

Ecclesiastes 12:1-7

The Scripture of the Master Mason Degree

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We start by recognizing our mortality and the importance of establishing our faith in our youth.	
Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth,	While we may be more apt to think about the religious consequences of our life when we are near the end of our life, we would be better served if we remember them in our youth, and make upright and moral decisions throughout our life.
while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;	The presumption here being that, at some point, just being alive might not provide you with any pleasure at all, and you'll be ready to pass on.
while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened,	See Isaiah Chapter 13. In Isaiah this marked the coming of the Lord. Here it may refer to the sign of your pending mortal death and the judgement to come thereafter.
nor the clouds return after the rain:	I am not sure about the weather patterns of the middle east, but where I live, we can generally expect for the clouds to clear up after the rain as passed. The rain provides the moisture and nutrients plants need, but they also need the sun. If the clouds keep returning after the rain, the potential for further growth is very limited.
Next, we start to describe how the body begins to fail us in age.	
in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble,	One could argue that the keepers of a house are its framework, the studs and beams that hold it up. Comparing that to our bodies, we are talking about the shaking of our bones. Is this just old age acting upon us, or are we fearing our pending judgement?

<p>and the strong men shall bow themselves,</p>	<p>It has been said that time is the great leveler, and that certainly is a message that resonates in Freemasonry. It matters not how strong you were in your youth, age will eventually overcome you, and that can be symbolically represented by the stooping posture of an elderly person.</p>
<p>and the grinders cease because they are few,</p>	<p>As we age, we may well lose most if not all of our teeth, making it difficult if not impossible to grind our food.</p>
<p>and those that look out of the windows be darkened,</p>	<p>Similarly, our eyesight is likely to worsen with age.</p>
<p>and the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low,</p>	<p>In keeping with the body imagery, we can imagine this to describe how the elderly tend to speak much less than they did in their youth, especially when in public.</p>
<p>and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low;</p>	<p>Our bodies consistently confuse us with how they respond to stimulus, but even more so in advanced age, where just the tweet of a bird might wake us up, but the joyful music we want to listen to seems impossible to hear.</p>
<p>also they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way,</p>	<p>The older we get the more attune we are to the dangers of harming our body. Not only from our life experiences that tell us about these dangers, but also because we know it will be more difficult for our body to heal. This fear may well stop us from doing tasks we wouldn't have thought twice about in the past.</p>
<p>and the almond tree shall flourish,</p>	<p>While there are species of almonds that produce a pink blossom, there are white ones as well. This is generally accepted to represent the changing of the color of hair to white.</p>

<p>and the grasshopper shall be a burden,</p>	<p>The grasshopper is used in scripture to mean several things. It can mean a great quantity of people, which could relate to an elderly person not wanting to be in a crowd, or to feel crowded. It can refer to a pestilence, which might refer to the diseases of old age. It can refer to a scattering, which might relate to the elderly who need someone to be close by with them, but everybody has scattered and left them alone. It may also refer to something that is small, signifying how even the smallest activity can be a burden to the aged.</p>
<p>and desire shall fail:</p>	<p>Desire could be many things, from sexual desire, to desire to be active, or any other desire you might imagine that would fade with age.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">And, finally, we finish with the ultimate death of our mortal body and the release of our soul.</p>	
<p>because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets:</p>	<p>All of our bodies eventually end up in our long home, the grave, coffin, tomb, etc. And when that finally happens, we will be mourned.</p>
<p>or ever the silver cord be loosed,</p>	<p>This being our spine. It being seen as the main framework of our body, this line alone denotes the ultimate frailty of our general body.</p>
<p>or the golden bowl be broken,</p>	<p>This being our mind, which sadly does dissipate in time.</p>
<p>or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.</p>	<p>This being our heart. Consider the line in reverse. A cistern holds fluid which must be pumped up, and then out of a fountain and into a pitcher. Again, cross reference with Isaiah Chapter 13.</p>
<p>Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was:</p>	<p>Have you ever considered how seemingly everything goes in cycles? Here our bodily and spiritual cycle is completed. Our body returns to dust, which Genesis 2:7 tells us we are made out of, and which Genesis 3:19 told us we would return to.</p>
<p>and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."</p>	<p>Genesis 2:7 also tells us of our spirit coming from God and, accordingly, just as our body returned from whence it came, so shall our spirit.</p>