

## Review:

Solomon had completed his investigation of “life under the sun,” and had concluded that all was vanity in 1:2. Throughout the first two chapters he gave the irrefutable proofs that the conclusion he had drawn was both logical and unassailable. No one who carefully ponders both the thoroughness of the investigation and the visceral (gut wrenching) and tangible nature of its truth. Carefully ponder again the nature of this proof:

1. **1:3-8** It is impossible to find satisfaction exclusively from “life under the sun.” All the generations that have come and gone have left little trace of their existence. For the vast majority of men and women there is no way to even leave a mark. All remains as it was.

2. **1:9-11** There is nothing new left to discover or to bring to the light of day. Man can search, and find new ways to do old things, but is only fooling himself if he thinks he has accomplished something special. There is nothing new under the sun.

3. **1:12-18** Those who are idealistic in their youth, and will spend their lives on a crusade to make the world a better place are doomed to failure. Although there are multitudes of things that are crooked or lacking something there is nothing to straighten or make them whole. Those who spend their lives seeking to correct the uncorrectable are doomed to disillusionment.

4. **2:1-11** Those who are minded to be rich, who would give themselves to pleasure, ease and enjoyment are also doomed to futility. There is no real contentment in them. Their lack of any real accomplishment soon weighs the mind down. Solomon then gave a thorough exploration to all that money can buy. In the gaining of possessions and the building of homes, parks, he again was led to the conclusion that their enjoyment in acquiring them soon becomes empty meaningless and futile. One cannot find true happiness in materialism.

5. **2:12-23** Solomon saves to the very end, the real problem with “life under the sun.” He views three categories of people who live “life under the sun.” The person who acts “mad,” the one who acts like a “fool,” and the one who acts with “wisdom.” These three categories reveal how people approach their wonderful gift of “life under the sun.” Some approach life like they are “insane.” They take risks that often end their lives before it really even has a chance to begin. Others approach life like a “fool,” though not to the degree of the “mad,” these still waste their precious life. The “wise” person approaches “life under the sun” with the dignity and importance it deserves. But without God, and eternal consequences, death makes all the above meaningless. With our total inability to control death, it makes no difference in the final outcome how one approaches life. This conclusion led Solomon to despair. In spite of all his wisdom in approaching “life under the sun,” he will die and leave all he has done to someone who may not have that wisdom. The reality is that this is exactly what occurred. Today there is nothing left of all Solomon did.

6. **2:24-26** This is one of the major conclusions of the book. After all that Solomon had done, he sees three things that man can enjoy. He can enjoy his food, his beverages, and his labor. The labor includes both his job, and the hobbies that interest him. But even in this, the moral component cannot be removed. Those who are righteous will be blessed by God in these endeavors, while the wicked will ultimately lose it all.

With all the above in mind, no matter what a young man or woman sets out to do with their lives, sooner or later they will see the futility of continuing it. This will lead as many as possible back to God. Since without God, there is no purpose to “life under the sun,” the empty futility of this life will lead many to eternal life. Once this conclusion has been clearly seen and understood, we are ready to move on to the next lesson.

## **Introduction**

One of the most frustrating things about the curse is its inflexibility. Solomon spoke briefly in chapter one about the crooked things that cannot be straightened and the things that are lacking that cannot be made whole(**1:14-15**). When one of these things comes upon us, we will have to bend for it. It cannot be straightened or made whole. For the mental health of God's children, these things have to be accepted. Each of the things listed below has something about life that is joyful and exciting. Many of them also have something that is sober or that fills the heart with unhappiness. They exist in life under the sun through God's wisdom and God's desire to chasten and lead us back to Him. There is no possible way for us to modify or change these things in any way. We must therefore build our lives around them and realize that they can come upon us at any time. In this way, the righteous can avoid the bitterness and grave unhappiness the these things can lead to . Forewarned is forearmed. Most of these things will come upon us. We must be prepared make the best of them. Paul gave an excellent summary of what this verse is designed to accomplish:

*Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. 12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. Phil 4:11-13*

*9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Cor 12:9-10*

## **Ecclesiastes Three**

### **1. to everything there is a season,**

Everything that exists in "life under the sun" has a season. It has a time within which it will occur. The term season carries the idea of a "set time or an "appointed time."

2165 zeman- a set time, an appointed time, a time

Better even than it's definition are its other uses in Scripture. It is only used in Nehemiah and Esther. Nehemiah uses it to give a set period of time that he will be away to help rebuild Jerusalem. This would likely include the month day and year of departure and the month day and year of return.

*Then the king said to me, the queen sitting beside him, "How long will your journey be, and when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a definite time. Neh 2:6*

In Esther, it is used of the month, days, and duration of an annual period of celebration.

*the Jews established and made a custom for themselves, and for their descendants, and for all those who allied themselves with them, so that they should not fail to celebrate these two days according to their regulation, and according to their appointed time annually. Esth 9:27*

The season in Nehemiah lasted many months, while the one in Esther lasted two days. Everything that exists in this life has an appointed time or a set duration. Everything has a time appointed for it or a set duration that it will last. We have taken this very term "season" and use it to describe the four set times of the year when things are very different. We call them spring, summer, fall and winter, and our minds have a definite understanding of what life will be like in each of these four "seasons." We regulate our lives around them. In the same way we must regulate our lives around the seasons for all other things as well.

Though cursed by God, still there is a set time and there is order to God's created physical universe. Though

some bring happiness and some bring deep sorrow and anguish, all the “seasons” Solomon speaks of in the next eight verses exist. When these times come, if a man wants to be happy and productive, he must accept them and seek to live within their parameters. Just as a farmer must plant in the spring and harvest in the fall, so man must learn the times and the seasons and do what is appropriate within them.

