

# Ecclesiastes 12:1-5

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/eccl/eccl-12/ecclesiastes-121-5/>

*Solomon challenges the young to remember God with a perspective that embraces both the brevity of life and the certainty of judgment.*

Solomon continues his line of thought from Chapter 11, speaking to the *young man* (chapter breaks were added centuries after the OT was written). In Chapter 11, Solomon exhorted the *young man* to enjoy life while avoiding evil, keeping in mind he would give account to God in the *judgment*. Now Solomon tells the *young man* to *remember also your Creator in the days of your youth*. The young have a tendency to consider youth a permanent feature and squander the opportunity to live a life of true enjoyment in gratitude to God.

Solomon warns about the coming *judgment* but also the realities of aging. We won't always be young. When Solomon describes the process of aging, he talks about *evil days*. The word translated *evil* is the same word translated "pain" in [Ecclesiastes 11:10](#). In this case, a person's behavior is not *evil*, but rather the *days* are *evil*. They are *evil* because we lose many joys we tend to take for granted when young. Reflecting on the reality we will one day lose these functions is part of living in gratitude.

In old age, the opportunity for enjoyment changes. These are *years when the elderly person will say, I have no delight in them*. They are years when eyesight fades. Solomon uses a poetic description likely describing the loss of eyesight as *the sun and the light, the moon and the stars are darkened*. The *sun, moon and stars* are still there, but the elderly person can no longer see them. This could also refer to a general loss of awareness.

The phrase *the clouds return after the rain* might refer to the deterioration of bladder function. The bladder is emptied, but soon after needs to be emptied again, due to age. Further, *in the day that the watchmen of the house tremble, and mighty men stoop* likely refers to the loss of physical strength. Someone who was *mighty* in physical strength when young now walks with a *stoop*. The *watchmen of the house* might be men chosen for their physical strength to serve as bodyguards. But now they suffer from tremors, they *tremble* and no longer are suited to handle weapons.

Solomon continues his poetic description of growing old and refers to the aging of teeth, *the grinding ones stand idle because they are few*. As we age, we tend to lose teeth, and dental functions subside. There aren't enough teeth to properly chew, so they *stand idle*. We might be consigned to a liquid diet and no longer be able to enjoy dining. The phrase *those who look through windows grow dim* might refer to diminished eyesight. The elderly person looks *through* the *window* and can't really make out what they see.

Hearing deteriorates in old age, too. *The doors on the street are shut*, indicates that the person no longer hears doors open and close. And when they come near a *grinding mill*, *the sound of the grinding mill is low* because of their diminished hearing. Old age also means not sleeping as soundly, *and one will arise at the sound of the bird*.

Because of diminished hearing, music will be less enjoyable—*all the daughters of song will sing softly*. As we age we tend to lose our balance more easily, causing *men* to be *afraid of a high place*. Elderly people are also more vulnerable to being taken advantage of, so fear the *terrors on the road*. We also tend to have our hair turn white. Solomon notes that *the almond tree blossoms*. *Almond blossoms* are white. When we grow old, our hair "*blossoms*" like an *almond tree*.

We also tend to lose mobility. We tend to move like a *grasshopper* that *drags himself along*. Finally, sexual function diminishes. Solomon describes *the caperberry* as becoming *ineffective*. A *caperberry* was likely meant to represent sexual function, as it was consumed to enhance sexual activity. It no longer works due to loss of sexual capabilities. Finally, Solomon notes the ultimate reality of old age—death. *Mourners go about in the street*, mourning the man's death, while the *man goes to his eternal home*. This sermon to the *youth* is one of the few Old Testament passages that refers to life after death in the presence of God.

The *young man* is exhorted to bear in mind that he will grow old, die, and be judged by God for the decisions made *in the days of his youth*. Choosing this perspective will allow him to approach the *days of his youth* as a wise investor. To enjoy these days, living in gratitude for God's gifts, before they fade. All the while fleeing evil, and laying a foundation for a good report when judged by God. This perspective is the way to *remember our Creator in the days of our youth*.

### **Biblical Text:**

**<sup>1</sup>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';<sup>2</sup> before the sun and the light, the moon and the stars are darkened, and clouds return after the rain;<sup>3</sup> 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;<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.