

6989U

IDYLLWILD BIBLE SCHOOL - 1992

UNDER THE SUN - THEMES FROM ECCLESIASTES

Speaker: Bro. Michael Ashton

Study #6: Behold, the sun!

Readings: Ecclesiastes 11 and 12

Well, good morning my dear brethren and sisters. It hardly seems possible, does it? that we're now on the sixth of these studies; it doesn't seem that long since we were discussing just what the title of the book meant, and here we are now, right at the end. Our chapters for today are Ecclesiastes 11 and 12.

There is a message here for us all! It's important that it is that aspect that we underline. It is for us all whatever age we may be. There is a tendency for particularly in chapter 12, 'remember now your Creator in the days of thy youth', for those who are starting to get a little grey in their beards, to say that from our position, we can now tell the young people what they ought to do! Well, perhaps there's an element in that, but there is just as an important a message for those of us, no matter whatever age we might be! That's what we're going to discover this morning as we look together at these passages.

So having discovered as we did, as we concluded yesterday, that the only answer to the perplexities of life which Solomon was able to see as he reviewed his own experiences and those trials and tribulations which befell him and befall other people in the earth, clearly because we are children of Adam and live upon a world which is at present given over to sin; the only answer to those perplexities lies in the Lord Jesus Christ. So then, earlier in the book, Solomon has confined his review to those things which are upon the earth, he now says and it's in Ecclesiastes 11 verse 7, 'truly the light is sweet and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun', and the resolution of all those perplexities and those tensions as we discussed lies in the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of righteousness who arises with healing in his wings!

So, let's go back to the first verse of Ecclesiastes 11 and Solomon is continuing with some of these assorted proverbial sayings, but now they are beginning to focus towards a particular end. 'Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth'. Solomon is saying that we are to do (and we discussed this yesterday too) we are to do with all our might, those things which come into our own sphere of

operation. We might not be able to see the real purpose of it at the time, but after a period of time on reflection we will recognize that by serving faithfully and diligently a benefit will come to us in later years, so we now cast our bread upon the waters. It's particularly true as we come to think of the commandments of God and His word, the more diligently we study it now, then the more ready will our recollection be in those times of trial, when the only answer lies in the Word of God. It's no good just when we meet difficulties saying, 'well now I'm going to open my bible and find out an example or some verses which are going to help me'. They've got to be there from the beginning and that was the Lord's teaching to us, when He was driven into the wilderness, immediately as the temptations came to Him, they were thwarted by His ready recollection of the Word of God. Unless we do so 'cast our bread upon the waters, we will not find it after many days'!

Just as there have been many common sayings discovered in the book of Ecclesiastes, so we have one here in verse 2 (at least it's a common saying in England, and I think it probably is in this country as well) 'don't put all your eggs in one basket', is taken here from verse 2 of Ecclesiastes 11. 'Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth', so it's necessary for us to look at things over a broad spectrum and to ensure that our lives are properly directed in the ways of God; and the unexpected event is expressed in verse 3, 'If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: if the tree fall toward the south or toward the north, in the place where the tree falls, there shall it be'. You can't do anything about it, it's going to come, you **can't anticipate it!** but when it happens it happens; it's like the two quakes that we felt yesterday, they happen and we didn't know when they were going to come, but they came!

We can be **slothful**, and that's what verse 4 of Ecclesiastes 11 says, 'He that observeth the wind will not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds will not reap'. It's very easy for us to make excuses **not** to do things, and this is not just speaking about agricultural work, this is talking about all life, we find it very easy to procrastinate, to put off till tomorrow the things we know we should do today, and Solomon is recognizing this and using this clear example to teach us, the diligent people we ought to be!

So, he says in verse 5, 'As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: so thou knowest not the works of God who makes all'. We cannot fathom the mind of God nor understand the full extent of His power. Solomon continues in chapter 11, there's more lying behind what he says than what you first might appreciate; he is using an agricultural example, verse 6, 'in the morning sow thy seed and in the evening withhold not thy hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good', but what he is intending us to understand is our own life before God. In the morning, in youth sow thy seed and also in the evening when our years multiply we are to do the same and gently now he is introducing us to this idea of **age**. It's been there before, of

course, in the book of Ecclesiastes where he is speaking about the certain end which comes upon us all; therefore we are to live each day and look at the opportunities of the day, and fulfil those opportunities to the best of our ability. Having introduced the thought, that whatever age we may be, we must try and work properly before the LORD God. He says in verse 7, 'truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun', whether we are in the morning of our years or the evening of our years, it is pleasant to behold the sun.

