of 55 years and over the last 3 years have detected a notable tremulousness in her hands when I hand her something.

NET NOTE - The verb זָעַו (zéua, “to tremble”) probably does not refer to physical tremors but to trembling in fear (e.g., Esth 5:9; Hab 2:7; Sir 48:12); cf. HALOT 267 s.v. זָעַו). At the onset of old age, those who had been the most courageous during their youth suddenly become fearful.

and mighty men stoop Likely refers to the legs or shoulders, strong in youth but now bent or weakened. I am 79 and used to stand 6 foot 3 inches tall but I recently gave a eulogy at a funeral and when I watched the replay, I was shocked at how stooped over I was as I walked to the podium!

NET NOTE - The verb עָוָה (‘avat, “to bend; to stoop”) means “to be stooped” (HALOT 804 s.v. עָוָה) rather than “to bend themselves” (BDB 736 s.v. עָוָה). The perfect tense may be taken in an ingressive sense (“begin to stoop over”).

the grinding ones stand idle because they are few A picture of teeth, which become few and cease to function well. If anyone has false teeth, they would agree that this is a reference to teeth!

NET NOTE - The term הַטְּחָנוֹת (hattokhanot, Qal active participle feminine plural from טָחַן, takhan, “to grind”) is a double entendre. In its literal sense, it refers to female mill-grinders; in its figurative sense, it refers to molar teeth (HALOT 374 s.v. *טְחָנָה). The related Hebrew noun טְחָנָה (takhanah) refers to a “mill,” and the related Arabic noun tahinat means “molar tooth” (HALOT 374 s.v. *טְחָנָה).

and those who look through windows grow dim Symbolic of eyesight diminishing, like looking through darkened or cloudy windows. I am 79 and about 3 years ago the light was growing dim in my vision because it was blocked by the increasing opacity of cataracts. Then I opted for lens replacement and it was like everything became not only clearer but brighter, with even colors appearing more vibrant.

NET NOTE - The verb קָשַׁח (khashakh, “to grow dim”) is used elsewhere in reference to failing eyesight (e.g., Ps 69:24; Lam 5:17); see HALOT 361 s.v. 2 קָשַׁח. Therefore, the phrase “those who look through the windows” is probably a figurative description of the eyes, picturing failing eyesight at the onset of old age.

John MacArthur agrees with the metaphorical description of old age - **watchmen of the house tremble**. The hands and arms which protect the body, as guards do a palace, shake in old age. **mighty men stoop**. The legs, like supporting pillars, weaken. **grinding ones**. Teeth. **those who look through windows**. Eyes. (See [MacArthur Study Bible](#))

Walter Kaiser - The arms and hands tremble in old age with palsy or feebleness. The legs are bent in feebleness, and the knees totter. The teeth lose their ability to masticate food. The eyes begin to lose their sight, and the pupils become less dilated and more contracted.

Donald Glenn - the keepers of the house tremble (the arms and hands grow weak). Also the strong men stoop, that is, the legs grow bent and feeble. The grinders cease because they are few refers to the teeth becoming fewer, and those looking through the windows grow dim refers to the eyesight beginning to fail. (Borrow [The Bible knowledge commentary](#))

Keith Krell - In Ecc 12:3 Solomon says that the “the watchmen of the house tremble.” This means that the arms and hands shake and become feeble. When he says that the “mighty men stoop,” he is referring to the shoulders, legs, and back slumping and becoming feeble. Your knees buckle when your belt won’t! Your back goes out more than you. “The grinding ones stand idle because they are few” speaks to the scarcity of teeth. You sink your teeth into a steak and they stay there. The phrase “those who look through windows grow dim” means vision suffers.⁴⁸⁶ Or if you prefer, your arms aren’t long enough to hold reading material.

William Barrick -(WHILE I GENERALLY FIND DR BARRICK’S COMMENTS ACCURATE, I DO NOT AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS WHICH MAY HAVE LITERAL TRUTH, BUT THEY SEEM FAR AFIELD FROM THE PICTURE SOLOMON IS PAINTING OF OLD AGE.) **The Household of the Deceased** (Eccl 12:3–4) In verses 3 and 4, Solomon seems to depict a great house either in decline or anticipating the death of its master. The picture not only describes happenings within the house, but extends to the village and ultimately becomes a metaphor of death itself. According to Ec 12:3, four classes of people experience the fear and anxiety created by the proximity of death within the household. The “**watchmen**” represent the male servants who are responsible for protecting the household. “**Mighty men**” depict the freemen, the landowners, the family members of the estate or the heads of nearby estates. Following the two groups of men come two groups of women: the maidservants who grind the grain and the free women, the mistresses of the estate, who avoid the public eye in their grief. “**Those who look through the windows**” most naturally refers “to the women of the household who, according to Middle Eastern custom, were not allowed to mingle with the men in the business of the household, so they peered through the lattice-work of the house.” (C. Davis, “[Zuck](#)”) Other biblical examples of women looking out from a house include Sisera’s mother (Jdg 5:28) and David’s wife Michal (2Sa 6:16–23).

Whether due to death in the house, calamity in the village, or the arrival of a severe winter storm, these women have become more isolated from the life they once knew.

“The House Is Fading—The Spirit Must Shine” Your body may be: Strong now Sharp-eyed Sure-footed But not forever. This “house” was never meant to last. The soul within it must be anchored in Christ (Heb 6:19+) Don’t mourn the house—secure the soul. Don’t wait for the stairs to break—turn to the Builder now. The body ages like a home falling into disrepair. Hands tremble, legs bend, teeth fall, eyes dim—this is the human condition. Take care of your body, but never idolize it—it will fade. Make peace with the reality of physical decline—it points you to eternal hope. Start building your spiritual “house” before your physical one collapses.

Warren Wiersbe - Ec 12:3–7 give us one of the most imaginative descriptions of old age and death found anywhere in literature. Students don’t agree on all the details of interpretation, but most of them do see here a picture of a house that is falling apart and finally turns to dust. A dwelling place is one biblical metaphor for the human body (Job 4:19; 2 Cor. 5:1–2 [a tent]; 2 Peter 1:13 [a tent]), and taking down a house or tent is a picture of death. The meaning may be:

keepers of the house—Your arms and hands tremble.
strong men—Your legs, knees, and shoulders weaken and you walk bent over.
grinders—You start to lose your teeth.
windows—Your vision begins to deteriorate.
doors—Either your hearing starts to fail, or you close your mouth because you’ve lost your teeth.
grinding—You can’t chew your food, or your ears can’t pick up the sounds outdoors.
rise up—You wake up with the birds early each morning, and wish you could sleep longer.
music—Your voice starts to quaver and weaken.
afraid—You are terrified of heights and afraid of falling while you walk down the street.
almond tree—If you have any hair left, it turns white, like almond blossoms.
grasshopper—You just drag yourself along, like a grasshopper at the close of the summer season.
desire—You lose your appetite, or perhaps your sexual desire.
long home—You go to your eternal [long] home and people mourn your death.

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - **THE BUDDING OF THE ALMOND TREE** Ecclesiastes 12:3-5

Many—OK, perhaps most—of us don’t like to think about growing older. The hands tremble, the back begins to stoop, our teeth don’t work so well, and our eyesight grows dim. We wake up early but don’t have the energy we once had. We worry about things that never bothered us before. Sexual ardor fades away. Life itself slows to a crawl.

The words of Ecclesiastes 12:3-5 describe in poetic language the toll that old age takes on the human body. Finally death comes, and man “goes to his eternal home” while his friends gather at his wake to tell a few stories and shed a few tears.

We may not wish to consider our later years, yet this is life as it really is—this is what is ahead for all of us if we live long enough. The only people who escape this slow decline are those who die before they grow old. The rest of us will learn the truth of Solomon’s words. I’m thinking as I write this of a friend of mine who uses a walker to get around because her legs are unsteady. Looking me straight in the eye, she proclaimed, “It’s heck growing older.” I did not doubt her at all.

There is another side to the story. Psalm 92:12-15 speaks of the vitality of the righteous in their old age. The righteous are blessed with long life and good health and fruitfulness even into old age. They don’t dry up and wither away, but bear fruit until the end.

They leave this world, praising God all the way. They proclaim, “The Lord is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him” (Psalm 92:15). Only those who have seen life in all its fullness can say that with conviction. Here is a fundamental difference between the old and the young. The young know the words to the song; the old know the composer.

Perhaps you’ve heard the story of the young pastor who rose to preach on Psalm 23. He gave it his best effort but never connected with the audience. Afterward an old man got up to speak. He bowed his head, his hands quivering, his body worn from years of hard work. Gripping the podium, he began to recite, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” As he finished the audience sat in deep silence, profoundly moved. When the young pastor asked the old man why his words had made such a difference, the old man said simply, “You know the psalm, I know the Shepherd.”

Some things are learned only through hard experience. Only those who have known suffering and hardship can say with deep conviction, “The Lord is upright. All that He does is good. He makes no mistakes, and He made no mistakes in my life.” It is only looking back that the testimony of the righteous is seen in its full power.

Lord of years, may all my days be spent serving You and may I come to the end without fear, ready to enter

my eternal home through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Are you afraid of growing old? Why or why not?
- What will happen to you when you die?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read John 5:24; 11:25-26; and 1 John 3:1-3.

Ecclesiastes 12:4 and the doors on the street are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is low, and one will arise at the sound of the bird, and all the daughters of song will sing softly.

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:4 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;

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:4 When the doors are shut in the streets, And the sound of grinding is low; When one rises up at the sound of a bird, And all the daughters of music are brought low;

NET Ecclesiastes 12:4 and the doors along the street are shut; when the sound of the grinding mill grows low, and one is awakened by the sound of a bird, and all their songs grow faint,

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:4 κα κλε σουσιν θ ρας ν γορ ν σθενε φων ς τ ς ληθο σης κα ναστ σετ αι ε ς φων ν το στρουθ ου κα ταπεινωθ σονται π σαι α θυγατ ρες το σματος

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:4 and they shall shut the doors in the market-place, because of the weakness of the voice of her that grinds at the mill; and he shall rise up at the voice of the sparrow, and all the daughters of song shall be brought low;

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:4 the doors at the street are shut while the sound of the mill fades; when one rises at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song grow faint.

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:4 and the doors on the street are shut-- when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low--

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:4 when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades; when men rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint;

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:4 Remember him before the door to life's opportunities is closed and the sound of work fades. Now you rise at the first chirping of the birds, but then all their sounds will grow faint.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:4 And doors have been shut in the street. When the noise of the grinding is low, And one riseth at the voice of the bird, And all daughters of song are bowed down.

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:4 When the street-door is kept shut, when the sound of grinding fades away, when the first cry of a bird wakes you up, when all the singing has stopped;

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:4 when the doors on the street are shut, and the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low;

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:4 and the doors on the street are shut; when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the voice of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low;

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:4 When the doors to the street are shut, and the sound of the mill is low; When one waits for the chirp of a bird, but all the daughters of song are suppressed;

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:4 Remember your Creator when the doors to the street are closed, the sound of the mill is muffled, you are startled at the sound of a bird, and those who sing songs become quiet.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:4 When the doors are shut in the street, and the sound of the crushing is low, and the voice of the bird is soft, and the daughters of music will be made low;

- all: 2Sa 19:35

WHEN THE SONG GROWS FAINT

AND THE BIRD AWAKENS

Solomon extends his description to include pictures one might see in a village. While the interpretations of the metaphorical descriptions in Ec 12:3 had relatively good agreement, there is considerably less agreement between the commentaries on the meaning of these metaphors. I will give you a sampling from several excellent conservative commentaries, but the variation suggests **it is best not to be too dogmatic**.

and the doors on the street are shut This may refer to hearing loss (ears closed) or withdrawal from public life (shut in). The aged person no longer hears the outside world well or engages with it fully.

as the sound of the grinding mill is low Normal household sounds—like grinding grain—are now barely audible. This reflects both reduced sensory perception and slower activity in daily life.

and one will arise at the sound of the bird Paradoxically, while the aged can't hear well in general, they are easily disturbed in sleep by even the quietest noise. This captures the light, restless sleep common in old age.

and all the daughters of song will sing softly - The enjoyment of music, singing, and celebration fades. It could reflect hearing loss, emotional dullness, or simply a waning desire for song.