### **A time for every purpose under heaven:**

While season is very specific in its reference the term “time” is much broader. Time means “a period of time” “appointed time” and “season.” It also means an “appropriate time” or an “opportunity.”

et 6256, "time; period of time; appointed time; proper time; season." This word also appears in Phoenician, post-biblical Hebrew, Arabic (where the same radicals constitute a verb signifying "to appear"), and Akkadian (where these radicals form an adverb signifying "at the time when"). Et appears about 290 times in the Bible and in all periods. Basically this noun connotes "time" conceived as an opportunity or season. First, the word signifies an appointed, fixed, and set time or period... This noun also is used of the concept "proper or appropriate time."... It is used of the "appropriate or suitable time" for a given activity in life:... A third use connotes "season," or a regular fixed period of time such as springtime: (Vine's)

God has given man an appropriate time in which to do everything that is to be done under heaven. Of the forty-two times this word is used in Ecclesiastes, thirty-one of them are in this chapter. He has given man the opportunity and means to do all that needs to be done. The curse has not completely thwarted man. He can still fulfill his “purposes.”

chepets 2656, "pleasure; delight; desire; request; affair; thing." None of the 39 occurrences of this word appear before First Samuel. All its occurrences are scattered through the rest of biblical literature. This word often means "pleasure" or "delight" "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" ... ~~Cps~~ can mean not simply what one takes pleasure in or what gives someone delight but one's wish or desire... Third, chepes sometimes represents one's affairs as that in which one takes delight: "...there is... a time to every purpose [literally, delight] under the heaven" Eccl. 3:1. Finally, in one passage this word means "affair" in the sense of a "thing" or "situation"... (Vine's)

This term essentially takes in all the things that man needs or enjoys doing. It can be a “pleasure” “delight,” “desire,” or “thing.” There is opportunity to accomplish the delightful and desirable things that we would like to accomplish with our “life under the sun” But we have to work within God’s time if we are to do it.

Hence, Not only is there a seasonable time for everything, but there is also a set time in which it must be accomplished. There are times when they can be done and there are times when they cannot be done. A man can wear himself out seeking to do things when they cannot be done, or he can learn these times and seasons. Again, the best illustration is the farmer. There is a set time to plant, a set time to water, and a set time to harvest. If man works within that time, he is happy and blessed. If he refuses to work within God’s time, then he is doomed to fail.

### **2. A time to be born,**

God has set an appointed time for each person to be born. If we work within that time then we will be blessed, if we seek to thwart it then we are doomed to fail. God wants children to be born in a one flesh monogynous relationship where there is a mother and a father to love, cherish and train them. In speaking of the terrible consequences of divorce, the Spirit explained why God wanted the two to be one in regard to their children.

*But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. **Mal 2:15***

The blessedness that accrues to those children who are born when it is the time to be born is that they will be godly offspring. They will have a mother to nurture and give them faith(**II Tim 1:5**) and a father to train

them up in the chastening and admonition of the Lord. **(Eph 6:4)**. When man works within God's time, he can successfully accomplish it.

### **And a time to die;**

God has appointed that all men will die. After the curse, God intended that "life under the sun" would end for all men in death. This was strongly set forth at the time of the curse. God told Adam he would go back to the dust and then banished him from the garden to keep him from the tree of life. Paul explains that it was through sin that death entered the world and passed to all men.

*19 By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Gen 3:19*

*Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"-- 23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. Gen 3:22-23*

*For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. 1 Cor 15:22*

*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned-- Rom 5:12*

There is now a time to die for all the race of Adam. There is nothing we can do about this time except be prepared for it when it occurs. This verse does not say that we have an appointed time when we can determine that it will occur. No one knows the day of his death, but he knows that it is coming. When this time strikes without warning, man must be prepared to work within it. It is appointed for all men to die.

*And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, Heb 9:27*

But for those prepared, death is gain.

There is no way to change this, and wise indeed are those who take into consideration that there is a time for them to die. Those who make adequate preparations for this event need never fear it. It is coming. Don't put it out of your mind, don't deny it, don't look at it as a fearful and ominous thing. It is your friend, and your meditations and thoughts should enter that realm often until it becomes to you as it was to Paul in Phil 1:21:

*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Phil 1:21*

The key here like that above is to have everything properly prepared so that when the time to die arrives, it is as welcome an event as the time to be born.

### **A time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted;**

Within the fixed order of life, with never changing seasons, there is an opportune time for planting. A time when it is most advantageous to plant. God has set this within the order of creation and we must work within it.

*"While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." Gen 8:22*

There is a time for each plant to be planted. If we plant at another time, then we must work much harder and still may fail. If we work within God's time frame, it is always easier and much more promising for success.

This is also true of the harvest. One does not pluck what is planted before the time, nor after. The time to harvest is when the fruit or produce is ripe. Too soon or too late ruins the flavor and benefit. We must be prepared to work within God's order. These things are inflexible and we only set ourselves up for failure

when we do not work within them. It would be folly to pluck the plants before the time, folly to plant in the fall, or to harvest in the spring. It is not the time.