You can understand now, can't you? how he then comes to the conclusions that he does in Ecclesiastes 12 verse 13, 'Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: this is the whole duty of man'. It was for that reason that this collection of the wisdom of Solomon has been preserved for us! Look at verse 11 of Ecclesiastes 12, 'the words of the wise are as **goads** and as **nails** fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd. And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh'. Even when he is bringing before us the fact that the collected wisdom that he is presenting is there to **teach us the necessity to fear God and keep His commandments**, Solomon is able to say, as he has said with everything else, including our religious life remember, that if we're not careful, that can be a vanity as well. So even the making of many books, even the collecting of many proverbs can be a vanity, unless we see its underlying purpose, and unless we lift our eyes and behold the sun.

You probably have already noticed in verse 11 of chapter 12, that we've got this little idea which we saw right at the start, that Ecclesiastes, the Preacher, (Quohelet) is one who assembles, the one who calls an assembly and the one who assembles sayings, and here Solomon is describing himself as a 'master' in assembling wise and proverbial sayings. Each of them, if we allow them to dwell in our mind, and this is very true of the proverbs and many verses in Ecclesiastes, if we allow them to dwell in our mind, they will prick our consciences. So the words of the wise are as goads, and again Solomon is using that agricultural imagery of the man following the oxen with the plough, and to insure that the ox is in the right place, just goading him along like nails fastened by masters of assemblies. We're reminded, of course, (we're going to come back to Ecclesiastes), we're reminded if you turn to Acts 9 of the words which were spoken to the apostle Paul and in a sense, the experiences of the apostle have been true for us all. This is when Saul as he was at the time, when he was travelling from Jerusalem to Damascus, and he beheld the sun, remember? you can spell it either way, he was on the road to Damascus and a bright light from heaven, brighter than the noonday sun, shone upon him. That's halfway through verse 3, 'suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven and he fell to the earth and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecuteth thou Me? and he said, who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I'm Jesus whom thou persecuteth, it is hard for thee to kick against the goads (to kick against the pricks)' and all of those sayings which had been teaching Saul and us how we ought to live, and what is the whole duty of man, had be pricking Saul, had be

goads Saul, and had brought him to this moment and it was necessary now in the purpose of God, that Saul should see the sun, and seeing the sun, this is his response! Verse 6, 'He **trembling and astonished** said, Lord, what would Thou have me to do?' Do you remember that passage in Isaiah? 'To this man will I look, even to him that is humble and contrite in spirit and trembleth at my Word, for the words that had pricked him, have now caused him to tremble. I always have in mind there, now I make a link between the passage in Isaiah and the discussion between the Lord Jesus Christ and Nicodemus in John 3, 'now the wind blows where it listeth; you don't know where it comes from or where it's going to, so is he that is born of the Spirit'. We see a gentle wind, don't we? and its effect on the trees and the leaves that just tremble. They can't stop trembling because the wind is there, and if we are responding to the Word of God we cannot but tremble! The Word is going to have that effect upon us; you try and walk up to a tree and say, 'I know there's a big wind coming but I want you to just stand still and I don't want you to move at all'. The tree can't do it and unfortunately for ourselves we can fix our will such as we will not be affected by the Word of God and we will cauterize our consciences that they will not affect us, and that's not how we're to be. Instead, our consciences are to very sensitive, and they are sensitized by our reading and our meditation upon the Word of God.

So, Saul here, when he was told it was hard for him to 'kick against the pricks', stumbling and astonished he said, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? and not for the first time this week, we've noticed that the Word has got to result in action. Just turn back to Acts 2 and verse 37, where at the end of Peter's speech on the day of Pentecost, exactly the same point is made to the people that heard him; verse 36, 'Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were **pricked** in the heart' (it was a goad to them). The master assemblies, the Word from the one Shepherd had come to them, they were pricked in their heart and said to Peter and the apostles exactly as Saul says in Acts 9, 'men and brethren what shall we do?' and Peter said, 'repent, be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins. You shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit', and so they did! and it was an earnest in them of the time when the Lord shall return and change their vile bodies to be like unto His glorious body!