NET NOTE - The noun טַחְנָה (takhanah) refers to a “**grinding-mill**” where grain is ground into flour (HALOT 374 s.v. טַחְנָה). The term is here used as a double entendre, figuratively describing the loss of one's teeth at the onset of old age. The figurative usage also draws upon the polysemantic nature of this noun; the related Arabic root tahinat means “molar tooth” (HALOT 374 s.v. *טַחְנָה).

NET NOTE - Heb “rises up.” The verb קוּם (qum, “to arise”) refers to being awakened from sleep in the middle of the night by a sound (e.g., Exod 12:30; 1 Sam 3:6, 8) and waking up early in the morning (e.g., Gen 24:54; Judg 16:3; Ruth 3:14; Neh 2:12; Job 14:12; 24:14); see HALOT 1086 s.v. קוּם; BDB 877 s.v. קוּם.a. Here it describes one of the frustrations of old age: the elderly person is unable to get a full night's sleep because every little sound awakens him in the middle of the night or too early in the morning.

NET NOTE - Heb “**all the daughters of song.**” The expression “the daughters of song” (בְּנוֹת הַשִּׁיר, bənot hashir) is an idiom for “songs; musical sounds; melodious notes” (HALOT 166 s.v. בְּנוֹת; BDB 123 s.v. בְּנוֹת; GKC 418 §128.v). The genitive הַשִּׁיר (“song”) represents the nature, quality, character or condition of the construct בְּנוֹת (“daughters”); see IBHS 149–51 §9.5.3b. The idiom refers to the musical songs sung during one's youth or to the ability to hear songs that are sung. This line is lamenting the loss of hearing which occurs at the onset of old age.

John MacArthur - **doors.** Lips that do not have much to say. **sound of the grinding.** This refers to little eating, when the sound of masticating is low. **arise.** Light sleep. **daughters of song.** The ear and voice that once loved music. (See [MacArthur Study Bible](#))

Donald Glenn - **The doors to the street are closed** may picture the lips sinking in, due to the loss of teeth. **When men rise up at the sound of birds** suggests that old people get up early because of their inability to sleep. **All their songs grow faint** speaks of hearing that becomes impaired. (Borrow [The Bible knowledge commentary](#))

Daniel Akin - The first part of this verse may refer to the fact that elderly people are shut off from business and daily commerce. It could also refer to the loss of teeth. Either way, old age limits a person's activities. The second part of the verse also raises different possibilities. One possibility is that this depicts how elderly people are easily startled, even at the soft sound of a bird. Another interpretation moves more in the direction of saying that elderly people can't enjoy music or can't participate in singing any longer (see 2 Sam. 19:35). Either interpretation furthers the idea that Solomon is trying to get across about aging. (See [Holman Old Testament Commentary - Ecclesiastes](#))

Michael Eaton shows how respected commentators disagree - If the details are significant, **the doors on the street** will refer to the reduced access to the outside world which follows impaired hearing. The next phrase, when (RSV; better is Leupold's 'in that') the sound of the grinding is low, may extend the image; for the grinding of grain must have been a common cheerful indication that younger folk were going about their business, while the elderly found themselves increasingly shut off from the hum of daily life. Rising at the voice **of a bird** has often been taken to mean that 'the old sleep so lightly that even the twittering of birds will rouse them' (Jones). So much for impaired hearing! More likely the picture is one of waking erratically in the early hours. (**ED:** AT 79 I CAN ATTEST TO WAKING EARLY, USUALLY AROUND 3 AM, BUT SOMETIMES AT EARLY AS MIDNIGHT!) Some interpret the reference to the **daughters of song** to participation in singing; some refer to enjoyment of others' singing. There is no need to decide between the two. (Borrow [Ecclesiastes](#))

William Barrick - (AGAIN BECAUSE OF THE CONTEXT WHERE SOLOMON BEGAN BY DISCUSSING YOUTH AND THEN

MOVED TO DESCRIBE AGING, I DISAGREE WITH BARRICK'S INTERPRETATION AS FAR TOO LITERAL.) Eccl 12:4 continues the description of the stricken household and, perhaps, its village. **"Doors"** literally means "two doors." However, most houses in ancient Israel possessed but one door. The dual number favors a reference to a city gate through which people would enter the bazaar and the nearby judgment seat where the elders of the city held court. **"The sound of the grinding mill is low"** thus indicates a decrease in the normal economic and commercial activities common to everyday life. The village activities slow nearly to a halt for the death of a key citizen and his funeral. Rising at the **sound of the bird** may refer either to being startled to action by the sound of a bird through the silent streets or to the hooting or cooing of birds viewed as harbingers of death. **"Daughters of song"** could refer to the women whose function involves singing laments for the dying master.

Ecclesiastes 12:5 Furthermore, men are afraid of a high place and of terrors on the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags himself along, and the caperberry is ineffective. For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street.

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:5 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:

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:5 Also they are afraid of height, And of terrors in the way; When the almond tree blossoms, The grasshopper is a burden, And desire fails. For man goes to his eternal home, And the mourners go about the streets.

NET Ecclesiastes 12:5 and they are afraid of heights and the dangers in the street; the almond blossoms grow white, and the grasshopper drags itself along, and the caper berry shrivels up— because man goes to his eternal home, and the mourners go about in the streets—

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:5 κα γε π ψους ψονται κα θ μβοι ν τ δ κα νθ σ τ μ γδαλον κα παχυνθ κρ ς κα διασκεδασθ κ ππαρις τι πορε θη νθρωπος ε ς ο κον α νο ς α το κα κ κλωσαν ν γορ ο κοπτ μενοι

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:5 and they shall look up, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall blossom, and the locust shall increase, and the caper shall be scattered: because man has gone to his eternal home, and the mourners have gone about the market:

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:5 Also, they are afraid of heights and dangers on the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper loses its spring, and the caper berry has no effect; for man is headed to his eternal home, and mourners will walk around in the street;

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:5 they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along, and desire fails, because man is going to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets--

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:5 when men are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets; when the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags himself along and desire no longer is stirred. Then man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the streets.

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:5 Remember him before you become fearful of falling and worry about danger in the streets; before your hair turns white like an almond tree in bloom, and you drag along without energy like a dying grasshopper, and the caperberry no longer inspires sexual desire. Remember him before you near the grave, your everlasting home, when the mourners will weep at your funeral.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:5 Also of that which is high they are afraid, And of the low places in the way, And the almond-tree is despised, And the grasshopper is become a burden, And want is increased, For man is going unto his home age-during, And the mourners have gone round through the street.

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:5 when going uphill is an ordeal and you are frightened at every step you take- yet the almond tree is in flower and the grasshopper is weighed down and the caper-bush loses its tang; while you are on the way to your everlasting home and the mourners are assembling in the street;

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:5 when one is afraid of heights, and terrors are in the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along and desire fails; because all must go to their eternal home, and the mourners will go about the streets;

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:5 they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way; the almond tree

blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along and desire fails; because man goes to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets;

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:5 And one fears heights, and perils in the street; When the almond tree blooms, and the locust grows sluggish and the caper berry is without effect, Because man goes to his lasting home, and mourners go about the streets;

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:5 Remember your Creator when someone is afraid of heights and of dangers along the road, the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along, and the caper bush has no fruit. Mortals go to their eternal rest, and mourners go out in the streets.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:5 And he is in fear of that which is high, and danger is in the road, and the tree is white with flower, and the least thing is a weight, and desire is at an end, because man goes to his last resting-place, and those who are sorrowing are in the streets;

- the almond: Ge 42:38 44:29,31 Lev 19:32 Job 15:10 Ps 71:18 Pr 16:31 20:29 Isa 46:4 Jer 1:11
- because: Ec 9:10 Job 17:13 30:23 Ps 49:10-14 Heb 9:27
- the mourners: Ge 50:3-10 Jer 9:17-20 Mk 5:38,39

FADING OF EARTHLY STRENGTH POINTS TOWARD ETERNITY

Furthermore, men are afraid of a high place and of terrors on the road- The meaning is uncertain. In old age, there's a loss of mobility, confidence, and boldness. The once-bold man is now timid and cautious, wary of danger. I will admit that at age 79, because of fear of falling, I now hire younger men to clean the leaves and branches from my roof. Some see this description as the elderly simply becoming more fearful in general. **NJB** has a very interpretative translation "when going uphill is an ordeal and you are frightened at every step you take."

Wycliffe Bible Commentary - This is probably a reference to the shortness of breath which makes any ascent difficult. (Ed: As a physician I doubt this is the meaning. Shortness of breath is not found in all aged people, but is a symptom of congestive heart failure.) (Borrow [Wycliffe Bible Commentary](#))

NET NOTE - The Hebrew noun חַתְּחַתִּים (khatkhattim) literally means "terrors" (HALOT 363 s.v. חַתְּחַת; BDB 369 s.v. חַתְּחַת). Here it is used as a metonymy (cause for effect) to refer to dangers that cause the elderly to be fearful of going outside or walking along the streets

The almond tree blossoms - NLT is interpretative = "before your hair turns white like an almond tree in bloom." Most favor white hair given that the almond blossom is white.

NET NOTE - The verb נָצַח ("to blossom") is a geminate verb (II = III) that, in this case, is written with a matres lectionis (plene spelling) rather than the normal spelling of נִצַּח (GKC 204 §73.g). The Hiphil verb יָנֵחַ (yane'ts) is from the root נָצַח "to shine; to sparkle; to blossom" (HALOT 717 s.v. נָצַח; BDB 665 s.v. נָצַח). It is used in reference to almond blossoms whose color progresses from pink to white as they ripen (e.g., Song 6:11). This is an appropriate metaphor (comparison of sight) to describe white hair that often accompanies the onset of old age.

The grasshopper drags himself along - Grasshopper, once agile and energetic is now limping or dragging. For aged folks, even the lightest movements become burdensome. What was once lively is now labored and slow. Elderly people are usually not jogging through the neighborhood, and their strolling stride is generally shorter and less stable than when they were a young pup.

Donald Glenn - The grasshopper drags himself along speaks of the body being bent and one's walk being slowed; the grasshopper, normally moving about quickly, is an apt figure of the past liveliness of one's childhood and youth. (Borrow [The Bible knowledge commentary](#))

And the caperberry is ineffective- KJV = "desire shall fail" **NIV** = "desire no longer is stirred" **NLT** = "the caperberry no longer inspires sexual desire" Most interpret this as a reference to decreased sexual desire in aged individuals. The natural passions and pleasures of life no longer stir the aged body. The senses are dulled, and appetites are weak.