### **3. A time to kill,**

There is a time to kill. This is not the word for “premeditated murder,” But is often used of “ruthless personal violence of man against man.” It also describes “killing” “slaughter,” and “taking of life whether animal or human.” Though “infrequent,” it can also refer to “men’s killing at the command of God.”

harag 2026, "to kill, slay, destroy." This term is commonly used in modern Hebrew in its verb and noun forms to express the idea of "killing, slaughter." The fact that it is found in the Old Testament some 170 times reflects how commonly this verb was used to indicate the taking of life, whether animal or human. Harag is found for the first time in the Old Testament in the Cain and Abel story Gen. 4:8; also vv. 14-15. Rarely suggesting premeditated killing or murder, this term generally is used for the "killing" of animals, including sacrificially, and for ruthless personal violence of man against man. The word harag often means wholesale slaughter, both in battle and after battle Num. 31:7-8; Josh. 8:24; 2 Sam. 10:18. The word is only infrequently used of men's killing at the command of God. In general, harag refers to violent "killing" and destruction..." (Vine's)

This presents a difficult dilemma for those seeking to understand all that God is revealing here. We have a very broad term and must seek for ways to properly limit it. This could refer to nothing more than the right times to kill. Wars in which the nation is a tool in God’s hand, the shedding of blood to expiate and atone for that of a victim.

*"Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man. Gen 9:6*

But though the word *can* mean this, it very seldom does. If you look it up, you find that generally it is used to describe the killing that men do to men without God’s approval. This word was used when Cain “killed” Abel(Gen 4:8, 14-15), Abraham thought the Egyptians might “kill” him so he said Sarah was his sister(Gen 12:12), Esau wanted to “kill” Jacob after he stole the blessing(Gen 27:41). Simeon and Levi “killed” an entire city to avenge Dinah(Gen 4:25-26), Joseph’s brothers wanted to “kill” him,(Gen 37:20), Moses “killed” and Egyptian(Ex 2:14), and God “killed” all the firstborn, (Ex 13:15).

Whether we like it or not, there was a “time” for all these things to be done. Cain found a time to kill Abel, Jezebel found a time to “kill” all the prophets of the LORD(I Kings 18:13), and Elijah was given a time to “kill” the 450 prophets of Baal(I Kings 19:1). There is a time to kill! A just time and an unjust time. This is what the curse has brought to man. With the ability to kill comes the abuse. We must work within life understanding that there is such a time.

Our society recognizes this in multitudes of ways. Police and soldiers carry guns. We have locks on our doors, alarm systems in our homes. Those who live “life under the sun” must take into consideration that there is a time for man’s cruelty to man. It is not pleasant, but it is a reality that we must factor in to our lives.

It is difficult to be certain how far to carry this thought. If we go back to chapters 1-2, then this broadness helps illustrate the vanity and emptiness of “life under the sun.” But if we go forward to 3:11. He has made everything beautiful in its time, then we may want to limit this only to the types of “killing” that are necessary and timely.

### **And a time to heal;**

There are also times when people are to be healed. A policeman might shoot to kill, and yet in only wounding, and the danger past, the state might spend 1000's of dollars to heal the one who was intended to be killed. There are medics to save all who can be saved after the battle was fought to kill. There is a set and

appointed time and all the means are available to do so. God has made the body capable of healing itself. This too is factored into our lives. Hospitals, clinics, doctors offices, band aids, etc all testify that there is a time to heal.

### **A time to break down,**

There also comes a time in life when it is time to break down. This is a broad word that can be used both emotionally as well as physically. The context here favors the latter.

6555 parats-to break through or down or over, to burst, to breach a) (Qal) 1) to break or burst out (from womb or enclosure) 2) to break through or down, to make a breach in 3) to break into 4) to break open 5) to break up, to break in pieces 6) to break out (violently) upon 7) to break over (limits), to increase 8) to use violence 9) to burst open 10) to spread, to distribute b) (Niphal) to be broken through c) (Pual) to be broken down d) (Hithpael) to break away

There is a time to break things down. We do this on trash day when we break down the boxes, cans, and other items to be taken away. We do it to our homes before we begin remodeling. Others do it on a grander scale by completely taking down a home in order to put something else on the land. This is part of what Solomon spoke of earlier. We can build something, and another can come along to tear it down. Often, the desire to tear something down is a good one, and there is a time for it. Often we will tear down the work of another in order to build what we desire.

It seems odd that there should be such times, but they come. They tear down old buildings in order to build up newer and better ones. They tear down one generations works in order to build up the next generations.

### **And a time to build up;**

The time to build can come either after one has finished “breaking down,” or it may be that we will build where no one has built before. The term itself can mean either “rebuilding,” or “building” for the first time.

1129 banah- to build, to rebuild, to establish, to cause to continue a) (Qal) 1) to build, to rebuild 2) to build a house (that is, to establish a family) b) (Niphal) 1) to be built 2) to be rebuilt 3) established (used of restored exiles) (figurative) 4) established (made permanent) 5) to be built up (used of a childless wife becoming the mother of a family through the children of a concubine)

There is a time in one’s life where we build, collect, prepare and develop. There is another time when it is time to undo, throw away, and bring things to an end. Either can be exciting or depressing. It depends on our state of mind, and whether we are doing it in its time.

### **4. A time to weep,**

There comes into the lives of all a time to weep. Periods of time when life is harsh and cruel, when overwhelming sorrows hit one. The basic meaning of weep isn’t much different in English or Hebrew.

1058 bakah- to weep, to bewail, to cry, to shed tears a) (Qal) 1) to weep (in grief, humiliation, or joy) 2) to weep bitterly (with cognate acc.) 3) to weep upon (to embrace and weep) 4) to bewail b) (Piel) participle 1) lamenting 2) bewailing

Because of the way of “life under the sun,” there are appointed times and seasons when we will weep. We weep when we part from dear friends or when we suffer great losses or bitter defeats. Life is full of disappointments and sorrows and when they become strong enough, it is time to weep.

### **and a time to laugh;**

“Life under the sun” also has times of great joy and happiness. There are set and appointed times when we “laugh,” “jest,” and enjoy. During times of success, reunions with loved ones, births, marriages, beginnings, it is often a time of laughter and joy.

