

ECCLESIASTES

TIME AND ETERNITY

Ecclesiastes 3:1-22

INTRODUCTION

- Solomon, having sought out through various means to find satisfaction in life, and coming up empty, turns now to consider the subject of time, and eternity
- There are times and seasons for the events we face in life, and there is a God who is outside of our time domain, yet who has a hand in these events
- In this chapter Solomon tackles the question of what it is to be human
- What, if anything, distinguishes us from the beasts?
- Do we as humans have any advantage over the animals?
- While the atheist says no, we understand that man is God's special creation, made in his image, the pinnacle of the terrestrial creation (Psalm 8:4-8)
- This knowledge gives meaning, purpose, and value to human life that no other created species possesses

Consider three observations by Solomon regarding time and the meaning of life:

I. THE TIMES AND PURPOSE IN LIFE (1-10)

A. Everything has a Season (1)

1. It is obvious to see when we look around us that God has set up patterns and cycles in nature that are repeated throughout history

2. But not only are there times and seasons in *nature*, but also with *man*
3. Our lives are enriched by the different times and seasons that God sends into them
4. This describes the providence of God over his creation – his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions

B. The Events of Life (2-8)

1. Birth and death (Hebrews 9:27)
2. Planting and reaping (Psalms 126:5-6)
3. Killing and healing (Genesis 9:6)
4. Demolishing and building
5. Weeping and laughing
6. Mourning and dancing
7. Casting stones and gathering stones
8. Embracing and abstaining
9. Gaining and losing
10. Keeping and casting away
11. Rending and sewing
12. Silence and speaking (Proverbs 17:28; Psalms 106:32-33)
13. Loving and hating (Psalms 97:10; 139:21-22; Proverbs 8:13; Amos 5:15; Revelation 2:6)
14. War and peace

C. An Exercise in futility (9-10)

1. Where is the profit (9)
2. Witness of the travail (10)
3. Under the sun, from a worldly viewpoint, Solomon's conclusion makes sense – there is no profit to this existence
4. But in the following verses Solomon goes from looking at man who inhabits time, to the *“high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity.”* (Isaiah 57:15)
5. Then the whole attitude changes – from being unprofitable travail, everything becomes beautiful and good, and joyful
6. Our place is to understand that all that happens in our lives is from the hand of God, and if we belong to him, is working together for our spiritual good, shaping us and conforming us to the image of his Son, Jesus Christ (Romans 8:28-30)
7. So powerful and wise is our God, that even the “evil” events that befall us are part of his design for us whereby he uses them for our eternal good (Genesis 50:20; Jeremiah 29:11)
8. We are all a “work in progress” and will not be complete until we enter his presence, in his likeness (Philippians 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2-3)

II. THE TIMELESS PROVISION OF THE LORD (11-15)

A. He creates beautifully (11)

1. He is Creator (Hosea 8:14; Ecclesiastes 12:1)
2. His creation is beautiful (Genesis 1:31) (Psalms 19:1)
3. His timing is perfect (Habakkuk 3:17-19; Job 13:15; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

B. He Inspires Spiritually (11)

1. He set the world in our hearts (Ephesians 3:21)

2. Our understanding is limited (Psalm 147:5; Deuteronomy 29:29)

C. He Gives Benevolently (12-13)

1. Rejoice and do good (Acts 10:38; Galatians 6:10)

2. Acknowledge the giver (1 Timothy 6:17)

D. He works perpetually (14-15)

1. His nature is immutable (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17)

2. His works are immutable (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

3. He operates perpetually

III. THE TERMINATION OF PHYSICAL LIFE (16-22)

A. A consideration – judgment (16-17)

1. Of men

2. Of God (Ecclesiastes 12:14; Acts 17:31)

B. A comparison – Man and Beast (18-21; 2 Peter 2:12; Jude 10)

1. They both die

2. They are both buried

3. Only man has an eternal spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23; James 2:26; Ecclesiastes 12:7)

C. The conclusion – rejoice (22)

1. The present is ours to enjoy (John 10:10)

2. The future belongs to God