NET NOTE - The noun אֲבִי־יוֹנָה ('aviyyonah, "caper berry, caper fruit") is a hapax legomenon, occurring only here in the Hebrew Bible. It refers to the Capparis spinosa fruit which was eaten as an aphrodisiac in the

ancient Near East (HALOT 5 s.v. אֶבְיוֹנָה; BDB 2–3 s.v. אֶבְיוֹנָה). There are two options for the interpretation of this figure: (1) At the onset of old age, the sexual virility that marked one's youth is nothing more than a distant memory, and even aphrodisiacs fail to stimulate sexual desire to allow for sexual intercourse. (2) The onset of old age is like the shriveling up of the caper berry fruit; the once virile youth has passed his prime just like a shriveled caper berry can no longer provide a sexual stimulant.

NET NOTE on **ineffective** - Or “fails”; or “bursts.” The meaning of the verb פָּרַר (parar, “to break; to make ineffectual”) is debated: (1) “to be ineffectual,” that is, to fail to provide sexual power as an aphrodisiac, or (2) “to break; to burst,” that is, the caper berry fruit shrivels as it lingers on its branch beyond its period of ripeness (HALOT 975 s.v. 2 פָּרַר.f; BDB 830 s.v. I. 2 פָּרַר.d).

Daniel Akin - The grasshopper drags himself along seems clear. The passing of years causes the elderly to develop a slower gait. Desire no longer is stirred (or “the caperberry is ineffective,” NASB) is seen by many commentators as a description of loss of sexual desire, although “no evidence for the aphrodisiac qualities of the caper appears prior to the medieval Jewish commentaries” (Garrett, 342). Some extend it to refer to the loss of desire in general (Leupold, 282). This interpretation certainly has some merit because of what this passage may say about the loss of teeth and sight. Senses like taste and smell usually grow dull with age. (See [Holman Old Testament Commentary - Ecclesiastes](#))

For man goes to his eternal home (Beth [Olam](#)) **while mourners go about in the street** - The poetic metaphors now turn literal: death approaches. Man is about to depart this temporary life for his permanent dwelling place for eternity. Here Solomon is clearly referring to the “tearing down of the house” so to speak. While he makes no distinction between heaven and hell, he clearly believes that men and women live forever in their **eternal home**. As the man dies, mourners begin their procession, signaling the final farewell of earthly life.

NET NOTE on **eternal home** - In the construct phrase בֵּית עוֹלָמוֹ (bet 'olamo, “house of his eternity”), the genitive עוֹלָמוֹ (“eternity”) functions as an attributive adjective: “his eternal home.” This is an idiom for the **grave** as the resting place of the body (e.g., Ps 49:12 [11]; Job 7:9; 14:10–12; Eccl 12:5) or **Sheol** as the residence of the dead (e.g., Job 17:13; 30:23); see HALOT 124 s.v. I 5) 799 ;בֵּית 2; BDB 109 s.v. 1 בֵּית.d. For example, the term בֵּית (“house”) is used in Job 30:23 in parallelism with “death” (מָוֶת, mavet). The same idiom appears in postbiblical Hebrew: “the house of eternity” (בֵּית עוֹלָם, bet 'olam) is a euphemism for a burial ground or cemetery (e.g., Lamentations Rabbah 1:5); see Jastrow 1084–85 s.v. עֵלָם III. This idiom is also found in a Moabite text in reference to the grave (Deir Alla Inscription 2:6). A similar idiom is found in Phoenician and Palmyrene in reference to the grave (DISO 35). The idiom appears to have originated in Egyptian literature (H. A. Hoffner, TDOT 2:113). See F. Cumont, Afterlife in Roman Paganism, 48–50.

*All of these characteristics of the aging indicate
that they are on their final journey to their “eternal home.”*

William Barrick - (NOW BARRICK APPEARS TO PICK BACK UP THE PICTURE OF AGING SO I AGREE WITH THESE COMMENTS) - **Aging: The Ultimate Harbinger of Death** (Eccl 12:5) Fear of either climbing heights (which might result in a heart attack or stroke—at least being left with belabored breathing) or moving about in crowded streets characterize the elderly. The **blossoms of the almond tree** come toward the end of winter before the leaves even sprout. The white color of the **blossoms** crowning the whole tree reminds one of the white hair of the aged. A locust or **grasshopper**, when no longer able to hop about with youthful vigor, **drags** itself along as though burdened—much like the awkward gait of old men and women. The ancient peoples in the Near East prized the **caperberry** for stimulating appetite or sexual desire. In the advanced years, however, the **caperberry** no longer acts as an effective stimulant. Indeed, all of these characteristics of the aging indicate that they are on their final journey to their “eternal home.” Jewish communities still refer to their cemeteries as Beth [Olam](#) (eternal), the same phrase as used here. Readers of the New Testament readily associate the description with a similar concept in 2 Corinthians 5:1+. Granted, Solomon does not refer to a heavenly habitation and Paul does not refer to the grave or the netherworld of departed spirits of Old Testament times. However, both texts speak of the state of existence following life “**under the sun**” as a “**house**”—a place of habitation. The reference to “**mourners**” going **about in the street** (Eccl 12:5) fits the ancient Hebrew custom of mourning the death of an Israelite (Amos 5:16–20; Jer 9:17–22; 22:18; 34:5).

Ecclesiastes 12:6 Remember Him before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed;

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:6 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.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:6 Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed, Or the golden bowl is broken, Or the pitcher shattered at the fountain, Or the wheel broken at the well.

NET Ecclesiastes 12:6 before the silver cord is removed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the well, or the water wheel is broken at the cistern—

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:6 ως του μ νατραπ σχοιν ον το ργγυ ου κα συνθλιβ νθ μιον το χρυ ου κα συντριβ δρ α π τ ν πηγ ν κα συντροχ σ τροχ ς π τ ν λ κκον

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:6 before the silver cord be let go, or the choice gold be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel run down to the cistern;

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:6 before the silver cord is snapped, and the gold bowl is broken, and the jar is shattered at the spring, and the wheel is broken into the well;

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:6 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,

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:6 Remember him--before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well,

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:6 Yes, remember your Creator now while you are young, before the silver cord of life snaps and the golden bowl is broken. Don't wait until the water jar is smashed at the spring and the pulley is broken at the well.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:6 While that the silver cord is not removed, And the golden bowl broken, And the pitcher broken by the fountain, And the wheel broken at the well.

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:6 before the silver thread snaps, or the golden bowl is cracked, or the pitcher shattered at the fountain, or the pulley broken at the well-head:

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:6 before the silver cord is snapped, and the golden bowl is broken, and the pitcher is broken at the fountain, and the wheel broken at the cistern,

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:6 before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern,

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:6 Before the silver cord is snapped and the golden bowl is broken, And the pitcher is shattered at the spring, and the broken pulley falls into the well,

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:6 Remember your Creator before the silver cord is snapped, the golden bowl is broken, the pitcher is smashed near the spring, and the water wheel is broken at the cistern.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:6 Before ever the silver cord is cut, or the vessel of gold is broken, or the pot is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the water-hole;

Remember your Creator before you are broken

LIFE: BEAUTIFUL, FRAGILE, BRIEF

Remember Him - Added by the translators but clearly the sense intended. “Remember Him” your Creator before life breaks beyond repair.

Before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed These metaphors (**broken...crushed...shattered...crushed**) speak not of gradual decline (as in earlier verses) but of the final snap as when death comes. Life is precious and fragile—like a silver cord. Once it breaks, the connection is lost. Just as a valuable bowl, once shattered, cannot be used again, so life, once ended, cannot be restored.

Wycliffe Bible Commentary on the silver cord is broken - The figure represents an expensive gold and silver lamp hung from the ceiling. Its chain is snapped so that it comes crashing to the ground. The oil spills out of the broken bowl, and the light is gone. Light is the symbol of life. (Borrow [Wycliffe Bible Commentary](#))

John MacArthur agrees writing "Perhaps this pictures a lamp hanging from a silver chain, which breaks with age, smashing the lamp. Some suggest this refers to the spinal cord." (**ED: AS A PHYSICIAN I THINK ALLUSION TO SPINAL CORD IS FAR FETCHED AND IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY AS SPINAL CORDS OF ELDERLY ARE NOT KNOWN FOR "BREAKING".**) (See [MacArthur Study Bible](#))

the pitcher by the well is shattered The body (pitcher) is no longer able to draw from the well of life—death ends its function.

and the wheel at the cistern is crushed; Once the wheel (function) breaks, water no longer flows—life ceases. This may represent the final cessation of heart activity or blood flow.

John MacArthur - Wells required a wheel with a rope attached in order to lower the pitcher for water. Perhaps this pictures the fountain of blood, the heart.

NET NOTE on **wheel** - The term גַּלְגַּל (galgal, "wheel") refers to the "water wheel" or "paddle wheel" for drawing water from a well (HALOT 190 s.v. 1 גַּלְגַּל; BDB 165 s.v. 1 גַּלְגַּל.b). This Hebrew noun is related to the Akkadian term gulgullu ("pot"), as well as Phoenician (?) גלגל ("wheel for drawing water"). The Latin term girgillus ("lever for the bucket") is a late derivation from this term. See G. Dalman, Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina, 2:225–28.

Each metaphor shows value (silver, gold, water), fragility (easily broken), irreversibility (cannot be repaired). The message is that you are valuable. You are mortal. You must live in light of your Creator—before the final break.

William Barrick - **Death: Returning to God** (Eccl 12:6–7) The third **"before"** (Eccl 12:6) introduces the end of life when the opportunities to enjoy God's gifts cease and the individual meets his or her Creator. The **"golden bowl"** might depict a lamp like that in Zechariah 4:2–3. The lamp befits the description of death, since texts like Proverbs 13:9 speaks of "the lamp" of an individual being put out at death (cp. Job 18:5–6; 21:17; Pr 20:20; 24:20). The **silver cord** could be the means of hanging the golden lamp, filled with oil. Putting fire to the wicks in the oil would give light as the oil in the wicks burned. If someone cuts the **cord** or it breaks, the lamp of oil crashes to the stone floor and the oil is spilled. Likewise, the **pitcher** that holds life-giving water drawn from a well or cistern cannot serve its task if the **pitcher** breaks. Crenshaw explains that, "The picture of a fountain in disrepair suggests that the water of life can no longer be drawn, and the end has come."²¹ The **"wheel"** could be a pulley used to lower a pitcher into the depths of a well and to draw it back up when it is filled. Twice **"crushed"** occurs with the golden bowl as an object and then with **"the wheel."** Interestingly, Hebrew derives its words for "bowl" and for "wheel" from the same root word meaning "roll" or "round." (22 Provan, Ecclesiastes, 218. The Hebrew name Golgotha meaning "place of the skull"; Matthew 27:33+ comes from the same root.) Solomon might be depicting a violent death from a crushed skull and the failure of the destroyed cranium to retain the contents of the brain.

"Live Before You Break" Each image in this verse is a beautiful object destroyed: A silver cord—snapped. A golden bowl—shattered. A pitcher—cracked. A wheel—stopped. Life is precious. Death is certain. Eternity is near. But you can prepare now. You can remember your Creator—and commit your spirit to Him, not only at death, but in life. Life is valuable and delicate. Death is the complete and irreversible cessation of function. You must remember God before death—not after. Don't wait until you break to turn to the One who made you. Avoid living as though life will last forever—because it won't. Help others see the urgency of salvation now—not later. Prepare to meet your Maker while you still can.

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - **A MESSAGE FOR OLDER SAINTS** Ecclesiastes 12:6-7

Some blessings are given to the young—to marry, give birth, and raise a family for the glory of God, to set out to conquer the world, to find a mountain and climb it, to have a career, to rise in your chosen profession, to make a mark with your life. These things occupy the young.