## **A time to mourn,**

The term “mourn” is generally reserved for grieving over a lost loved one. Hence just as there is a time to die, there is also a time when we will mourn others who die. Just as we mourn our parents, our children will mourn us. The term “mourn” includes also those who “lament,” and “wail.”

5594 caphad- to wail, to lament, to mourn a) (Qal) 1) to wail, to lament 2) wailers (participle) b) (Niphal) to be lamented, to be bewailed

Though one of the most unpleasant times in our lives, there is a set and appointed time for it. It will be a difficult time, of grief, loss, anguish and bitterness. It will be a time of loneliness and reflection. We all need to realize that time is coming, and strive to prepare for it. Do not allow circumstances to arise in which the loss of a loved one is even more unbearable because things could have been said or done that were not and now never can be done. There is a time to mourn, a time of loss, be prepared for it, that when it comes it will not be any deeper and heavier a burden than it might otherwise have been.

## **And a time to dance;**

God lays “dancing” next to mourning. There will come times of dancing and happiness into the lives of all who “live under the sun.” Times when their joy is so great that it cannot be simply contained with a smile or a laugh. Times when gratitude, success, or gratification of long held goals is so great that it is not enough just to grin, or laugh out loud. It is time to “dance.” This word does not have quite the same meaning as it does today. It means to “dance” in the sense of to “skip about” or “leap,”

7540 raqad- to skip about a) (Qal) to skip about b) (Piel) to dance, to leap c) (Hiphil) to make to skip (BDB)

7540 raqad (raw-kad’); a primitive root; properly, to stamp, i.e. to spring about (wildly or for joy) KJV-- dance, jump, leap, skip. : (Strongs)

It is only used nine times in the Scriptures.

*And it happened when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and making merry; and she despised him in her heart. 1 Chr 15:29*

*They send forth their little ones like the flock, and their children skip about. Job 21:11*

*And He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox. Ps 29:6*

*But desert creatures will lie down there, and their houses will be full of owls, Ostriches also will live there, and shaggy goats will frollic there. Isa 13:21*

*The noise of the whip, the noise of the rattling of the wheel, Galloping horses, and bounding chariots! Nahum 3:2*

The idea behind the term is the joy that leaps the bounds. It is so great that one cannot contain themselves. They dance about the room, leaping, bounding, skipping and frolicking. This is joy indeed, and there are appointed times when we feel this happy.

## **5. A time to cast away stones,**

There is a time in life when it is time to cast away stones. A time to clear a field, a time to empty a garden or lawn of all foreign objects such as rocks and stones. When that time comes one simply throws rocks away.

7993 shalak- to throw, to cast, to hurl, to fling a) (Hiphil) 1) to throw, to cast, to throw away, to cast off, to shed, to cast down 2) to cast (lots) (figurative) b) (Hophal) 1) to be thrown, to be cast 2) to be cast forth or out 3) to be cast down 4) to be cast (metaphorical)(BDB)

All the effort energy, toil and feelings of success are based upon throwing stones away.

## **And a time to gather stones;**

Then, in perhaps a short period of time, it is now time to put forth the same energy, intensity and desire to gathering stones. While building a house, a rock garden, a chimney or filling in some large hole, it is time to go out and gather together all that was thrown away earlier. Thus man finds that he often does and then undoes, makes and then unmakes and makes again. There are such times, when they come do not be frustrated, simply realize that it is a part of "life under the sun."

**A time to embrace, And a time to refrain from embracing;**

There are times to hug, when it is right and proper to manifest affection. We hug our family and friends, our mates and our children. When among them, it is always time to embrace. There are other times when it is no longer right to embrace.

**6. A time to gain, And a time to lose;**

There will be times in one's life when they can make money, when things are going well, and all that one does turns out well. A time when one finds things, when one is blessed above what they could imagine. There are times like these in our "life under the sun." There are other times when no matter how hard one works, they can't seem to make things happen. A time when things just seem to fall apart. A time when we lose important things. There will be recessions, depressions, inflationary periods in the lives of all men. There will be times of prosperity, and times of adversity. Such times came then, they come now, they will come as long as life endures. Be prepared for them. When all goes well and life is exciting, enjoy it. When all goes sour, and life turns against one, consider and learn from it. It is all a part of life, and there is nothing anyone is going to do to change it.

**A time to keep, And a time to throw away;**

There are times to keep things, and times to throw them away. There circumstances in life that often dictate the sacrifice of some special thing in order to gain something even more precious. Often one must throw something special and valuable away in order to preserve life. The throwing of the cargo overboard during the storm while Paul was on his way to Rome is a good example of these circumstances. No one should be so in love with some physical possession that they could not part with it in an instant if for some reason the need arose, and such needs will arise. Times will come when such things must be done. No one should be so possessed of their possessions that they cannot easily cast them away, or that their loss would be devastating to their life.

**7. A time to tear, And a time to sew;**

Everything wears out. There are times to tear up old garments for rags, and a time to sew up new fabric into garments. No point in getting frustrated when things wear out. Everything wears out in time, and when it does then it is time to tear them up. There are other times when it is time to sew things together. They are new, and strong.

**A time to keep silence, And a time to speak;**

When nothing can be done about something, and the speaking will only bring about grave consequences, it is a time to keep silence, when someone is in the depths of great grief, it is not the time to speak about certain matters. There is a time when the fool should hold his peace, there is a time when the young should be silent and seek to gain wisdom from their elders.

*I said, "I will guard my ways, Lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, While the wicked are before me." Ps 39:2*

*A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, And a word spoken in due season, how good it is! Prov. 15:23;*

*Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; When he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive. Prov. 17:28;*

*A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. Prov. 25:11;*

*Therefore the prudent keep silent at that time, For it is an evil time. Amos 5:13*

There are times when it is wise to be silent. There are times when it is time to speak at whatever the cost. This wise find and use such times. The foolish select the wrong time and bring grave consequences upon themselves and others.

