

Wisdom for Aging

Key Verse: “*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.*”

—**Ecclesiastes 12:13**

Selected Scripture:
Ecclesiastes 11:7–12:14

YOUNG KING SOLOMON

was granted much wisdom from God as he began his reign over Israel. As time passed, however, he departed from much of the wisdom he had received. Now, in the context of our lesson, Solomon is nearing the end of his life and imparts to us lessons he has learned. Some of these he had learned through the wisdom given him by God. Others were learned in much difficulty as he strayed from righteousness.

One of the lessons Solomon passes on to us is that we should cherish life and rejoice in the years that we have. (Eccles. 11:8) Life is a precious gift from God our Creator. Solomon reminds us also in this verse that in the present life there are many “days of darkness.” These are the days of trial and suffering that all mankind experience to a greater or lesser extent because of their inherited fallen condition. This will be dealt with in Christ’s kingdom, for the penalty imposed upon Father Adam, and its resulting curse upon the earth and its inhabitants, will be lifted. This will allow mankind to learn righteousness in a way that he has never had available to him before. Then man will be free from the sinful, fallen tendencies passed down from generation to generation that are the case now.

Another lesson that Solomon provides us is the importance of following the ways of the Lord from our youth.

“Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee unto judgment. Therefore, . . . put away evil from thy flesh. . . . Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” (chaps. 11:9,10; 12:1) To some degree, Solomon was undoubtedly making a reference back to his own life. It is supposed that he was only 20 years old when he began his reign over Israel. It is evident that at first his heart leaned much on the Lord, and he was granted great wisdom as a result. However, even as still a relatively young man, he soon began to depart from the ways of God. He did not fully “remember” the Creator in the days of his youth. Let us heed this lesson even if Solomon did not.

Solomon also brings to our attention a very important doctrinal principle in today’s lesson concerning the condition of death. Using metaphorical language, he speaks of death this way, “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.” (chap. 12:6) These natural examples all are illustrative of death. Then Solomon states an important truth concerning death, “Then [when a person dies] shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”—vs. 7

Solomon’s words confirm the Genesis account of man’s creation (see Gen. 2:7). God formed man’s body from the elements of the earth, the “dust.” That dust was lifeless until God used his power—the power of the Holy Spirit—to breathe life into the elements he had fashioned into man’s body. Then, and only then, man “became a living soul.” Similarly, as Solomon says, when a person dies, their body returns to the elements, and the breath, spirit, returns to God. The soul dies and waits in the peaceful sleep of death for the resurrection day of Christ’s coming kingdom. ■