Well, back into Ecclesiastes, 'the words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies' is the passage that we were looking at in verse 11 of Ecclesiastes 12. A new Jewish translation of the bible which is called The Tanach, translates that verse as follows, 'the words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fixed in prodding sticks', and you get the idea, don't you? This is the goad that the farmer is using on his animal, a nail fixed in a prodding stick; if we think of the Word of God in that way, it's actually prodding us into action. Of course, as far as the oxen were concerned, if they were pulling on the plough there was no problem, it was when they relaxed and went somehow back in the tackle, and hit the goad that was their behind. The same is true for us, if we relax in our endeavours, then the Word of God if it dwells

in us richly, then we will be goaded into further action. All these things, in verse 11, come from one Shepherd!

So the message is clear, isn't it? as he now continues in verse 13, 'Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God, and keep His commandments'. It would be better if we missed out the words in italics in verse 13, '**this is the whole man**'. If we want to be **whole** people, rather than somehow partial people, vain people, just like a breath which vanishes away; if we want to be whole people then we **fear God and keep His commandments**. This idea was introduced way back in chapter 5 of Ecclesiastes, do you remember at the end of a little section about the house of God, 'keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God', and in verse 7 Solomon says this, 'For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: **but fear thou God**'. If ever there was a priority in our religious life and, of course, in our general life as well, it's the necessity to fear God! It's picked up again in chapter 7 and verse 18, 'It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this; yea also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all', and is looking now to the end of the purpose of God, and God now bringing forth those who are His and have chosen faithfully to follow Him. Or in chapter 8 and verse 12, 'Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him. But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God'. Now Solomon was not saying, (and we've already discovered this that the wicked only live short lives and the righteous live long lives); we discovered that that's not the case! What he's setting his mind upon is the ultimate good and the ultimate end of men and women. Then that passage we've just seen in Ecclesiastes 12, 'this is the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man'.

FOR, and we would have thought that we could have ended or that Solomon could have ended at verse 13 of Ecclesiastes 12, but he doesn't. '**For** God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil'. You see, the very conclusion of the purpose of God is predicated upon the fact that there will be a judgment; that the lives which we've been granted by God and in which we receive blessings from God are there in order to see what sort of people we are. We are being instructed thereby to learn about ourselves and to learn about God and His purpose of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. Those things will only be revealed for us in the last day, and so it's right that Solomon concludes by reminding ourselves of the necessity for judgment.

So, back into Ecclesiastes 11, 'Sow thy seed in the morning of thy years, and in the evening of thy years withhold not thine hand', verse 6. 'Thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good'. Verse 8, 'If a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for

they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity'. There isn't anything special about long life, there isn't anything to be congratulated about in long life; if you come from a long living family, you are not advantaged more than those that come from a family where they seem to die in early years. It's **what we do with our years** that's important, not the number of them. So Solomon now introduces this thought and he starts off with youth,

Verse 9, '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'. Live life to the full, put 100% into all that's given to you, **but**, just as he concludes chapter 12, 'but know thou, that for all these things **God will bring thee into judgment**'. Of course, He will! that's the whole message, isn't it? those are the things to which we are all moving. If you turn to the letter to the Hebrews chapter 9 it's as if, here again and in a number of places in the letter to the Hebrews where it's apparent that the apostle is drawing on the book of Ecclesiastes; right at the end of chapter 9 and verse 27 he writes, 'As it is appointed unto men **once to die** (now that's a theme straight out of Ecclesiastes and so is the next part of the verse), 'and after this **the judgment**: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of the many; and unto them that look for Him (them that behold the Son) 'shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation'. Do you see the message that the apostle is bringing before us? here now we are beholding the Son, and in doing so, the very tasks that we're given each day are enlightened and enlivened, if we do them in the knowledge of the salvation which is being made possible for us through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We remember that for all the things that we shall do, we will be brought into judgment, and the promise has been made that the Lord will return, this time without sin in His now glorified and immortalized nature, for our salvation.