### **8. A time to love, And a time to hate;**

There are times in the lives of men when they love. It is an appointed time that comes to all. In parent/child; husband/wife relationships, in times of great happiness and joy over life. We can love our lives, our works, and our opportunities. There are other appointed times and seasons where one “hates.”

sane' 8130, "to hate, set against." This verb appears in Ugaritic, Moabite, Aramaic, and Arabic. It appears in all periods of Hebrew and about 145 times in the Bible. Sane' represents an emotion ranging from intense "hatred" to the much weaker "set against" and is used of persons and things (including ideas, words, inanimate objects). The strong sense of the word typifies the emotion of jealousy... Obviously, the word covers emotion ranging from "bitter disdain" to outright "hatred,"(Vines)

We read earlier where Solomon “hated” life because of what he had learned.(**2:17**). There is a time in “life under the sun” for hatred. God bids us rule over those times and be careful about how we dispense our hatred, but many do not control themselves in this manner. When times of hatred come, many hate with all their being. They hate God(**Ex 20:5; Rom 1:30**), their fellow man(**Gen 37:8**). Some hate evil(**Ps 97:10; Pr 8:13**), while others hate good.(**Mic 3:2**) The appointed times may differ, and the means by which men control their hatred may vary, but all can see that there are times to love and times to hate during our “life under the sun.”

### **a time of war, and a time of peace.**

There are times of war. There are times in the history of this world when nations must fight one another. Generally one is the aggressor, and the other is simply protecting themselves or others. Often one is right and one is wrong, sometimes neither side is right, but regardless, there are times of war. When one lives in such a time, they have to be prepared for the consequences. There will be loss of life, liberty, possessions, there will be times of severe trial, but these times will come. It cannot be ignored, and all too often cannot be stopped, therefore those who live in such times will have to live accordingly. God often sanctioned wars during the Old Covenant. He had His people start them, He had his people punished in them. God uses wars to keep people and sin in check. There will always be times of war.

There will also be times of peace. Times of prosperity. Enjoy these times of good, and prepare for and consider the times of evil.

Regardless of the quality of time one lives in, they need to be aware that like the changing of the seasons, nothing is permanent. No matter how long one has lived under war, there will be times of peace again. No matter how long one has lived in peace there will be times of war. No matter how long one has lived under any of the circumstances listed above, there will come times when the other side of the circumstances will swing around also. They will come to all, and all ought to be prepared for them.

**Class # 7**

**Ecc 3:9-22**

**May 23, 1998**

### **9. What profit has the worker from that in which he labors?**

Since we live in such a world of inexorable principles of times and seasons over which we have absolutely

no control. A world where all the labor and of one seasonable time can be undone in a moment when a different season arrives, what profit is there? Someone clears out an area to plant a garden, and the next person moves in and pours a patio there. One builds a home, and the next generation tears it down. A wife makes someone a nice shirt, and two years later he is tearing it up for rags, someone marries a wife and 40 years later she dies and it is a time to mourn and refrain from embracing.

What is the profit to living in such a world? How can a man live happily knowing that everything he has done will be undone sooner or later? What is the profit? There is none. There is no profit to living in such a world, and if one thinks about it long enough it can remove all happiness from their hearts. It has already removed such happiness from Solomon who saw this truth even as he is now expounding it to others(Ecc 2:17-18). The term "profit" is defined:

"... excellence; advantage, profit... gain; pre-eminence, advantage... abundance..." (Wilson p 329)

Where is the advantage in such a life? Where is the gain and the abundance? Where is the happiness and contentment? These seasons of time come and go with absolutely no control. Sometimes we are right in the middle of throwing away stones and it becomes necessary to gather them. When one finally comes to understand how these seasons come and go, and how what is done is undone and what is gained is lost. When they see joys turned to sorrow and happiness to grief, what is the profit to this life under the sun?

### **10. I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied.**

In all of Solomon's exploring and studying of these things, he has seen that God has given the sons of men "tasks" which they are "occupied" with. The key to this verse are the terms "task," and "occupied." God has given men "tasks," and they are "occupied" with them. Both these terms come from the same root word. The first term "task" has the basic idea of "employment," "labor," "toil," "occupation," or "job." Its secondary idea is that of "fatigue" or "trouble" in that labor and toil.

6045 `inyan (in-yawn'); from 6031; ado, i.e. (generally) employment or (specifically) an affair: Strongs

"... labor, toil; events which occasion much trouble and fatigue..." (Wilson p 452)

6045 `inyan- an occupation, a task, a job(BDB)

Hence the task that God has given to the sons of men while they live their "life under the sun" is that of labor and toil leading to weariness and fatigue, coupled with trouble and difficulty. God said as much in the curse:

*Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. 18 "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field; 19 By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Gen 3:17-19*

This is the task that all men are "occupied" with. We struggle and toil to bring forth our food clothing and shelter. We function between the seasons God has appointed in which these man's labor is either done or undone. The term "occupied" even more strongly sets forth the idea of the difficulties and their affect on the human spirit. It is most often translated with the term "afflicted," but can also mean "bowed down," or "humbled."