But the old have a different calling. Most of these things they have already done, having persevered through years of struggle, long nights of prayer, seeing their children grow up and go off to school. They have found satisfying careers, developed lasting friendships, and have a raft of memories that uniquely define who they are. Some have lived so long that they have outlived many of their friends. Perhaps they buried a husband or wife along the way.

God gives to those in the sunset years a unique privilege. At the age of forty-five I can testify only to my life so far. But the elderly have lived far longer and they know from experience things I have not yet discovered.

If you live long enough, you may say, as did the senior in the previous entry, "The Lord is upright. All that He does is good. He makes no mistakes." Perhaps you will be able to add some other personal testimony: "I have seen all that life has to offer, I have known joy and I have known sorrow. My Lord is a Solid Rock and I'm still standing on that Rock. My feet are planted on a firm foundation because the Rock Himself is holding me up.

"I've been battered, bruised, bumped, and done my share of bleeding. I've wept an ocean of tears and learned to laugh afterwards. I've known more than my share of setbacks and difficulties. I know how hard life can be. But the Rock of my Salvation has never failed, never moved, never trembled, for all these years; He has never sagged under the weight of all my problems."

Here is a worthy goal for those who have lived to see the crowning years of life. Do not go silently into the night. Do not let these precious days go by quietly. Speak up for the Lord. We need you more than you know. We need your testimony, your years of experience, and most of all, we need you to tell us, and tell us again, that the Lord is a Rock upon whom we can all rest. Help us fix our lives on the one Rock that cannot be moved. Show us the way and someday we will thank you by sharing with our children what you have told us.

Rock of Ages, grant that my faith may remain strong until I draw my dying breath and go home to be with Jesus. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Think of the last person you knew who died unexpectedly. What lessons do you draw from that person's life and death?
- If you were to die today, what three things would your friends and family remember most about you?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Genesis 3:19; Job 1:20-21; and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Ecclesiastes 12:7 then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:7 Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it.

NET Ecclesiastes 12:7 and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the life's breath returns to God who gave it.

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:7 κα πιστρ ψ χο ς π τ ν γ ν ς ν κα τ πνε μα πιστρ ψ πρ ς τ ν θε ν ς δωκεν α τ

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:7 before the dust also return to the earth as it was, and the spirit return to God who gave it.

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:7 and the dust returns to the earth as it once was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:7 and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:7 and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:7 For then the dust will return to the earth, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:7 And the dust returneth to the earth as it was, And the spirit returneth to God who gave it.

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:7 the dust returns to the earth from which it came, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:7 and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the breath returns to God who gave it.

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:7 and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:7 And the dust returns to the earth as it once was, and the life breath returns to God who gave it.

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:7 Then the dust of mortals goes back to the ground as it was before, and the breath of life goes back to God who gave it.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:7 And the dust goes back to the earth as it was, and the spirit goes back to God who gave it.

- **dust:** Ec 3:20 Ge 3:19 18:27 Job 4:19,20 7:21 20:11 34:14,15 Ps 90:3 Ps 146:4 Da 12:2
- **the spirit:** Ec 3:21
- **God:** Ge 2:7 Nu 16:22 27:16 Isa 57:16 Jer 38:16 Zec 12:1 Heb 12:9,23

RETURN TO SENDER

Then the dust will return to the earth as it was This is the undoing of creation: the body decomposes, returning to the earth from which it came. It's the physical end of life.

and the spirit will return to God Who gave it - NET = "and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the life's breath returns to God who gave it." The body decays, but the spirit endures. God gave man a spirit (Genesis 2:7), and at death, that spirit returns to Him—not into oblivion, but into His presence for judgment or reward.

NET NOTE on the spirit - Or "spirit." The likely referent is the life's breath that originates with God. See Eccl 3:19, as well as Gen 2:7; 6:17; 7:22.

Only by accepting the reality and naturalness of death, can a person face life with the kind of joy that Solomon encourages in the enjoyment passages

William Barrick - Although Eccl 12:7 does not specifically identify an afterlife, other texts in the Old Testament make the concept more explicit (cf. Ps 49; Da 12:2+). Elsewhere, the reference to human beings returning to **the dust** out of which they came (Job 34:14–15; Ps 104:29) make it clear that the biblical prophets and sages clearly understood the historical record of mankind's creation (cp. Ge 2:7+; Ge 3:19+). Only by accepting the reality and naturalness of death, can a person face life with the kind of joy that Solomon encourages in the enjoyment passages (cp. Eccl 9:2–10 and Eccl 11:7–10). For the wise believer, contentment with the brevity of life produces a freedom for living the life God gives in His service and for His glory. **Ryken** reminds his readers that aging and death consist of "some of the hardest experiences in life. The Bible is honest about this, but not bitter." (See [Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters](#)) The psalmist speaks of the death of God's saints as precious in His estimation (Ps 116:15). **Swindoll** offers three pieces of practical advice in the light of Eccl 12:1–7: (1) I must face the fact that I'm not getting any younger. (2) God has designed me to be empty without Him. (3) Now is the time to prepare for eternity. (Borrow [Living on the Ragged Edge, 385](#))

Ecclesiastes 12:8 "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "all is vanity!"

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:8 Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:8 "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "All is vanity."

NET Ecclesiastes 12:8 "Absolutely futile!" laments the Teacher, "All of these things are futile!"

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:8 ματαιι της ματαιοι των ε πεν κκλησιαστ ς τ π ντα ματαιι της

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:8 Vanity of vanities, said the Preacher; all is vanity.

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:8 "Absolute futility," says the Teacher. "Everything is futile."

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:8 Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity.

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:8 "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Everything is meaningless!"

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:8 "Everything is meaningless," says the Teacher, "completely meaningless."

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:8 Vanity of vanities, said the preacher, the whole is vanity.

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:8 Sheer futility, Qoheleth says, everything is futile.

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:8 Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher; all is vanity.

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:8 Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity.

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:8 Vanity of vanities, says Qoheleth, all things are vanity!

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:8 "Absolutely pointless!" says the spokesman. "Everything is pointless!"

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:8 All things are to no purpose, says the Preacher, all is to no purpose.

FULL CIRCLE: FINAL WORD ON VANITY

Vanity (hebel; [Lxx](#) - mataiotes) of **vanities** (hebel; [Lxx](#) - mataiotes)," says the Preacher, "all is vanity (hebel; [Lxx](#) - mataiotes)!" Everything in life is a vapor—fleeting, elusive, passing—when viewed apart from God. The one who has explored pleasure, wisdom, work, wealth, youth, and death concludes that none of it brings lasting meaning on its own. Solomon is not saying life is worthless, but that apart from God, everything is ultimately ungraspable. Solomon affirms that the search for meaning without God ends in frustration and futility. Everything else, wisdom, pleasure, possessions, success, etc, cannot satisfy.

The upshot is that "Vanity" Is Not Meaningless—It Means Brief, Broken, and Beyond Grasp. To repeat, Solomon isn't saying life is nonsense—he's saying: Life is short (like vapor). Life is frustrating (cannot be controlled). Life is fragile (ends in death). Life is incomplete without God. This prepares us for the hopeful conclusion in Ecc 12:13–14: "Fear God and keep His commandments..."

NET NOTE on **vanity** (hebel; [Lxx](#) - mataiotes) of **vanities** - Heb "futility of futilities." The phrase "absolutely futile" (הֶבֶל הַבָּל, havel havalim) is a superlative genitive construction (GKC 431 §133.i). When a plural genitive follows a singular construct noun of the same root, it indicates the most outstanding example of the person or thing described. Examples: קֹדֶשׁ הַקְּדוֹשִׁים (qodesh haqqodashim, "holy of holies"), i.e., "the most holy place" (Exod 26:33); שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים (shir hashirim, "song of songs"), i.e., "the most excellent song" (Song 1:1); אֱלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וַאֲדֹנֵי הָאֲדֹנִים ('elohe ha'elohim va'adone ha'edonim, "the God of gods and Lord of lords"), i.e., "the highest God and the supreme Lord" (Deut 10:17). See also R. J. Williams, Hebrew Syntax, 17–18, §80; IBHS 154 §9.5.3j.

NET NOTE on all (everything) - tn Heb "Everything." The term is rendered "all of these things" for clarity. Although כֹּל (kol, "everything; all") is often used in an absolute or comprehensive sense (BDB 481 s.v. 1 כֹּל), it is frequently used as a synecdoche of the general for the specific, that is, its sense is limited contextually to the topic at hand (BDB 482 s.v. 2). This is particularly true of הַכֹּל (hakkol, BDB 482 s.v. 2.b) in which the article particularizes or limits the referent to the contextual or previously mentioned topic (e.g., Gen 16:12; 24:1; Exod 29:24; Lev 1:9, 13; 8:27; Deut 2:36; Josh 11:19 [see 2 Sam 19:31; 1 Kgs 14:26 = 2 Chr 12:9]; 21:43; 1 Sam 30:19; 2 Sam 17:3; 23:5; 24:23; 1 Kgs 6:18; 2 Kgs 24:16; Isa 29:11; 65:8; Jer 13:7, 10; Ezek 7:14; Pss 14:3; 49:18; 1 Chr 7:5; 28:19; 29:19; 2 Chr 28:6; 29:28; 31:5; 35:7; 36:17–18; Ezra 1:11; 2:42; 8:34–35; 10:17; Eccl 5:8). Thus, "all" does not always mean "all" absolutely or universally in comprehension. In several cases the context limits its reference to two classes of objects/issues being discussed, so הַכֹּל means "both" (e.g., 2:14; 3:19; 9:1, 2). Thus, הַכֹּל ("all; everything") refers only to what Qoheleth characterizes as "futile" (הֶבֶל, hevel) in the context. This does not mean that everything is futile. For example, fearing God is not "futile" (2:26; 3:14–15; 11:9–10; 12:1, 9, 13–14). Only those objects/issues that are contextually placed under כֹּל are designated as "futile" (הֶבֶל).

NET NOTE Absolutely futile!... All of these things are futile! This motto is the theme of the book. Its occurs at the beginning (1:2) and end of the book (12:8), forming an envelope structure (inclusio). Everything described in 1:2–12:8 is the supporting proof of the thesis of 1:2. With few exceptions (e.g., 2:24–26; 3:14–15; 11:9–12:1, 9), everything described in 1:2–12:8 is characterized as "futile" (הֶבֶל, hevel).

William Barrick - The Epilogue to Ecclesiastes (Eccl 12:8–14) **Most commentators hold that an editor added these final verses.** A Jewish tradition attributes them to Hezekiah's men who penned them as a conclusion to all canonical Solomonic writings. (Borrow Reichert [Ecclesiastes](#)) Some, like **Longman**, believe that the final editor added Eccl 12:8–14 in order to express a positive and orthodox theology, because the editor was unhappy with the ultimate conclusion of the book as a whole. (Ecclesiastes, 284.) Such a viewpoint finds little support from a careful reading of Ecclesiastes. Concepts of divine judgment, human accountability, and divine demands or imperatives surface throughout the book (cp. Eccl 2:26; 3:1, 17; 5:1, 2, 4–7; 7:29; 8:12, 13; 9:7–10; 11:9; 12:14). Crenshaw states that the presence of the refrain ("**Vanity of vanities, . . . all is vanity**") in Eccl 12:8 "refutes the claim that Qohelet hoped for immortality of the soul." (Borrow [Crenshaw](#)) Such a negative treatment of the teachings of Solomon languishes for adequate support. **(1)** Elsewhere in the book, Solomon speaks clearly of future judgment (Eccl 11:9; 12:14; cp. 1 Cor 4:5; Heb 9:27). **(2)** Crenshaw's declaration that the writer "hoped" for immortality rests upon an unknowable—the writer himself must specifically identify his hopes in order for later readers to claim their existence. **(3)** The fact that the spirit returns to God speaks of hope—implies that the spirit does not cease existence with the dissolution of the body in the grave. (Longman, 284.) **Ryken** cites a set of syllogisms: "If there is no God, then there is no Judge. If there is no Judge, then there will be no Final Judgment. If there is no Final Judgment, there is no ultimate meaning to life. Nothing matters." (See [Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters](#)) But, "The final

message of Ecclesiastes is not that nothing matters but that everything does.” (See [Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters](#)) In other words, Solomon’s argument goes this way:

- God exists—He is the Creator.
- Since God is the Creator, He is also the Judge.
- If God is the Judge, there will be a final judgment.
- Since there will be a final judgment, everything we do (how we live) matters.
- Therefore, even though life is but a fleeting breath, it is not futile and insignificant.