So if that's the case, the last verse of Ecclesiastes 11, 'Remove sorrow from thy heart, put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity' (and so is old age, of course), but so are childhood and youth. Those times when naturally speaking we would have thought that the bigger the aspirations, all of those things which go with you are a great benefit. Of course they are, **but** alongside them there are also days of vanity unless, **while we're living them**, we behold the Son! So, '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'. Up to now, Solomon has spoken about our mortality in ways which have been graphic but not in the sense that he now describes them in chapter 12! He's taught us the certainty of death, but he has not fully introduced to us, the reality of dying!

In Ecclesiastes 12 this is what he does, and none of us can read these verses and feel, well, that's how I would like to be! because we don't wish to be like this. We don't want the years to come when we'll wake up in the morning and wish it were evening; or in the evening to wish it were morning, do we? Instead we want to wake up and think of the opportunities that the day provides and thank God for them and for His blessings, and to have the energy to fulfil those things which fall to our hands each day.

But that's not the picture that is given here in chapter 12; none of God's creation moves us any longer. 'The sun, the light, the moon, the stars, nor the clouds return after the rain: The day when the keepers of the house shall tremble and the strong men shall bow themselves'. So the hands start to tremble and the legs bow because no longer is man upright, and this is now speaking physically not morally, no longer is man upright because that's what old age does to us; 'the strong men do bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few' (dental problems and our teeth no longer do what they're meant to do, they may not even be there). Our eyes begin to mist over and need correction and the strongest correction we can get for them, will not make them see as they did when we were young. 'Those that look out of the window be darkened; the doors shall be shut in the streets'; our hearing goes and the sound of the grinding is low, but even though our hearing is affected, strangely and paradoxically the slightest sound will cause a problem for us; we'll rise up at the voice of the bird. Sleep is difficult so we will sleep less and we will be awake in the morning as the birds start to sing; and we can't quite hear even the music 'as the daughters of music are brought low', and we shall certainly not walk near the edge of the cliff, whether we're like lemmings or not, because we'll be a little bit concerned about our balance, because the cliff is high, 'and fears shall be in the way'. We will be concerned about going out in the daytime and in the nighttime!

'The almond tree shall flourish', our once brilliantly coloured locks will change from whatever they were to white; 'and the grasshopper shall be a burden and desire shall fail', so our movement will be restricted, we will start to drive ourselves along, because 'man goes to his home of eternity'. This passage has become such a well known description of old age and all that it brings, that people who don't even believe in the bible or the Word of God, will read it as a poetic description of old age. It stands head and shoulders above all other literature the world has ever produced; alongside other passages like the 23rd psalm and others that you know well! Shakespeare never wrote like this, but it's not the beauty of the words that haunts us, it's the accuracy of the message that quite frankly horrifies us! because we know it to be true. That each morning as we look in the mirror and see that we're a day older than the last day we looked in the mirror; and we do it, don't we? we use all the lotions and potions that we can, to try and halt the ravages of time. I don't know why because it's like the king of England who tried to keep the tide back and he learnt that you couldn't when it started to lap up nearer his nose - it didn't work. What do we do with this information? but more than that, yes, of course, Solomon wrote it under inspiration but have you got an actual picture in mind to describe this?

For a long time I thought, in fact, I've told many people this, so I'm now going to eat my words; for a long time I thought that Solomon had in mind, a picture of his father, David, in old age. We know what David was like, everything had gone and even his desire failed. Remember when Abishag was placed with him, they did not know each other, so even desire had failed, just in fulfilment of these words here in Ecclesiastes 12, and

thought perhaps that this was what Solomon was bringing before us. He's introduced to us earlier in Ecclesiastes, what is the man going to do? the king? he doesn't know who's going to come after him, and however good a king may be, in the end, this is his end, these verses in Ecclesiastes 12. A good and godly king like David, will finally come to this picture, this graphic picture of old age. Well it may be that Solomon had that in mind, but I think there is probably even a clearer picture!