`anah 6031, "to be afflicted, be bowed down, be humbled, be meek." This word, common to both ancient and modern Hebrew, is the source of several important words in the history and experience of Judaism: "humble, meek, poor, and affliction." `Anah occurs approximately 80 times in the Hebrew Old Testament. It is found for the first time in Gen. 15:13: "...they shall afflict them four hundred years." `Anah often expresses harsh and painful treatment. Sarai "dealt hardly" with Hagar Gen. 16:6. When Joseph was sold as a slave, his feet were hurt with fetters Ps. 105:18. Frequently the verb expresses the idea that God sends affliction for disciplinary purposes: "...the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the

wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart..." In the Day of Atonement observance, "to humble oneself" is probably connected with the requirement for fasting on that day Lev. 23:28- 29. (Vines)

The manner and methods by which the curse operates are designed and intended by the Creator to humble and afflict man. To make him meek and lowly in his understanding of who and what he is. I believe the basic idea here is very similar to that used by Moses in his final speech to the children of Israel. He reminds them that all did not go perfectly for them in the wilderness. God did not always do everything for them. He let them hunger from time to time to teach them something. He humbled them in these activities. The two underlined words in this passage are the same ones as the word defined above.

*"And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. 3 "And He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. Deut 8:2-3*

God has given man difficult and fatiguing tasks, to humble and afflict man. Just as the adversity behind a lack of food was a means to test them so that man might learn that he does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, so Solomon now reveals all of life works. The inability of man to affect the times and seasons God sets are a difficult and fatiguing task that afflicts and humbles man. This is bad for those who live "life under the sun" out of the presence of Jehovah, but is very good for those who do.

*9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Cor 12:9-10*

This is what can make everything beautiful in its time! There is in fact a time and a purpose for everything under heaven! God has made everything beautiful in its time.

## **11. He has made everything beautiful in its time.**

After completing the above section in which he speaks of the various times(appointed seasons, appropriate times or opportunities). He now concludes by saying that God has made each of the above things "beautiful" in its appropriate time. This is not addressing the sinful abuses by which man has commandeered some of these things to his own uses. He will address this later and conclude.

**"Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices." Ecc 7:29**

But God Himself has coordinated all the above in such a way that they are "beautiful."

"to be fair, beautiful, comely in person, by nature or art; beautiful in action, in wisdom, in season, and in suitableness: it implies beauty internal as well as external... adj. fair, beautiful..." (Wilson p 33)

Everything if it is seen in its true and appropriate light is "fair," "comely," or "beautiful" in its "wisdom" or "suitableness." This is a hard saying. It will require great wisdom on our part to see some of these things in this light. For while it requires little thought to see why giving birth, planting, healing, building up, laughing, skipping, embracing keeping, loving and peace are beautiful in their time, it is not always so easy to see that the time to die, uproot, kill, tear down, weep, mourn, hate and war are also beautiful. Yet for those who live their "lives under the sun" in the presence of Jehovah, we have God's assurance that He will make it so.

*And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called*

*according to {His} purpose. Rom 8:28*

Though man cannot see all ends and understand all of God's purposes and plans, through the eyes of faith and trust we must accept such passages. God is at work in all things and He can make all things beautiful in their time.

### **Also He has put eternity in their hearts,**

The term "put" in this context describes the act of "giving", "granting," "assigning" or "appointing."

5414 nathan- to give, to put, to set a) (Qal) 1) to give, to bestow, to grant, to permit, to ascribe, to employ, to devote, to consecrate, to dedicate, to pay wages, to sell, to exchange, to lend, to commit, to entrust, to give over, to deliver up, to yield produce, to occasion, to produce, to requite to, to report, to mention, to utter, to stretch out, to extend 2) to put, to set, to put on, to put upon, to set, to appoint, to assign, to designate

God has "given," "granted," and "appointed" eternity in the hearts of man. This is a very important concept to grasp. It holds such a great bearing on the book and our understanding of life. "Eternity" is mostly commonly translated "for ever" or "everlasting." and is defined "perpetuity" "always," "unending future." God has placed this idea into the hearts of man.

`olam 5769, "eternity; remotest time; perpetuity." This word has cognates in Ugaritic, Moabite, Phoenician, Aramaic, Arabic, and Akkadian. It appears about 440 times in biblical Hebrew and in all periods. (Vines)

5769 `owlam or `olam- long duration, antiquity, futurity, forever, ever, everlasting, evermore, perpetual, old, ancient, world a) ancient time, long time (used of the past) b) (used of the future) 1) forever, always 2) continuous existence, perpetual 3) everlasting, indefinite or unending future, eternity (BDB)

God has given man the ability to grasp a much bigger concept than this life could have ever given him. "Life under the sun" is trapped in time. It has a beginning, man has a beginning, every season has a beginning, everything has a beginning. It also all has an end. The universe winding down, man grows old and dies, seasons end and all the has a beginning also has an end.

Yet the concept of unending eternity has been placed within our heart. Not only has it been placed in our hearts, but we also see ourselves in that light. No man sees himself as mortal without great effort. We feel eternal. We see things in the context of eternity. We live as though we are eternal. All young people come from the womb with the concept of eternity clearly stamped in their heart. No one teaches them this, but they all live, act and truly believe that they will live forever. Death is what has to be learned, not eternity! We must teach children to fear death, but we do not have to teach them that they will live forever.

### **except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.**

The term "except that" comes from two separate Hebrew terms. It could also be translated "without which," "without this, that" or "besides that." (Delitzsch Vol 6 p. 260). Our translations have "Yet so that" (NAS; ASV); "so that" (KJV) or "yet (NIV). It seems clear from all this that this is some sort of exception clause. An additional explanation to the fact that man has eternity in his heart, but it does little good since one cannot see far enough into it to make any decisions. Those who feel eternity no longer have the dominion or the control to make any real use of it if they simply want to live their life "under the sun" and out of the presence of Jehovah." No one is able to "find out" the work that God does from beginning to end. They cannot "grasp it" or "discover" it and it is therefore not able to "obtain" it.

matsa' 4672, "to find, meet, get." This word is found in every branch of the Semitic languages (including biblical Aramaic) and in all periods. It is attested both in biblical (about 455 times) and post-biblical Hebrew. Matsa' refers to "finding" someone or something that is lost or misplaced, or "finding" where it is. The thing may be found as the result of a purposeful search... may connote not only "finding" a subject in a location, but "finding something" in an abstract sense... can also mean "to discover."... The word matsa', therefore, can mean not only to "find" something, but to "obtain" it as one's own ...

