

THE MODERN EMPTINESS

Young people in today's world are spiritually hungry, and they are searching, but like so many others, young people seek satisfaction in their own thinking. Jesus' apostle Peter calls this uneasiness "the empty way of life." (1 Peter 1:18) Peter says this "empty way of life" was handed down from our ancestors. In other words, our forefathers also experienced the same kinds of frustration that every generation faces. Even ancient people could feel empty! Young people today remind me of Solomon and his hunger for the meaning of life.

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Solomon, like modern people, was seeking the meaning of life on this earth. Solomon sought a purpose for his life, something in the world that made his presence in the world sensible. Are you in search of the same thing? Solomon called himself "the preacher." So listen to what that preacher had to say about life on earth.

"What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? (4) A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. (5) The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and [then] hastens to the place where it rises [again]. (6) The wind blows to the south and goes around to the north; around and around goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns. (7) All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again. (8) All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. (9) What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 1:3-9)

That Preacher, the wise man Solomon, was a keen observer of the way life **seems** to be on this earth. And so Solomon writes this book of Ecclesiastes and rehearses before us all the things that seem to be in vain in this world. And the reason they **seem** to be vain is because humans live their lives without God and without the information that God gives in His book, the Bible. But Solomon's greatest observations and realizations were about God, and people's relationship with God.

For instance, in chapter 3 of Ecclesiastes, Solomon talked about **time** and **eternity**. Solomon wrote, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to search and a time to give up [searching], a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace." And then Solomon asked this question: "What do workers gain from their toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. He **has** made everything beautiful in its time. He **has** also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God **has done** from beginning to end." (Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 NIV) Yes, even in the midst of "time" God has put "eternity" in the human heart! Eternity in the heart is the yearning we have for life. We do not want to die! We want to live. And **because** there is eternity in the heart, we look on our toil in this world in a different light. Suddenly, when we live life in view of eternity, it does not seem vain.

Instead of time going around in a circle, eternity suggests that **time** will end! That's right! Life on earth will come to a climax! Just as surely as a newborn baby moves through "time" toward the climax of death, life on earth is a straight line, not a circle. And at the end of the line is life, more life, life like we have never before experienced; at the end of the line is "eternity." But there is something that stands between death and eternity. That something is Judgment! That's right! Solomon also had something to say about Judgment Day!

Solomon wrote, "You who are young, be happy while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, **but** know [this] for all these things God will bring you into judgment." (Ecclesiastes 11:9 NIV) Young people, you may live as if there is no end to life, but there is an end. Death also comes to young people. Do not so sin in your youth so that you cannot repent! Do not become addicted to anything sinful. No, you will not be able to live perfectly. You will sin. But never give over to it! Always fight sin, because sin is your enemy! Resist it! And you can resist it. Learn repentance. It can save your soul. Don't be just sorry for what you have done, but be repentant. Repentance means that you will not only cease your sin,

but you will also correct it to the extent that is possible. Jesus once told a parable to demonstrate repentance. Jesus said, "A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went. And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." (Matthew 21:28-31) The son who changed his mind and went into the vineyard is the one who repented and did what his father commanded him to do. Sin says, "I will not obey." But repentance says, "I've changed my mind; I will obey."

Young people, it is wise to change your mind about your sin and obey the Creator. Yes, young people, it is wise to remember God in the days of your youth!

Solomon encouraged young people to remember God while they live in **time**. Everyone who lives long enough will go through the aging process. Solomon referred to the aging process when he encouraged young people to remember God while young. Solomon wrote, "Remember [now] 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'—[remember God] before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain; [that is, remember God before your eyes develop cataracts and your sight begins to fail and even bright days after the rain seem dark]. [Remember God before]... the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, when the grinders [the teeth] cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim; when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades; when people rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint; [remember God before] ... [you become] ... afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets; [before] the almond tree blossoms [that is, your hair grows white] and the grasshopper drags itself along and desire no longer is stirred. [Young people, you need to remember your creator before you] ... go to [your] **eternal** home and mourners go about the streets [mourning your passing]. Remember [God]--before the silver cord is severed, and the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, and the wheel broken at the well, and [before] the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it." (Ecclesiastes 12:1-7)

Yes, no matter how old or how young you are, the end of **your time** on earth is approaching. Most people do not know when that event will happen. When death overtakes us, we will not have another opportunity to serve God in the flesh. The flesh will return to the dust from which it came. But just as surely as the spirit returns to God who gave it, **there will be a resurrection!** That's right! Jesus Christ will raise the dead. Now some people believe they will be reincarnated. But resurrection is NOT reincarnation as it is taught in our world. The teaching of Reincarnation says only that people will be recycled into this present world. But Jesus teaches that resurrection of our bodies will be for judgment and eternity. Jesus put it this way, "...As the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And [the Father] has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment." (John 5:26-29)

Jesus' apostle Paul put it this way: "...We will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us will give an account of himself to God." (Romans 14:10-12)

No doubt the teaching of Reincarnation derives from our human desire for immortality! And that wish is naturally present in the hearts of all people. Immortality is true. That which lives in our human bodies is immortal! Jesus' apostle Paul said that Jesus brought this to light. (2 Timothy 1:10) But immortality does **not** mean that we will be **recycled** when we die. No, we will move on ahead into eternity. But, we must pass through Judgment! That's right! Jesus' inspired writer put it this way: "...it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment...." (Hebrews 9:27)

Young people, old people, all people, Solomon's final advice to us is this: "Here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 NIV) You see, friends, life is meaningless and vain if we do not keep ETERNITY in view! Jesus Christ came to the earth because the END IS NOT THE END! Our death,

although it is the end of our life on earth, our death is not the end of our existence!

Jesus' apostle Paul encouraged a young preacher Timothy by writing, "...Our Savior Christ Jesus, abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me." (2 Timothy 1:8-12) Yes, a great DAY is coming to each of us in which we will give account as to how we lived on earth!

Young people, remember **now** your Creator in the days of your youth! Visit a church of Christ near you to learn more from the Bible about how to prepare for eternity.