Turn back to 2 Samuel 15 and I would just like us to look at few characters in this little section in 2 Samuel, and I think it's worth our while bearing in mind that Solomon would have been, a young man, a youth. It's difficult to be absolutely certain of his age at this time but my calculation would place him, oh, somewhere between 10 and 15 years old, I think. You'll notice that it's Absalom's rebellion, verse 13, 'A messenger came to David saying, the hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom'. So David decides to flee and there is one man who comes to him, it's this man Ittai the Gittite in verse 19 and David says to him, 'why are you going with us? Return to your place and stay with the king; you're a stranger and an exile. You came but yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? seeing I go whither I may, return thou, and take back thy brethren: mercy and truth be with thee', and Ittai whose name means 'with me' (863) (one of these fascinating little links which occur in scripture) 'answered the king and said, As the LORD liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be'. It doesn't matter what the purpose is going to be, whether by being with the king it means my death or by being with the king it means I retain my life, whether I'm old or young, what I must do is be with the king! This is the message and we're going to come back into 2 Samuel, but just turn to John 12 and notice how this is picked up in the gospels. **Be with the king**, 'In what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will my servant be', and in John 12 verse 26 the Lord says, 'If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be. If any man serve Me, him will my Father honour'. Now that's the message which Solomon is getting across in Ecclesiastes, for those that behold the Son and decide to serve the Son, 'if any man will serve Me, him will my Father honour'.

Or just a lovely little passage in 2 Kings 11, in the most unlikely place, in those dark days when Athaliah, that wicked woman was reigning, and here's the message in verse 8 of 2 Kings 11, 'Ye shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand: and he that cometh within the ranges, let him be slain: (but this is the phrase) 'and be ye with the king as he goeth out and as he cometh in'. Make that the object of your life; be ye with the king when you go out, and when you come in. **Keep the King beside you at all times**, be aware of His presence, stay near to the King, 'for where I am there shall also my servant be and he that serves Me, him will God my Father honour!' It's a lovely teaching, isn't it? which comes out of this incident with Ittai and so David says to him, 'Well, yes, come with me!'

So go back into 2 Samuel 15, and we've had Ittai's instruction and how relevant it is to the message which Solomon introduces to us and I just wonder you know, whether Solomon as a lad at this time, was standing by his father David's side? It would have been a traumatic experience fleeing from the city with his father, and these things if he were there, would have been burned into his memory and perhaps they came out under the inspiring hand of God as he writes Ecclesiastes. So verse 30 of 2 Samuel 15, 'David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, wept as he went up, his head covered, barefoot: everyone with him covered every man his head and they went up, weeping as they went up. And one told David saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray Thee (here is his prayer) 'turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness'. The immediate answer was the coming of Hushai the Archite, 'who came with his coat rent and earth upon his head'. This one whose name means 'loyal to' (2365) and David now recognized the loyalty of Hushai who had been his counsellor in time past; so David says to Hushai, 'if you wish to be my servant, it's not necessary to be physically next to the king, but if you wish to be with the king when he goes out and when he comes in, now go and confound the counsel of Ahithophel'. So Hushai does it!

Then move on to chapter 17, we've met Hushai and we've met Ittai, and we've learnt from their example; and now in verse 27 of 2 Samuel 17, David comes to Mahanaim, that place which is memorialized because of Jacob's meeting with the angel and his understanding now that there are two camps; his own earthly camp and God's heavenly angels who are on every side round about them that fear Him and delivers them. So in verse 27, 'It came to pass when David was come to Mahanaim these men met him, Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim'. Look what they did, the king was fleeing, he was a broken man apparently: they brought beds, basins, earthen vessels, wheat, barley, flour, parched corn, beans and lentils, parched pulse, honey, butter, sheep, cheese of kine, for David and the people that were with him to eat, for they said, 'the people is hungry and weary, and thirsty in the wilderness'. They did and they allied themselves with an apparently lost cause for they saw in David the LORD'S anointed; there's something very special about these people, they were risking their lives about what Absalom might do to them when he had fully taken the kingdom. But they placed their trust and confidence in the one that they understood was the LORD'S anointed.

So turn to 2 Samuel 19, where when the threat of Absalom had been removed with his own death, in verse 31, 'Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim and went over Jordan with the king, to conduct him over Jordan. We are told something about this man, Barzillai was an aged man even fourscore years old: and he had provided the king with sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim; for he was a very great man'. Barzillai, whose name means 'my iron' (1271) the indication is that in his youth that's how he'd been, a man of iron, a strong man and though now a man 80 years old, his physical strength may have diminished, but his spiritual strength had been growing and he had

provided the king with sustenance - 'to be with the king when he goes out and when he comes in', and Barzillai had done it! Then the king said to Barzillai, verse 33, 'Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem'; now listen to the words of Barzillai and remember the words that we have read in Ecclesiastes 12. 'Barzillai said unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old: and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king?' The language is exactly the same, desire shall fail, the grasshopper shall drag itself, why should I be a burden; and this honour that you wish to grant to me now to spend my time in the king's palace in Jerusalem - no I cannot take it!