(Vine's)

Man will grope in vain for this if he does not come into the presence of God's light for understanding. The physical creation certainly contains testimony of God's eternal power and divine nature, but one must come into the "presence of Jehovah" to learn any more. No one outside of Scripture can find out the work God does from beginning to end. Even with the word it is a complicated thing. Rather than delve into it, Solomon contents himself to speak of what should be done without it.

## **12. I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice,**

Before moving on to fully conclude the matter above, Solomon take a brief repose to regroup his audience. There are some difficult things spoken in the previous verses. What is the point to those who are living their lives under the sun? There is nothing better for any one than to rejoice and do good all their lives. Rejoice is defined:

samach 8055, "to rejoice, be joyful." This verb ... appears in all periods of Hebrew and about 155 times in the Bible... usually refers to a spontaneous emotion or extreme happiness which is expressed in some visible and or external manner. It does not normally represent an abiding state of well being or feeling. This emotion arises at festivals, circumcision feasts, wedding feasts, harvest feasts, the overthrow of one's enemies, and other such events.... suggests three elements: (1) a spontaneous, unsustained feeling of jubilation, (2) a feeling so strong that it finds expression in some external act, and (3) a feeling prompted by some external and unsustained stimulus. (Vine's)

"...to rejoice, to be joyful, to be glad: the primary idea seems to be that of a smiling, cheerful, merry countenance, free from care; sometimes of a louder joy, to be or make merry..." (Wilson p 346)

Why after speaking of these deep incomprehensible things and of manifesting that man is caught and has no control over his life can Solomon conclude with a statement like this one? It is an answer one needs to take to heart and meditate upon. It is one of the secrets of life that if a man can grasp and comprehend will lead him to the most enjoyable life possible in this world, and before we get to heaven. Each person must so reflect upon God's control, and the beauty of everything in its time that no matter what type of life that they live in they can rejoice in it. Paul managed to do this,

*Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. 12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. Phil 4:11-13*

as did Jesus even before the cross(Heb 12:1-2)

*fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart. Heb 12:2-3*

This is a wonderful piece of advice for those who seek to live in God's presence and are preparing for eternity. Seek for the best in all situations. Seek for something to rejoice and be happy in no matter what. The whole book of Philippians takes on this theme. It is the attitude that God is ruling in the world, that all things work for good for them that love God, that to live is Christ and to die is gain, that we can rejoice in our tribulations knowing that they work patience. There is no reason for an educated and wise child of God who has learned to live within the system cannot find life an enjoyable experience. Certainly sin has cursed and marred God's world, but not so deeply that its beauty and loveliness do not continue to shine through.

## **and to do good in their lives,**

Another thing that there is nothing better for a man to do if they seek for the best possible life here is that they do good. They need to contribute to the good things of life. They should be the reason others rejoice,

not weep. They should do all within their power to be a blessing and a help to others. God wants us to “contribute positively” be “pleasant,” and be “friendly” or “useful.”

tob 2896, "good; favorable; festive; pleasing,; pleasant; well; better; right; best." This word appears in Akkadian, Aramaic, Arabic, Ugaritic, and Old South Arabic. Occurring in all periods of biblical Hebrew, it appears about 559 times. T h i s adjective denotes "good" in every sense of that word. For example, tob is used in the sense "pleasant" or "delightful"... the emphasis is on the nuance "delightful" or "festal": ..." characterizes a people as "friendly" or "useful": Tob indicates that a given word, act, or circumstance contributes positively to the condition of a situation. (Vine's)

All should learn early in life that to be selfish is not conducive to happiness. That to share, to do good and to help others as much as possible is a gift from God that leads to happiness and contentment.

*"In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" [Acts 20:35](#)*

### **13. and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor-- it is the gift of God.**

Once again, Solomon repeats the conclusion drawn in 2:24. With man’s powerlessness to affect any of the times and seasons that God has within his own authority, man must learn to live within the boundaries God has set. Man must learn to be content within them. Man must learn that this is our Fathers world and that he will have all things work for the good of those who love Him. Once we grasp this, all the worries and cares are removed and we can enjoy the things God has set within our own domain. It is a small dominion to be sure, but we must be content in it. We can enjoy our food, our drink, and our labor. “Labor” is

`amal 5999, "labor; toil; anguish; troublesome work; trouble; misery." Cognates of this noun and the verb from which it is derived occur in Aramaic, Arabic, and Akkadian. The 55 occurrences of the noun are mostly in later poetic and prophetic literature Gen. 41:51; Deut. 26:7; Judg. 10:16.... Third, `amal means "troublesome work"; the emphasis is on the difficulty involved in a task or work as troublesome and burdensome: All 17 appearances of the word in Ecclesiastes bear this meaning. (Vine's Dictionary)

The “toil,” “labor,” and “work” that man must do in all realms of his life, though “troublesome” and “burdensome” still give great pleasure in the challenge, the accomplishment, and in the labor itself. Man has been designed by God to be productive and to be able to enjoy the labor and its fruit. Regardless of the difficulties involved, man can still derive great pleasure and satisfaction from it. As a matter of fact, Solomon calls these things a “gift” or “present” of God.