All things continue as they were from the beginning. From the fall of man (cp. Eccl 7:29), vanity or futility entered the creation through mankind’s sins. Death came because of sin (Rom 5:12). Because of death, life is fleeting. The use of hebel (“vanity” or “breath”) in verse 8 follows the mention of “spirit” in Eccl 12:7 so closely that the text seems to indicate that “Human breath is the metre not only of one’s life but of the duration of all that is done under the sun.” (Fredericks, Ecclesiastes, 240.)

“Don’t End in Vanity” Solomon says everything is vapor—unless you remember your Creator (v.1), fear God (v.13), and obey Him. Your work, wealth, body, reputation—they all fade. But your soul, your worship, your obedience—these last. The Preacher ends his sermon with a warning: Don’t settle for the vapor. Don’t waste your life chasing wind. Don’t ignore the only One who gives life meaning. Life apart from God is ultimately unfulfilling. All earthly pursuits are temporary and fragile. The phrase “vanity of vanities” sums up Solomon’s search for meaning under the sun. True meaning is found only by looking beyond the sun—to the Creator. This verse sets up the final charge: fear God and obey Him.

- Reassess what you are living for—will it last beyond this life?
- Let go of chasing things that cannot satisfy.
- Read this verse not with despair, but as an invitation to find true purpose in God.
- Use this truth to witness to others chasing worldly success.
- Ask yourself daily: Am I pursuing vapor—or eternity?

Vanity (futility, idols, breath, delusion, worthless, emptiness)([01892](#)) **hebel** means breath, vapor, vanity, emptiness, meaninglessness; idols. Hebel commonly has the figurative use of that which is evanescent and unstable. The first OT use refers to idols ([Dt](#) 32:21, cf 1 Ki 16:13, 26, Jer 8:19; Jeremiah 10:8, 15; Jer 14:22 Jer 51:18; Jonah 2:9; Ps 31:6), a fitting word picture for the worthlessness of idols! **Hebel** refers to breath because of its transitory fleeting character, as in Job’s figurative use “my days are but a **breath**.” (Job 7:16, cf similar idea Ps 39:5, 6, 11; Ps 62:9; Ps 78:33 where hebel parallels behālā from root bāhal “to hasten”: Ps 94:11; Ps 144:4) **Hebel** “generally appears in contexts where it is used as a simile emphasizing the transitory state of an object, never as descriptive of the biological function. A prime example would be “Humanity is like a breath (Ps. 144:4). Not only is breath ethereal and of short duration, but all things which breathe will die.” (Gilbrant)

HEBEL IN ECCLESIASTES - Eccl. 1:2; Eccl. 1:14; Eccl. 2:1; Eccl. 2:11; Eccl. 2:15; Eccl. 2:17; Eccl. 2:19; Eccl. 2:21; Eccl. 2:23; Eccl. 2:26; Eccl. 3:19; Eccl. 4:4; Eccl. 4:7; Eccl. 4:8; Eccl. 4:16; Eccl. 5:7; Eccl. 5:10; Eccl. 6:2; Eccl. 6:4; Eccl. 6:9; Eccl. 6:11; Eccl. 6:12; Eccl. 7:6; Eccl. 7:15; Eccl. 8:10; Eccl. 8:14; Eccl. 9:9; Eccl. 11:8; Eccl. 11:10; Eccl. 12:8

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - NAILS FROM THE SHEPHERD Ecclesiastes 12:8-11

The experiment has ended. With the words “meaningless, meaningless,” Solomon ends where he began—with the utter vanity of life apart from God. Taking the standpoint of a man “under the sun,” he has searched every possible avenue to find the key to the meaning of life. His search led him to wealth, wisdom, education, pleasure, possessions, achievement, fame, folly, and eventually to the house of sorrow. He examined it all and discovered that without God, life is truly meaningless.

No matter what you accomplish in this life, death trumps everything else. Since we all die and no one knows what happens afterwards, nothing is left but to enjoy the short life God gives you.

The last few verses of Ecclesiastes 12 are Solomon’s personal epilogue to the reader. They summarize the journey and apply the truth to the human heart. Verse 11 reminds us that Solomon’s wisdom came from God. They also tell us how hard he worked to write this short book—how he arranged the stories and proverbs to produce a pleasing result.

We also discover why he wrote as he did. His words are like sharp goads—meant to stick in the mind. If you find yourself arguing with something in Ecclesiastes, all the better, because Solomon fully intended to nail the truth to your heart. His is no mere devotional book, meant to be picked up and read casually. To the contrary, only serious readers will appreciate his literary creation.

Solomon himself acknowledged the wisdom contained in the book came from God—the “one Shepherd” (verse 11). This should answer forever those critics and commentators who doubt the value and inspiration of Ecclesiastes. The same Shepherd who gave

Romans to Paul gave Ecclesiastes to Solomon.

This brings us face-to-face with the inspiration of Holy Scripture. No question could be more fundamental. Christians believe and teach that the Bible alone is the Word of God. When the Bible speaks, God speaks. What the Bible says, God says.

The Bible stands alone because it was given by one Shepherd to many authors over 1,500 years. No other book can remotely be compared to it. No one who reads it with an open mind will ever be disappointed.

O God of truth, I thank You for the Holy Scriptures, for in them I discover the way to life eternal. May the truth of Your Word be etched on the tablets of my heart. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- What does it mean to you to say that the Bible is the Word of God?
- What "nails" of truth have you gained from this study of Ecclesiastes? Which passages were like "goads" that seemed to stick in your mind?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Psalm 119:105; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; and Hebrews 4:12-13.

Ecclesiastes 12:9 In addition to being a wise man, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge; and he pondered, searched out and arranged many proverbs.

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:9 And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:9 And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs.

NET Ecclesiastes 12:9 Not only was the Teacher wise, but he also taught knowledge to the people; he carefully evaluated and arranged many proverbs.

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:9 κα περισσ ν τι γνετο κκλησιαστ ς σοφ ς τι δ δαξεν γν σιν σ ν τ ν λα ν κα ο ς
ξιχνι σεται κ σμιον παραβολ ν

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:9 And because the Preacher was wise above others, so it was that he taught man excellent knowledge, and the ear will trace out the parables.

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:9 In addition to the Teacher being a wise man, he constantly taught the people knowledge; he weighed, explored, and arranged many proverbs.

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:9 Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care.

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:9 Not only was the Teacher wise, but also he imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs.

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:9 Keep this in mind: The Teacher was considered wise, and he taught the people everything he knew. He listened carefully to many proverbs, studying and classifying them.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:9 And further, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge, and gave ear, and sought out -- he made right many similes.

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:9 Besides being a sage, Qoheleth taught the people what he himself knew, having weighed, studied and emended many proverbs.

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:9 Besides being wise, the Teacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs.

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:9 Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging proverbs with great care.

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:9 Besides being wise, Qoheleth taught the people knowledge, and weighed, scrutinized and arranged many proverbs.

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:9 Besides being wise, the spokesman also taught the people what he knew. He very

carefully thought about it, studied it, and arranged it in many proverbs.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:9 And because the Preacher was wise he still gave the people knowledge; searching out, testing, and putting in order a great number of wise sayings.

- he still: 1Ki 8:12-21 10:8
- he gave: 1Ki 4:32 Pr 1:1 10:1 25:1

THE WISE PREACHER TRUTH CAREFULLY TAUGHT

In addition to being a wise man Qoheleth (the Preacher) was not merely a philosopher—he was recognized as wise, grounded in fear of the Lord (cf. Proverbs 9:10).

the Preacher ([qoheleth](#); Lxx - ekklesiastes) **also taught the people knowledge** His wisdom wasn't self-centered. He taught others—he was a public instructor, sharing truth with clarity and purpose.

and he pondered, searched out and arranged many proverbs ([mashal](#); Lxx - [parabole](#) = parable) The Preacher wasn't casual. He was a deliberate craftsman. He thought deeply. He researched thoroughly. He organized skillfully. All to teach wisdom effectively. True teaching requires effort: pondering, researching, and organizing.

NET NOTE on **pondered, searched** - Heb “he weighed and studied.” The verbs וְחִקֵּק וַיִּזְנֶה (vé'izzen vekhiqer, “he weighed and he explored”) form a hendiadys (a figurative expression in which two separate terms used in combination to convey a single idea): “he studiously weighed” or “carefully evaluated.” The verb וַיִּזְנֶה (conjunction + Piel perfect 3rd person masculine singular from II זָנַן ('azan) “to weigh; to balance”) is related to the noun מִזְנֶה (mo'zen) “balances; scales” used for weighing money or commercial items (e.g., Jer 32:10; Ezek 5:1). This is the only use of the verb in the OT. In this context, it means “to weigh” = “to test; to prove” (BDB 24 s.v. זָנַן) or “to balance” (HALOT 27 II זָנַן). Cohen suggests, “**He made an examination of the large number of proverbial sayings which had been composed, testing their truth and worth, to select those which he considered deserving of circulation**” (A. Cohen, The Five Megilloth [SoBB], 189).

NET NOTE on **arranged** - The verb יָקַן (taqan, “to make straight”) connotes “to put straight” or “to arrange in order” (HALOT 1784 s.v. יָקַן; BDB 1075 s.v. יָקַן). This may refer to Qoheleth's activity in compiling a collection of wisdom sayings in an orderly manner, or writing the wisdom sayings in a straightforward, direct manner.

William Barrick - Eccl 12:9–10 give implicit, if not explicit, testimony to the reality of the writer's historical existence. (Fox, Qohelet argues that this might be a common literary device to cause readers to “suspend disbelief” in order to accept the book itself as credible) Eccl 12:9, even if written by an editor, seems to point to the book of Proverbs, which the writer attributes to “the Preacher.” That implies that the author of Proverbs is the same as “the Preacher.” Solomon's pursuit of wisdom displays a pastoral tone more than an academic or professional tone. (Borrow [Eaton, Ecclesiastes](#)) “**Pondered**,” “**searched out**,” and “**arranged**” all reflect Solomon's knowledgeable pursuit of wisdom and the issues involved in life “under the sun.” “**Pondered**” (literally, “weighed”) “points to careful evaluation, indicating his honesty, caution and balance”; (Borrow [Eaton, Ecclesiastes](#)) “searched out” implies his “thoroughness and diligence”; (Borrow [Eaton, Ecclesiastes](#)) and, “arranged” points to orderliness and an artistic skill in his presentation (cp. 1 Kgs 4:32). (Borrow [Eaton, Ecclesiastes](#)) The description of the author reminds readers of the introduction to the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:1–4) and of the various inscriptions found in the Book of Proverbs 24:23; 30:1; 31:1. All are a straightforward account of how the respective book or collection (in Proverbs) came to be written.