Verse 36, 'Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king; and why should the king recompense it me with such a reward? Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother.

But if you wish to honour those who serve thee, for those who are my servants, ('him will God my Father honour' said the Lord Jesus Christ), 'if you wish to honour me for these things which I have done, behold thy servant Chimham' and Barzillai now brings forward his son, Chimham the son of Barzillai, let him go over with my lord the king; and do to him what shall seem good unto thee'. Do to him what you were going to do for me, let the reward that you were going to grant to me, now rest upon my son, upon Chimham! And the king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee: and whatsoever thou shalt require of me, that will I do for thee. And all the people went over Jordan. And when the king was come over, the king kissed Barzillai, and blessed him; and he returned to his own place'.

We would have thought that that was the end of the story: the king goes on to Gilgal and Chimham goes with him, and Barzillai returns to Rogelim. But it's not the end of the story! Jeremiah 41, and how much of this through the hand of his God upon him, Solomon was able to see, it is impossible to be certain, but what do you do to the son of the man who showed such great faith when you were running from the rebellious king Absalom? What would David have done for Chimham remembering Barzillai's kindness? Well, David could have continued to feed him in the palace in Jerusalem and he probably did! but it seems he gave Chimham an inheritance! Tucked away in this prophecy, almost an obscure place, this is what we read in verse 16 of Jeremiah 41, 'Then took Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces with him, all the remnant of the people whom he recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, from Mizpah, after that he had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, even might men of war, and the women and the children, and the eunuchs, whom he had brought again from Gibeon: And they departed, and dwelt in the habitation of Chimham', so Chimham had got a property, and where had he received it from? well, clearly from David, who had done on him all that seemed right to him, and it was David's to bestow because David was from Bethlehem, and this property which was now Chimham's was by Bethlehem and they dwelt there before they entered into Egypt because of the Chaldeans they

were afraid of them. And we're told something else, you see, it's not just that Chimham was given the property, but what did Chimham do with that property? he was a true son of his father, Barzillai, who recognized that the people were hungry and thirsty and weary in the wilderness and knew that other people would be hungry and thirsty and weary in the wilderness. So what does he do? he built a dwelling place on that property, it becomes a place for strangers and passing men to dwell in. It becomes an **inn!** and do you need me to tell you, Luke 2, and can you really believe that it wasn't the same place? Verse 4, 'Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David); To be taxed with his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered, and she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger: because there was no room for them in the inn', By Bethlehem, an inn, perhaps on the property which had been given to Chimham by David, it was the city of David. The people are hungry and thirsty and weary in the wilderness; and the provision was made for them, and the provision was the Son, what a remarkable teaching! 'surely it is good to behold the Son', Ecclesiastes said and Solomon wrote for us in that great and inspired writing.

So, remember now thy Creator, in the days of thy youth and in the days when we are bowed down with age! whether we're a Chimham or whether we're a Barzillai, and surely these are the things that Solomon had in his mind as he wrote this? The important message, you see, was that **we fear God and keep His commandments**, that we recognize the vanity of life and the treadmill which we work each day which reminds us of our mortality. That madness is in our hearts while we live, that we go to the earth and perish like the beasts; but that God has set eternity in our hearts and if we respond to that call and stay with the king when we go out and when we come in, then indeed we will go to **our long home**, this is verse 5 of Ecclesiastes 12, the home of eternity, the house of eternity; it's a description of the kingdom, we knew it all along but we needed to see it, and we shall indeed be there! Then there will be no need to go out or to come in, because we shall be with the King forever!

We shall just bow our heads and then we shall sing a hymn.

LORD God, for thy Word which is so full, that it's an honour to us to be able to search out it's hidden parts, we offer Thee our thanks. For thy Word made flesh in the Son of thy providing we see the Son, and we thank Thee for Him. For the blessings of our lives bestowed upon us so richly and in so many ways, we offer our thanksgiving and we ascribe to Thee the honour and the glory due to thy holy Name, and we pray for the coming of the King and of the kingdom and of the house of eternity. In His name, Amen.

Our hymn is 131:

The brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid.