

Ecc 3:16-4:3 JUSTICE, MAN & BEASTS

PRELIMS. Sol - all of life is meaningless - without God! He knows from experience. There is a time for everything. To be born and to die, a time to build and a time to destroy!

The PLACE of JUSTICE

Why do people go to Court to settle disputes? Because they believe they will get **justice**! Of course that is what is **supposed** to happen! But we do hear the cry from outside these Courts, 'Its no justice'! People are **despondent** when they lose their case at the Courts. Because it is the **final** opportunity to get justice - can go no further!

The Courts are supposed to be **the place** where we get justice. That is what Sol is **inferring** here about "*the place of justice*" - but "*even there was wickedness, and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness*"[16]! There is **none** where we should expect it! The very sight of the **symbols** of justice in the **Scales of Balance** on top of the Court buildings can seem a **mockery** and an **eyesore** to some!

However, for **believers**, it is different! There is no need for Xns to be despondent when the Courts fail them - in fact we ought to perhaps **expect** failure, especially from non-Xn Courts! The **Apostles** were constantly unfairly dealt with, not to speak of our **Saviour**!

But the Xn has another hope, a **sure hope** - the great Day of Judgment when all the universe will be assembled and **justice will** done! That hope will be **realised**! It is no false hope. Paul told the philosophers of Athens about the true God saying "*He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a Man whom He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead*"[Acts 17:31] The Day of Judgment (Justice) is as sure as the resurrection of Jesus Christ!! Is there more evidence of anything? Has anything been more **tested** and **proven**!

That **ought** to make us feel **relaxed** and **patient** knowing that justice is going to be done finally! It means we can **wait** in **confidence**! It means we can exercise **faith**! That is its **purpose** - to **enable** faith to

shine! It means we need not **grieve inappropriately** here on earth at all the injustices that are done to X's Cause!

That, of course is exactly what Sol himself does here. He **resolves** the dilemma of injustice by **appealing to God** "*I said in my heart, **God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter and for every work***"[17] Note: There is a time!!

APP Our Presbyterian system of lower Courts, Kirk Session; higher Courts, Presbytery, Synod, Gen Assembly, derive their authority from this principle. When all the Courts have been appealed to, we must finally be **reconciled** to the decision of the highest Court but we can **Appeal to Christ** at the Great Day of Judgment and **leave** it there! That is why it is not right for the APC to **publicise** its grievance (we do not reply to accusations), we try and **leave** and be at **peace** until the Great Day when everything will be revealed and justice done!

Sol discovers something else! All this **injustices, dilemmas** and **contradictions** is nothing else but **God testing** the children of men! "*I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that **God is testing them...***"[18a]! **APP** You know, actually the **whole** of life is one great big test! The test? Do we believe in God? After all of life's experiences; after all the good things we had, and enjoyed; after all the 'escapes' we had in Providence, is our **trust** in God?

At the Judgment we will **not** be asked about the theological stance you took on certain issues! You will be asked this: 'What did you do with Jesus?' and 'How did you use the **life** I gave you, the gifts, the talents, the opportunities, the health/strength? Did you use them all on **yourself** or for the purposes God intended you use them?

Yes, life is a test - even on the very **small things**! The way you drive your car, are you impatient or rude? As someone else said 'When you open a door, when you pick up a piece of trash, or when you are polite to a clerk or a waitress', you're being tested! God is testing your **character**! He rewards a cup of water! When you realise life is a test **nothing** is insignificant! The **smallest incident** has **meaning**. Every day is an important day, because every day has **opportunities**

to show the kind of people we really are! Are we here on earth only for ourselves and what we can get out of it, or are we here **for God**?

Sol tells us that God tests people for a **reason** “*that they may see that they themselves are but beasts*”[18b]! God wants us to realise that **in some ways** (not in all ways) God wants us to realise our **brutishness**

Both Peter and Jude describe some people as “*unreasonable/irrational animals*” or **brute beasts** as in some version [2P2:12+J10] But of course they are not really serious in that description. Peter and Jude are only describing people’s **vile behaviour!** They are telling of their “*blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant*”!

MAN v BEASTS

Now Sol here is **not** giving us a **theology** of man and animals! He is **not talking** about the constituent elements of the **nature** of man and beast. Sol is talking about what **happens** in the **end** to man and beast “*what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other*”[19] Sol is talking about what he “*saw under the sun*”[16] to us it **seems** that there is no difference between man and beast as far as **General revelation** goes.

Unless we know what God has **revealed** in **Special revelation** there is no difference. “*Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of beast goes down into the earth*”[21] No ones knows if you only go by what can be observed by the human eye! ‘So just **enjoy yourself** oh man? “*there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his work for that is his lot*” there is nothing more to life!! But **that is not** reality. Sol tells us **elsewhere** that about the theology of man’s constitution. Before he ends this book Sol tells us **plainly** in [12:5-7] “*man is going to his eternal home*” and the **dust** of man “*returns to the earth*” and “*spirit*” of man “*returns to God who gave it*” to man in the 1st place! Like beasts that perish![P49:20]

Sol is just confirming here what this whole book is about - we don’t know anything unless we know God. Without God life is meaningless! Yes, different from Professor **Stephen Hawking** but then he admits he is **only** reading from General revelation!! There are those

like Revd Garth Barber, a cosmologist and member of the Society of Ordained Scientists who said ‘The law of science are God’s law of creation’![Mail 3/9/10].

Twice in Psalm 49 we read that “*Man in his pomp...is like the beasts that perish*”[Psa 49:12,20] Man is constituted above the beasts - but we have **lowered ourselves!** I have often heard on TV words to this effect ‘Animals do it, why should we not?’!! In some things, we actually look to the animals for guidance and wisdom!!

Friends: How would **you** describe life? This is what Rick Warren records about people he met and how they described life ‘a circus, a minefield, a roller coaster, a puzzle, a symphony, a journey, and a dance...a ten-speed bicycle with gears we never use, life is a game of cards: you have to play the hand you are dealt’!! That indeed is how it truly seems to be - **without God!**

Why spend time trying to own possessions that we are going to leave behind? Think of some of the **names** God calls **His people** in the Bible **aliens, pilgrims, foreigners, strangers!** What does that tell you? Paul said he was an **ambassador** of another country![Eph6:20] Someone said ‘You will not be in heaven for more than 2 seconds when you will cry out ‘Why did I spend so much time on things that weren’t going to last? What was I thinking of’! The reason so many of your prayers are not answered, the reason why some of God’s promises are unfulfilled, is because ‘This is not the end of the story’!

Friends, you are not beasts! You were made for God. “*God has put eternity into man’s heart*”[11] **You** are to **live for God!** Animals don’t do that! Animals **can’t** do that! You were created to **worship God!** Worship Him in everything! Especially at Church!

If you say ‘I didn’t get anything at church today’ you worshipped for the **wrong reason!** Worship isn’t for you - its for God! We **don’t** worship to please ourselves! We worship to **please God!** Worship should **not** part of your life! Worship should **be** your life - all of it! Luther said ‘A dairymaid can milk cows to the glory of God’! *But you need the **sixth sense**, the Holy Spirit to be able to do that!