Preacher (06953) [qoheleth](#) (from [qahal](#) = to gather or assemble, convocation - 116v frequently in context of assembling people for worship, war or teaching) refers to a collector (of sentences or of wisdom), preacher, public speaker, speaker in an assembly, Qoheleth. Qōheleṯ only occurs in Ecclesiastes and is the Hebrew name for the book.

The English title **Ecclesiastes** is a transliteration of the Greek ([Lxx](#)) word **ekklesiastes**, which is one who speaks to the assembly or a preacher/public speaker in an assembly and is derived from [ekklesia/ecclesia](#) which means assembly or congregation. In sum, the Greek **ekklesiastes** is one who addresses the congregation or the assembly.

the wealth and influence to live the "good life" and report his findings to the assembly.

TWOT (PAGE 790) - qōhelet. Preacher, speaker in assemblies. qōhelet is a Qal feminine participle from qāhal which in the Niphal means "to come together" and in the Hiphil "to bring together." The Qal form is used only

here. The word is related to the noun qāhal (assembly). The LXX chose ecclesiastes (a member of an assembly) as a translation due to the alleged relation of qāhāl to ecclēsia (assembly, see above). The English rendering "Preacher" follows Jerome's Latin concionatur ("speaker before an assembly"), however the meaning of the Hebrew name is by no means clear. The content of the book fits the wisdom literature category rather than the sermonic category. A second conjecture contends that the Qal form qōhelet is used as though it were a Hiph 1 and means "one who convenes an assembly." The word has the definite article in Eccles. 12:8 which lends credence to the claim that the word is intended to be a description, not a personal name.

qōhelet occurs seven times in the book of Ecclesiastes (Eccles. 1:1-2, 12; Eccles. 7:27; Eccles. 12:8-10) and nowhere else in biblical literature. As a noun designating the speaker, it also gives the Hebrew name Qōhelet to the book itself. The noun is ordinarily construed with masculine forms of verbs. The exception in Eccles. 7:27 may be due to an erroneous word division since qōhelet identifies himself as a son of David, king in Jerusalem (Eccles. 1:1, 12).

QOHELETH - 7V - Preacher(7). Eccl. 1:1; Eccl. 1:2; Eccl. 1:12; Eccl. 7:27; Eccl. 12:8; Eccl. 12:9; Eccl. 12:10

Ecclesiastes 12:10 The Preacher sought to find delightful words and to write words of truth correctly.

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:10 The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:10 The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and what was written was upright-- words of truth.

NET Ecclesiastes 12:10 The Teacher sought to find delightful words, and to write accurately truthful sayings.

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:10 πολλὰ ζήτησεν κκλησιαστὸς τὸ εὐκταλὸν καὶ γεγραμμένον ἐθιχτοῦς λέξεως

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:10 The Preacher sought diligently to find out acceptable words, and a correct writing, even words of truth.

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:10 The Teacher sought to find delightful sayings and write words of truth accurately.

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:10 The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:10 The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true.

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:10 The Teacher sought to find just the right words to express truths clearly.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:10 The preacher sought to find out pleasing words, and, written by the upright, words of truth.

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:10 Qoheleth took pains to write in an attractive style and by it to convey truths.

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:10 The Teacher sought to find pleasing words, and he wrote words of truth plainly.

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:10 The Preacher sought to find pleasing words, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:10 Qoheleth sought to find pleasing sayings, and to write down true sayings with precision.

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:10 The spokesman tried to find just the right words. He wrote the words of truth very carefully.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:10 The Preacher made search for words which were pleasing, but his writing was in words upright and true.

- **Preacher:** Ec 1:1,12
- **delightful words** Pr 15:23,26 16:21-24 25:11,12 1Ti 1:15
- **to write words:** Pr 1:1-6 8:6-10 22:17-21 Lu 1:1-4 Joh 3:11 Col 1:5

WORDS DELIGHTFUL

AND TRUE

The Preacher sought to find delightful words and to write words of truth correctly- NET = "and to write accurately truthful sayings." GWN = "He wrote the words of truth very carefully." The Preacher didn't only aim to teach truth—he aimed to do so beautifully and memorably, in a way that engaged the heart as well as the mind. He not only sought truth—he worked to present it rightly. His goal was not just information, but trustworthy expression.

NET NOTE on **delightful** - In the construct phrase דִּבְרֵי־חֵפֶזֶת (divre-khefets, "words of delight") the noun חֵפֶזֶת ("delight") functions as an attributive genitive ("delightful words") or a genitive of estimation or worth ("words viewed as delightful by Qoheleth" or "words that he took delight in"). For another example of a genitive of estimation of worth, see זִבְחֵי אֱלֹהִים (zivkhe 'elohim) "sacrifices of God" = "sacrifices viewed as acceptable to God" (Ps 51:19). In other words, Qoheleth wrote his proverbs so effectively that he was able to take moral and aesthetic delight in his words.

William Barrick - Solomon attributes both delightfulness (cf. Prov 25:11) and dependability to the words that he sought (Eccl 12:10). These two characteristics of instruction in Ecclesiastes reveal a balance. "To be upright but unpleasant is to be a fool; to be pleasant but not upright is to be a charlatan." (Borrow [Eaton, Ecclesiastes](#)) The positive message of Ecclesiastes as presented in the enjoyment passages and in the book's closing exhortations argue against a pessimistic approach to the teachings of the book. **Kaiser** concludes, "In no way can that be a description of the work of a pessimist, nihilist, or Epicurean with an 'eat-drink-and-be-merry-for-tomorrow-we-die' mentality." (Borrow [Kaiser, Ecclesiastes](#))

Ecclesiastes 12:11 The words of wise men are like goads, and masters of these collections are like well-driven nails; they are given by one Shepherd.

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:11 The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:11 The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd.

NET Ecclesiastes 12:11 The words of the sages are like prods, and the collected sayings are like firmly fixed nails; they are given by one shepherd.

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:11 λ γοι σοφ ν ς τ βο κεντρα κα ς λοι πεφυτευμ νοι ο παρ τ ν συναγμ των δ θησαν κ ποιμ νος ν ς κα περισσ ν ξ α τ ν

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:11 The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails firmly fastened, which have been given from one shepherd by agreement.

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:11 The sayings of the wise are like goads, and those from masters of collections are like firmly embedded nails. The sayings are given by one Shepherd.

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:11 The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd.

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:11 The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails--given by one Shepherd.

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:11 The words of the wise are like cattle prods-- painful but helpful. Their collected sayings are like a nail-studded stick with which a shepherd drives the sheep.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:11 Words of the wise are as goads, and as fences planted by the masters of collections, they have been given by one shepherd.

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:11 The sayings of a sage are like goads, like pegs positioned by shepherds: the same shepherd finds a use for both.

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:11 The sayings of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings that are given by one shepherd.

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:11 The sayings of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings which are given by one Shepherd.

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:11 The sayings of the wise are like goads; like fixed spikes are the topics given by one

collector.

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:11 Words from wise people are like spurs. Their collected sayings are like nails that have been driven in firmly. They come from one shepherd.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:11 The words of the wise are pointed, and sayings grouped together are like nails fixed with a hammer; they are given by one guide.

- as goads: Jer 23:29 Mt 3:7 Ac 2:37 2Co 10:4 Heb 4:12
- masters: Joh 3:10
- given: Ge 49:24 Ps 23:1 80:1 Isa 40:11 Eze 34:23 Joh 10:14 Heb 13:20 1Pe 5:4

Related Passages:

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

Psalm 119:105 Nun. Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

John 6:68 Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.

John 10:27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;

GOADS AND NAILS FROM OUR SHEPHERD

The words of wise men are like goads - A **goad** is a sharp stick used to prod oxen forward. True wisdom isn't always comfortable—it stings, awakens, convicts,, directs, motivates, and corrects. Like a goad, it prevents spiritual laziness or drifting. Like a goad, true wisdom may hurt at first—but only to guide us to righteousness. God's truth doesn't flatter—it transforms.

and masters of these collections are like well-driven nails- Wisdom doesn't just poke but it stabilizes and anchors. It gives the soul firm truths to hang life upon, like nails in a wall, holding steady in a world of uncertainty.

they are given by one Shepherd - Though wise words come through many men (like Solomon), true wisdom comes from one source, the Shepherd of souls (cf. Psalm 23, John 10).

Walter Kaiser - Accordingly, Qoheleth's words are designed to prod the sluggish into action. They "goad" him into doing something. But they are also meant to be "nails" that are "fastened" as definite points in the sluggard's mental furnishings to give him anchorage, stability, and perspective on life. At one time they are pricking his conscience, perhaps with a single proverb; at another time they are fixing themselves on the memory like a central nail on which the important, everyday articles of clothing or cooking are kept. (Borrow [Ecclesiastes](#))

NET NOTE on "**goads**"; NCV "sharp sticks used to guide animals." For further information see M. A. Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation, 29–32.

William Barrick - Interpreters variously take the "**one Shepherd**" as either Solomon, wisdom writers in general, or God (Ec 12:11). Since the book addresses the author as "the Preacher," it seems better to understand "**Shepherd**" as a title of deity rather than another title for the human author. This title for God in this context implies a doctrine of divine superintendence in the writing of Scripture (cp. 2Pe 1:21). (Borrow [Eaton](#)) "**Shepherd**" refers to God Who "is the real source of the words of this book; not cynicism, not skepticism, not worldliness." (Borrow [Kaiser](#)) The agricultural reference to **goads** (cf. 1Sa 13:21) provides a vehicle for saying that "**Words** and **goads** are tools to guide people on the right path, though making them uncomfortable in doing so." (Fox, Qohelet) The "**well-driven nails**" appear to be something like tent pegs for the herdsmen's tents or pegs driven into beams for use in hanging utensils from them. The two figures represent the stimulation and the steadying effects of wise words, or, as Kidner notes, "they spur the will and stick in the memory." (Borrow [Kidner](#))

Ecclesiastes 12:12 But beyond this, my son, be warned: the writing of many books is endless, and excessive devotion to

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:12 And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:12 And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh.

NET Ecclesiastes 12:12 Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them. There is no end to the making of many books, and much study is exhausting to the body.

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:12 ὁ υἱοῦ μου φλάξαι ποιεῖσαι βιβλὰ πολλὰ οὐκ ὅστιν περᾶσμις καὶ μελὴ τῆ πολλῆς πωσις σαρκὸς

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:12 And moreover, my son, guard thyself by means of them: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:12 But beyond these, my son, be warned: there is no end to the making of many books, and much study wearies the body.

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:12 My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:12 Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them. Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body.

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:12 But, my child, let me give you some further advice: Be careful, for writing books is endless, and much study wears you out.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:12 And further, from these, my son, be warned; the making of many books hath no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:12 Furthermore, my child, you must realise that writing books involves endless hard work, and that much study wearies the body.

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:12 Of anything beyond these, my child, beware. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:12 My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:12 As to more than these, my son, beware. Of the making of many books there is no end, and in much study there is weariness for the flesh.

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:12 Be warned, my children, against anything more than these. People never stop writing books. Too much studying will wear out your body.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:12 And further, my son, take note of this: of the making of books there is no end, and much learning is a weariness to the flesh.

