

# Rejoice & Remember

Ecclesiastes 11:7-12:14

Solomon comes to the end of his book talking about the end of life. How do we live this life knowing it won't last forever? By the grace of God, our approaching death is no impediment to joy, but a reason to enjoy and thank Him.

## The Map

- I. 1:1-2:26 Satisfaction cannot be found in a vaporous world. Only God can give it.
- II. 3:1-5:20 God is sovereign over all despite grief and hardship.
- III. 6:1-8:15 Look beyond appearances in order to understand and live wisely.
- IV. 8:16-12:14 Last, Solomon addresses challenges and difficulties, and the need to seek wisdom and live joyfully despite them. This is the gift of God.
  - i. 8:16-9:9 Live joyfully despite your lack of control of events and brevity of life under the sun.
  - ii. 9:10-11:6 Work with all your might, trusting the Lord.
  - iii. 11:7-12:14 Rejoice and enjoy life in the years God gives you, remembering Him.

## Rejoice

We are not the only ones in history to enjoy watching the sunset. God made light and the human eye with six million cone and 100 million rod cells that allow us to see in the day and night. Light is a sweet and pleasant gift (v. 7). We need to enjoy it because many days of darkness are ahead, and they *hevel*, out of our control (v. 8). You should not try to be young forever and waste your youth, middle, or healthy old age fretting and discontent; rather rejoice and be cheered by your heart (v. 9). Solomon puts the two extremes of pursuing pleasure and dedicated faithfulness together: "Walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment" (v. 9). It's true that the heart is deceitful above all—"Who can know it?", Jeremiah asks (Jer. 17:9). Solomon also says, "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool" (Prov. 28:26; cf. Num. 15:39). But the heart in verse 9 has been submitted to God, cleansed by His grace, and is obedient to His law. It rejoices in God and fully embraces His gifts. "Love God," Augustine said, "and do as you please." This is not antinomian and libertine foolishness but Solomonian wisdom that looks to Jesus Christ seated at the right hand of the Father where there are pleasures forevermore (Ps. 16:4). Therefore, Qoheleth commands, chase sorrow out of your heart and evil from your flesh because you have no control over the time of childhood and youth (v. 10). Jesus elaborates on this in His most famous sermon (Matt. 6:25-34). Who knows how long you have to enjoy the desires of your heart? We must remember God created the five senses and gave us the ability to enjoy them. He is the God of pleasure; it's the devil who hates His good creation and the gift of enjoying it to His glory. False doctrines of demons "[forbid] to marry, and command to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth" (1 Tim. 4:3). It's the white witch, not Aslan, who scoffs at the feast in Narnia: "What is the meaning of all this gluttony, this waste, this self-indulgence? Where did you get all these things?" Why do people rebel against God by rejecting His gifts? John Calvin said, "In despising the gifts, we insult the Giver." The Lord made sure His people would rejoice before Him at the feasts of Israel, whenever they tithed, and He forbade a newly married man to go to war and make his wife unhappy (Lev. 23, Ex. 23; Deut. 8:26; Deut. 24:5). This is not the first time Solomon commands joy, but he drives it home.

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## Remember

Joy and pleasure go hand in hand with knowing and following God. You can't truly have one without the other, so the Preacher says to remember your creator when you are young because you won't always be (12:1). The word "remember" here has connotations of action. God "remembered" Hannah and acted on her behalf (1 Sam. 1:19). The days are coming when you will not be able to speak, listen, taste, walk, and live like you do now. In verses two through six, Solomon poetically describes our physical decline like that of a great house that decays and ultimately collapses. You can be elderly and still bear much fruit with your increased wisdom (Ps. 92:14), but we will still say in our latter years, "I have no pleasure in them" (v. 1). The shining sun, moon, and stars symbolize ruling faculties, and clouds after rain means misfortune (v. 2). He is saying remember God while you are alive and well. The "keepers of the house" that tremble are arms and hands that shake in old age. Heroic men are bent, grinders are teeth that don't chew much anymore, and eyesight declines as "the windows grow dim" (v. 3). The door shut and grinding low likely means lips are closed and little sound is heard (v. 4). Sleep is easily disturbed, and the sound of a bird stirs us in old age, even while we don't hear and enjoy music as much (v. 4). Heights and walks become perilous and the "grasshopper drags along", moving slowly with a cane, and his "sexual desire" ("caper-berry") wanes. Eventually man goes to his eternal home and mourners come to the funeral (v. 5). The silver cord, golden bowl, clay pitcher, and wheel at the well refer to the body in its glorious design and power, all coming apart as dust returns to dust and the spirit goes to God who gave it (vv. 6-7).

## Like Driven Nails

Solomon was wise and he would be foolish not to know it (v. 9). He worked hard to craft and assemble this book (v. 10). Goads are wooden rods with iron points that drive cattle to the right place. The words of the scholar are like nails that fasten things down, that stabilize us in the wisdom of the true Shepherd (v. 11). Solomon wants his son, and all royal heirs of the King, to be admonished. We need to be pushed, settled, and corrected in order to rejoice in and remember God rightly. We have to hear this short book if we would profit from longer ones (v. 12). His conclusion follows from the premises. God is God, so fear Him. Remember His exhaustive knowledge and final judgment in the middle of your vaporous life (vv. 13-14). How can you do this? Only by the gift of God, by receiving the Son that the Father gave.