

Remember now thy Creator

“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;”

You should all recognize Ecclesiastes 12, verse 1 through 7. The passage is recited by the Chaplain at the beginning of the Master Mason Degree. The first verse is an admonition to put your faith in God as a young man who is still virtuous and pure, as it is harder to live a life of sin and sensual pleasures and become faithful late in life.

“While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:”

After our body dies, our spirit moves on to a place with no rain, no clouds, no night, and no storms. We are in heaven with our Lord.

“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, ”

This verse describes the collapse of the body, as its individual parts stop working as death is near. The keepers of the house being the arms, the strong men the legs, the

grinders the teeth, and those looking out of the windows are the eyes, naturally. Another metaphor is the various members of a household reacting to the tempest, or storm, from the previous verse. It should also be noted that the grinders and those who look out of the windows are female: the grinding maids at work, and the well to do women whose main occupation is apparently gazing out of windows.

“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 music shall be brought low;”

More of the metaphors of the human body shutting down, and the town in terror hiding from the storm. The doors shutting are closing out the outside world, no more visitors as death is near. The grinders, or teeth, are failing, so the body can no longer eat or talk. Next the dying man is actually personified, he awakes at the slightest sound, even that of a single bird. The daughters of music being brought low could mean he is no longer able to sing or even speak, or that his ears no longer let him hear or enjoy music.

“Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way,”

The dying man suffers from imaginary terrors.

“and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail:”

An old man’s head is full of white hairs, like the white blossoms of the almond tree. If a small insect, like a grasshopper, were to light on him, the weight would be almost too great for his frail body. The earthly desires which fill the life of a younger man, fade away and hold little interest for the old.

“because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets:”

The old man finally passes, traveling to his eternal reward. In eastern cultures, the body is carried on a bier out of the city to the burial site, while the mourners follow, lamenting and wailing over the dead.

“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.”

More examples of the parts of the body, as it shuts down. The silver cord refers to the spinal cord, and the golden bowl is either the skull or the stomach. The pitcher and the wheel refer to the actions of the heart and lungs, no longer drawing a breath, and no longer sending blood through the veins to replenish the body.

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

This verse needs no interpretation. From Genesis 2:7, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust."

This passage contains many symbols related to old age and death. It is meant to prepare the candidate for the seriousness of the degree, and to encourage wise and serious truths about immortality. It is also a foreshadowing of his role in the second section, as he represents our Grand Master Hiram Abiff.

I was greatly assisted in preparation of this talk by biblical commentary from Bible Hub.