ASV Ecclesiastes 12:12 And furthermore, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

DBY Ecclesiastes 12:12 And besides, my son, be warned by them: of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

BHT Ecclesiastes 12:12 wūyötēr mēhē^ammâ Būnî hizzāhēr `ásôt sūpārīm harBĕ ʿên qēc wūla^ahag harBĕ yūgî`at Bāsār

- **But beyond this** Lu 16:29-31 Joh 5:39 20:31 21:25 2Pe 1:19-21
- **wearying to the body:** Ec 1:18

WHEN BOOKS ARE TOO MUCH

But beyond this, my son, be warned ([zahar](#); Lxx - [phulasso](#) - be on guard) A loving but serious warning: don't drift away from the truth by overindulging in man-made wisdom.

the writing of many books is endless There's no end to the writing of books—philosophies, theories, opinions. This is not an attack on learning, but a warning about overload, distraction, or endless speculation.

and excessive devotion to books is wearying to the body Excessive study can wear you out—not just physically, but spiritually. It can become pointless labor when it doesn't lead to truth or transformation. This verse is not anti-intellectual. Solomon wrote Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes—he valued learning. But he warns: Don't let intellectual pursuit become a distraction from obedience. The danger: Knowing much, but doing little chasing novelty, but forgetting what's eternal, accumulating opinions, but ignoring God's commands. Studying without God at the center leads to weariness and futility.

NET NOTE on The exhortation may be understood in two ways: (1) to avoid any so-called wisdom sayings beyond those mentioned in vv. 10–11: "The words of the wise ... are given from one shepherd. And of anything beyond these, my son, be warned!" (see RSV, NRSV, NAB, Douay, NIV). This is paraphrased well by Moffatt: "My son, avoid anything beyond the scriptures of wisdom" (Moffatt). (2) The exhortation refers to the concerns of v. 12b, namely, diligent study is wearisome, i.e., "Furthermore, my son, be warned: there is no end to the making of books, and much study is wearisome to the body" (see NEB, ASV, NASB, MLB).

Walter Kaiser - Another function found in Ecclesiastes is admonishment (v. 12). Whereas books may multiply and men may weary themselves with study of the ever enlarging library of volumes, the inspired words of Ecclesiastes will instruct, warn, and admonish. (The Hebrew word [zahar](#) does not appear in Proverbs, but it is found in Eccles. 4:13, where it means "to take advice.") Only one true source of the book could cause Solomon, the human author, to have such a high estimation of this book of Ecclesiastes: the "one Shepherd" (Ec 12:11). This can only mean Jehovah (or, more accurately, Yahweh), the Shepherd of Israel (Psalm 80:1). He is the real source of the words of this book; not cynicism, not skepticism, not worldliness—not any of these sources. He gave the ideas and aided Solomon in the composition of Ecclesiastes. (Borrow [Kaiser](#))

William Barrick - In Eccl 12:12–13, the imperatives fill the air with a sense of urgency. (Crenshaw, Ecclesiastes) Eccl 12:12 provides the only occurrence of the phrase "**my son**" in Ecclesiastes. Some commentators apply the nomenclature to students, rather than to actual sons. (Borrow Crenshaw, [Ecclesiastes](#)) The context does not resolve the meaning for the reader. Either interpretation might be correct. One commentator takes the position that "**the writing of many books is endless**" means "'Making many books is a thing of no purpose'. Writing is praiseworthy, but there is no point in overdoing it." (Fox, Qoheltet) Another sees the statement as a warning about the many pagan writings from other nations that claim to offer wisdom. (Borrow [Eaton](#)) Understanding it as a warning, another identifies it with "poring over unsuitable literature," which will only weary and do harm. (Whybray, [Ecclesiastes](#) online) In other words, the writer intends more the "use" of **books** than the writing of them. (Fredericks, "Ecclesiastes," 244.)

Warned (teach) ([02094](#)) [zahar](#) means to teach, to admonish or to warn. For example in Ps 19:11+ David says that "Moreover, by them (**judgments** in Ps 19:9) Your servant is **warned** ([zahar](#)); In keeping them there is great reward." In Da 12:3+ the sense is different = "Those who have insight will shine ([zahar](#)) brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven." **Summary** - 1) to admonish, warn, teach, shine, send out light, be light, be shining 1a) (Niphal) to be taught, be admonished 1b) (Hiphil) 1b1) to teach, warn 1b2) to shine, send out light (in Da 12:3)

Zahar - give them warning(1), receive instruction(1), take warning(2), taken warning(1), teach(1), took warning(1), warn(6), warned(7), warns(1). - Ex 18:20; 2 Ki. 6:10; 2 Chr. 19:10; Ps. 19:11; Eccl. 4:13; Eccl. 12:12; Ezek. 3:17; Ezek. 3:18; Ezek. 3:19; Ezek. 3:20; Ezek. 3:21; Ezek. 33:3; Ezek. 33:4; Ezek. 33:5; Ezek. 33:6; Ezek. 33:7; Ezek. 33:8; Ezek. 33:9; Dan. 12:3

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - **MAKE UP YOUR MIND!** Ecclesiastes 12:12

As a careful reading of Ecclesiastes makes clear, Solomon enjoyed the challenge of mastering a new topic. He didn't mind doing the hard work of research necessary in order to find the truth. But eventually the time comes when you have to make up your mind. You can't sit on the fence forever. If your studies don't lead you to the Lord, then perhaps you've been studying the wrong things.

It meant taking a long motorcycle ride over the dusty, hot roads of northern India, but I jumped at the chance to see the actual village work. When we arrived in a small village in the state of Bihar, my guide introduced me to two local Christian leaders. Together we sat down on the mat and I listened with awe as the two men sang original songs they had written in the local dialect of the Hindi language. Indian music sounds nothing at all like Western music—the pitch, tone, and rhythms are completely different. But they sang with enthusiasm and obvious joy in the Lord, accompanied only by a tambourine that one man beat against his shin.

The leader of the local congregation came from a warrior caste. His people had a long and proud history that stretched back many centuries. How did he become a Christian? It started a few years ago when someone told him about the Bible. Although he was

illiterate, he tried to read it, and as he did a light shined from heaven upon Matthew 5:5 and gave him the meaning. This miraculous insight appeared to him several more times, each time teaching him more about Jesus.

When he finally accepted Christ, his wife threw him out of their house, whereupon he moved to this village and joined the small band of believers. With great pride he showed me the stones in the ground for the new church they hoped to build. It wasn't large—about 11 feet by 17 feet—but his face glowed with joy at the thought of having a proper building for God's worship.

Through a translator he told me five other men in this village had a name identical to his. Therefore, his official address consists of his name plus the word "Christian," because he was the only believer by that name in the village.

Although it's not easy for him to be known as Mr. Christian, he smiled as he told me the story. He thinks that God is going to do something great in his village. I believe he's right, because God honors those who aren't ashamed of Jesus' name.

Lord, I ask for the courage to make up my mind, so that I won't be guilty of always searching but never quite finding the way of truth. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Name someone you know who is "sitting on the fence" spiritually. What will it take to move the person to a decision one way or the other
- In what areas of your life do you need to make up your mind? What is holding you back?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Psalm 119:89-91; John 17:17; and 2 Timothy 3:6-7.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person.

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all.

NET Ecclesiastes 12:13 Having heard everything, I have reached this conclusion: Fear God and keep his commandments, because this is the whole duty of man.

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:13 τ λος λ γου τ π ν κο εται τ ν θε ν φοβο κα τ ς ντολ ς α το φ λασσε τι το το π ς νθρωπος

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:13 Hear the end of the matter, the sun: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole man.

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:13 When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is: fear God and keep His commands, because this is for all humanity.

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:13 The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:13 Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:13 That's the whole story. Here now is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is everyone's duty.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:13 The end of the whole matter let us hear: -- 'Fear God, and keep His commands, for this is the whole of man.

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:13 To sum up the whole matter: fear God and keep his commandments, for that is the duty of everyone.

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:13 The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone.

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:13 The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:13 The last word, when all is heard: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is man's all;

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:13 After having heard it all, this is the conclusion: Fear God, and keep his commands, because this applies to everyone.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:13 This is the last word. All has been said. Have fear of God and keep his laws; because this is right for every man.

- Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: or, The end of the matter, even all that hath been heard is
- Fear: Ec 5:7 8:12 Ge 22:12 De 6:2 10:12 Ps 111:10 112:1 145:19 147:11 Pr 1:7 23:17 1Pe 2:17 Rev 19:5
- for: Ec 2:3 6:12 Job 28:28 Ps 115:13-15 Pr 19:23 Lu 1:50

THE END OF THE MATTER: LIFE'S TRUE PURPOSE

The conclusion, when all has been heard is Solomon has examined everything—pleasure, toil, success, wisdom, mortality—and now gives his final verdict.

Fear God - Fear is not terror, but reverence, awe, worshipful obedience. It is a vital Old Testament truth involving submission (Deut. 10:12), worship (Psalm 33:8), moral living (Proverbs 8:13) and awareness of judgment (Prov. 1:7)

and keep His commandments Life's meaning is found not just in knowing about God, but in obeying Him. Loving Him means walking in His ways (cf. Deut. 6:5; John 14:15). The only way to overcome futility is to live in fear and obedience to God.

This echoes what Jesus later taught: "Love the Lord your God... This is the great and foremost commandment." (Matt. 22:37–38) "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." (John 14:15) This is not legalism—it's relational loyalty to the One who made and loves us.

because this applies to every person Fearing God and obeying Him is not optional but it is the very end for every man. This is why we were made.

Walter Kaiser - What then is the grand conclusion (end) of all these things? If we have been following our author's aim carefully, we should have added up all the parts of the preceding argument and concluded that the chief end of man is to "fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the 'manishness' of a man and 'womanliness' of a woman" (Ecc 12:13). What is the "profit" of living? What does a man get for all his work? He gets the living God! And his whole profit consists of fearing Him and obeying His Word. ([Borrow](#))

William Barrick - Eccl 12:13–14 form the ultimate conclusion of Ecclesiastes. The Masoretes, preservationists of the ancient Hebrew text from around 700–1200 A.D., instruct the public reader to repeat Eccl 12:13 after Eccl 12:14 so that the reading does not end upon a negative note. Ending with verse 14 makes "evil" the final (and ominous) word of Ecclesiastes. (Reichart and Cohen, Ecclesiastes) The Hebrew text in Eccl 12:13 emphasizes "**God**" and "commandments." (Borrow [Eaton](#)) The logical order of the two imperatives ("fear" and "obey") supplies additional significance. As **Eaton** explains, "Conduct derives from worship. A knowledge of God leads to obedience; not vice versa." (Borrow [Eaton](#)) The teaching in these final verses reflects instructions in the book of Deuteronomy 4:6, 10; 6:2, 24; 8:6; 10:12–13. **Every person** (literally, "the whole of man"; Eccl 12:13) occurs also in Ec 3:13 and Ec 5:19. According to **Greidanus**, "The Hebrew does not have the word 'duty,' so it reads literally that fearing God and keeping his commandments 'is the whole of everyone.' It's not just our duty, it's our essence." (See [Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes - Page 309](#)) In Psalm 109:4 the psalmist uses a similar construction to indicate that he is characterized by prayer: "I am prayer." The same type of construction appears also in Psalm 120:7 ("I am peace") and Job 8:9 ("we are yesterday"). The point is that the attribute is the defining essence of the person or persons to which it is ascribed. Thus, it is mankind's very essence to **fear God** and obey Him. The truths of Ecclesiastes apply to everyone (cp. Ro 2:14–16+). Here is the answer to the opening question (Eccl 1:3+, "What advantage [or, profit] does man have in all his work which he does under the sun?"): "He gets the living God! And his whole profit consists of fearing Him and obeying His Word." (Borrow [Kaiser](#)) Or, as Estes puts it, the advantage "resides not in human achievement apart from God, but rather in human connection with God." Solomon's pursuit of wisdom and investigation of mankind's condition "under the sun" results in "an incitement to true piety. The insignificance of all that is done under the sun leaves him awestruck and silent before God." (Borrow [Garrett](#))

"This Is What You Were Made For" You were not made to chase success, to accumulate knowledge, to indulge pleasures or to

escape death. You were made to fear your Creator, to walk in His truth and to glorify and enjoy Him forever. Solomon, at the end of his life, cuts through the fog of everything else and says: "This is the purpose of your existence."

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - THE LAST WORD AND THE FIRST RULE Ecclesiastes 12:13

Where can we find meaning in life? Answer: Life makes sense if you fear God and keep His commandments. And conversely, nothing makes sense if you don't. If life is like a long, dark tunnel, then this is the light at the end.

Fear God! Keep His commandments! This is your whole duty. This is why you were born. Everything else is just details. That is Solomon's conclusion at the end of his journey to find ultimate meaning.

Several weeks ago a friend e-mailed me with the news that his mother's cancer surgery had been successful. He ended his message with this statement: "God is God, good, and great." As I pondered his words, I was struck at once by their simplicity and profundity. How much truth those six little words contain. They summarize an entire Christian worldview.

To say that God is God is simply to remind ourselves of the First Rule of the Spiritual Life: He's God and we're not. When I read my Bible it seems to pop up on every page and in every biblical story. Because God is God, He does whatever pleases Him and works in every situation of life in ways I cannot see and would not understand if I could see. This is a humbling truth because it brings me to my knees and forces me to admit that God alone is running the universe and I'm not running any part of it—not even the part I think I'm running.

To say that God is good means that His heart is inclined toward kindness. This gives me courage to pray for mercy in times of trouble. It also helps me to keep a positive perspective when life tumbles in around me. We often say that all things work together for good—and they do (Romans 8:28)—but that's true only because God Himself is good. That means I can be content right now because I have everything I need at any given moment. If I truly needed anything else, God would give it to me.

To say that God is great means that He isn't limited by my circumstances but can work through them for my good and His glory. Let these six simple words lift your spirits: "God is God, good, and great." God is God; be humbled. God is good; be encouraged. God is great; be thankful. Center your life on Him and in the end you will have no regrets.

Almighty God, to know You is life's highest goal and the reason for which I was created. May I be satisfied with nothing less. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- What does it mean to fear God? What are the marks of a person who fears God?
- Why is this the first step in the spiritual life?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read 1 Samuel 12:24; Proverbs 9:10; and Hebrews 12:1-3.

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - THE TRUEST BOOK IN THE BIBLE Ecclesiastes 1:2; 12:13

When I set out to write this book, several of my friends wondered whether this was a worthwhile project. A number commented on how rarely they had read Ecclesiastes. At least one person cautioned that Ecclesiastes could not be trusted because Solomon wrote it in a spiritually backslidden condition. My viewpoint is almost entirely the opposite. It seems to me that Ecclesiastes is the truest book in the Bible. I doubt that I would have said that twenty years ago—on reflection, I know that I wouldn't have—because I simply didn't appreciate the depth of Solomon's brutal candor about the ragged edges of life. Over the years, this book has become more and more familiar to me until at last it seems as natural and honest as anything in the Bible.

Not long ago I commented to my congregation that as a pastor I am very weary of doing funerals. After two decades of visiting mortuaries and doing graveside services, I have seen all the death I ever want to see. I've done funerals for babies, for young people, for adults who died suddenly, and many services for older people who died after a long illness. It's not that I don't find a profound satisfaction in bringing God's comfort to grieving hearts. I do, and I thank God for calling me into the ministry. But of death itself I am very tired. I long to see a few resurrections. In feeling that way, I am in good company because Solomon struggled mightily with the awesome reality of human death.

But I know something Solomon never knew. I know that Jesus Christ has come back from the dead. There is no other reason to think that we will ever see our loved ones again. The New Testament again and again connects our resurrection with His. Ours will happen in the future because His happened in the past. Sometimes when I stand by the grave of someone I know, I can almost hear a voice from beneath the ground saying, "I'm coming up." To unbelievers that may sound like wishful thinking, but to me it's nothing

but solid biblical faith. In the words of the Apostles' Creed, I believe in the resurrection of the dead.

Ecclesiastes is true and when it comes to the human condition, this may be the truest book in the Bible. But it's not the final word.

Lord Jesus, thank You for solid answers to life's hardest questions. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Which parts of Ecclesiastes are hardest for you to understand? Which parts seem to ring true to your own experience?
- Do you believe in the resurrection of the dead?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Psalm 111; Romans 8:31-35; and Revelation 19:1-5.

Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.

NET Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God will evaluate every deed, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:14 π σ ν π ν τ πο ημα θε ς ξει ν κρ σει ν παντ παρεωραμ ν ν γαθ ν κα ν πονηρ ν

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God will bring every work into judgment, with everything that has been overlooked, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God will bring every act to judgment, including every hidden thing, whether good or evil.

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:14 God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:14 For every work doth God bring into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether good or bad.'

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God will call all our deeds to judgement, all that is hidden, be it good or bad.

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:14 because God will bring to judgment every work, with all its hidden qualities, whether good or bad.

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:14 God will certainly judge everything that is done. This includes every secret thing, whether it is good or bad.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:14 God will be judge of every work, with every secret thing, good or evil.

- Ec 11:9 Ps 96:13 Mt 12:36 25:31-46 Lu 12:1,2 Joh 5:29 Ac 17:30,31 Ro 2:16 14:10-12 1Co 4:5 2Co 5:10 Rev 20:11-15

**THE FINAL EVALUATION
YOUR LIFE WILL BE JUDGED**

For God will bring every act to judgment Every action, large or small, seen or unseen, will be evaluated by God. There is no such thing as an insignificant act in His eyes. Secret sin on earth is open scandal in Heaven!

everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil. God sees everything (Pr 15:3), not just what is visible to people. He will judge not only what you did, but why you did it. Every deed is seen, no matter the moral quality and will be weighed by God. This includes righteous acts rewarded, and evil acts exposed and judged.

Solomon closes not with sentiment but sobriety: There is a Judge. There is a courtroom. There is an account to give. Whether you lived for pleasure, work, wisdom, or worship—God will evaluate all of it. The whole book, having declared so much to be “hebel” (vapor), ends by showing that life isn’t meaningless if lived under God’s judgment and sovereignty.

Walter Kaiser - What is more, “every work” and “every secret deed,” no matter “**whether it is good** or whether it is bad” (12:14), will be brought under the searching light of God’s judgment in that day when all men shall personally face Him to give an account of the deeds done in the body. So echoed Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:10 (Bema Seat for Believers). Men are responsible beings, not brutes, who are destined to live to confront the past with the God that they either feared or flouted. No formula of legalism is this “keeping of His commandments.” Neither is it a method of earning favor to be used when facing God. It is a summary of the beginning, middle, and end of life as we know it on this earth: coming to know and trust the living God; receiving the gifts of life’s goods; learning how to enjoy those mundane gifts; understanding the major part of the plan of God; and being guided into joyous and strenuous activity in the art of living, even while portions of life remain enigmatic. What a book! What a good God! What a life! And what a plan! ([Borrow](#))

[William Barrick](#) - The reader’s course is clear:

- Remember God, the Creator (Eccl 12:1).
- Fear God, the Creator (Eccl 3:14; 5:7; 8:12; 12:14).
- Keep the commandments of God (Eccl 12:14).
- Enjoy the life God gives (Eccl 9:7–10).
- Prepare for leaving life “under the sun” (Eccl 12:1).
- Prepare to stand before God in a future judgment where we will be held accountable for enjoying what He has given and for living in accord with His commands (Eccl 11:9; cf. Rom 2:16; Heb 9:27).

Here are a few questions to ponder as we bring this fascinating, enigmatic book to a close...

- What am I chasing that might turn out to be striving after the wind?
- Do I fear God and live with His Bema Seat judgment in mind (2Co 5:10+)?
- Am I enjoying today as a gift from God or resenting the lot He has given me (1Th 5:18+)?
- How does the brevity of my life and the certainty of death sharpen my focus to redeem the time of my life (Jas 4:14, Eph 5:15-16+)?
- Am I living in a way I would not regret if my life ended today (Ps 90:12+)?

[William Barrick](#) - Questions for study:

1. What does it mean to “Remember your Creator”? How can we do that?
2. Why is death sometimes very unpleasant and even frightening?
3. What are the characteristics of aging for most people?
4. How should we prepare ourselves for old age and death?
5. Explain the reasons for believing that the text of Ecclesiastes actually hints strongly at a life beyond the sun?
6. How does the writer of Eccl 12:9–11 describe the book of Ecclesiastes? How does that compare to a pessimistic or skeptical approach to the book?

“You Will Stand Before God” You may hide from others. You may rationalize to yourself. You may forget what you’ve done. But God sees.

And one day, God will call it all forth. If that truth scares you, good—it’s meant to. But if you fear God and trust in Christ, then judgment becomes: Not a terror, but a vindication, a moment of reward and final reckoning. Live every day with the Judgment Seat in mind and the Cross in your heart (Gal 2:20+).

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - **CORAM DEO** Ecclesiastes 12:14 (See online discussion of [Coram Deo](#))

Solomon’s final argument in favor of serving God may come as a surprise. Instead of ending on an “up” note, he reminds us one final time of the coming day of judgment when our lives will pass under His all-seeing eyes. This means that everything we do and

say is important. Since nothing is hidden, everything ultimately matters.

I know many people who struggle with questions of right and wrong—especially in those areas for which we have no explicit guidance in the Bible. They truly want to please the Lord, but worry about their daily decisions. Here is a simple question that will replace many of the dos and don'ts: Can I do this to God's glory? That is, if I do this, will it enhance God's reputation in the world? Will those who watch me know that I know God from my behavior? Or will I simply have to explain this away or apologize for it later?

That brings us back to Question 1 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism: What is the chief purpose of man? "To glorify God and enjoy Him forever." We were made to glorify God. Nothing works right when we don't.

In putting the matter this way I am calling for nothing less than a God-centered life. That means intentionally making your decisions so that God's reputation is enhanced in the world. The Puritans often used the Latin phrase *coram Deo*, which means "under the face of God." It's a reminder that God is always watching everything we do. His eye is always on us, nothing escapes His notice, and all of life must be lived for His approval.

J. S. Bach carved the words *Soli Deo Gloria* on his organ at Leipzig, Germany, to remind him that all his music be composed and performed for the glory of God. The initials SDG appear at the end of his compositions: "To God alone be the glory." That's what I mean by intentional God-centered living.

All I am saying may be summed up this way. People watch what we do and say and draw huge conclusions from our tiniest personal decisions. Living in the light of God's glory means to live so that others will draw the right conclusions as they watch us.

Ruth Bell Graham defines a saint this way: "A saint is someone who makes it easy to believe in Jesus." May God help us to live that way every day.

Righteous Judge, help to me to live in such a way that I will not be ashamed when I stand before You. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Name three practical ways you can glorify God this week.
- How does it make you feel to know that God is watching you this very moment? Is there anything in your life that you would be ashamed for God to bring to light when you stand before Him?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Romans 14:9-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10; and 1 John 2:28.