### **14. I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever.**

Another important fact is here brought forth. What ever God sets forth, that's the way it is and that is the way it will always be. Again, there is no pessimism here. Nor is there any cynicism or skepticism. This is reality and precedes full submission to God. There are some things that man cannot do. When God does something, that is what it will be forever. This is one of the passages that transcends man’s ability to comprehend, but leads to awe, fear, reverence and great respect. God has the ability to do things that remain forever. Solomon repeats the same word used back in verse 11 and translated “eternity.” Just as God put “eternity” into our hearts, all the things he does will be for eternity. God is not confined by time. He is an eternal being and works in the realm of eternity. When he does something, it remains like Himself, unchanged forever. The only thing that will change or remove what God does is God himself.

### **Nothing can be added to it, And nothing taken from it.**

This is a truth that God has emphasized again and agin regarding the doctrinal and moral purity of His word. Solomon broadens it out to all realms. Everything God does is forever! Nothing can be added to what God does. The material creation cannot add anything, and the eternal spirit of man, housed in a body of dust

cannot either. The term nothing is a comprehensive term for negation. It is defined “nothing,” “not.” Whatever it denies is completely impossible.

369 'ayin-nothing, not, nought as a noun: a) nothing, nought as a negative: b) not c) to have not (used of possession) as an adverb: d) without with a preposition: e) for lack of]

This term is placed before each of the things that God’s eternity denies to man. Since what God does is eternal, man cannot add to or diminish from it.

3254 yacaph- to add, to increase, to do again a) (Qal) to add, to increase, to do again b) (Niphal) 1) to join, to join oneself to 2) to be joined, to be added to c) (Hiphil) 1) to cause to add, to increase 2) to do more, to do again

1639 gara`-to diminish, to restrain, to withdraw, to abate, to keep back, to do away, to take from, to clip a) (Qal) 1) to diminish 2) to restrain 3) to withdraw b) (Niphal) 1) to be withdrawn 2) to be restrained c) (Piel) to withdraw, to draw up

This complements and strengthens the first part of chapter three. All of the things that God has created a time and season for cannot be changed by man. They cannot have anything “added to” them or be “increased,” nor can anything be “taken from them,” “diminished,” “withdrawn,” or “restrained.” Man is powerless to affect any positive or negative changes. Man must either submit to God or be destroyed. Man must either work within God’s system or be very unhappy trying to change what cannot be changed.

There is a time for everything and everything is beautiful in that time. When those times come there is nothing we can do but make the best of it. You can't add anything to the physical laws of the universe, and you cannot take anything away from them either. God set them in inexorable stone, and they cannot be modified or changed by mankind in the least. Why did God do that. Why didn't God give man a chance to change some of these things?

### **God does it, that men should fear before Him.**

Everything in this phrase hinges on the term fear. It has a dual meaning throughout the Scriptures. It can mean the dread and terror of imminent death and destruction. It is the feeling one has when they feel their life is in danger from some terrible force they cannot control. Man feels it at the approach of a hurricane or tornado, in the eruption of a mountain, or the approach of an army. It is the sheer terror that death and torture lead the mind toward. But it can also be something else. When not imminently threatened ourselves, “fear” can be respect, awe, and reverence. I believe that both are involved here.

yare' 3372, "to be afraid, stand in awe, fear." This verb occurs in Ugaritic and Hebrew (both biblical and post-biblical). The Bible attests it approximately 330 times and in all periods.... Basically, this verb connotes the psychological reaction of "fear." Yare' may indicate being afraid of something or someone. ... Used of a person in an exalted position, yare' connotes "standing in awe." This is not simple fear, but reverence, whereby an individual recognizes the power and position of the individual revered and renders him proper respect. ... There is more involved here than mere psychological fear. The people also showed proper "honor" ("reverence") for God and "stood in awe of" Him... After experiencing the thunder, lightning Flashes, sound of the trumpet, and smoking mountain, they were "afraid" and drew back; but Moses told them not to be afraid, "for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not" (Vines)

God has so ordered the material creation that it will lead all men to fear him in terror that leads them to fear him in respect awe and reverence. Those who fight against God are destined to the most terrible destruction. All who seek to change God’s order are destined to fail! After failing over and over again, many are led to trust, fear and respect God.

It is crucial that man be taught to fear God. Every failure recorded in Scripture came because of a lack of respect for God’s order. Every success came because man respected and held God in awe. Man must be taught to fear God, and this is the best and easiest way to do it. God's power has been exerted to set everything in place and nothing man can do will stop it from continuing. Man is not powerful enough or

wise enough to do anything about it. This ought to get even the slowest among mankind to thinking about their position in the overall scheme of things and start their minds down the realm of submission. God wants them to fear, it is in their best interests to fear him, it is right and proper for them to do so, it is the only good and proper thing for them to do and in order for them to be helped to do it, God has set things up the way they are. Man need only learn to live within the system and fear God to be truly happy here.

### **15. That which is has already been, and what is to be has already been;**

This too is a repetition of something said earlier in the book.

*That which has been is that which will be, and that which has been done is that which will be done. So, there is nothing new under the sun. Ecc 1:9*

He offers them again in a slightly different context. Man must learn that he is here to be tested and proved. He is here to work with God and to learn to love and honor him. The ever repeating cycles of human existence are designed to lead to some of the conclusions at the end of this book.

*Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things. Ecc 11:9*

*The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. 14 For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil. Ecc 12:13-14*

There is nothing different about today. Everything is exactly like it was when Ecclesiastes was written. Nothing will ever be any different. The world is what God made it to be and man is powerless to change it. It is impossible for him to do so. What is right now has already been sometime in the past. What will be tomorrow has already been long long ago.

### **And God requires an account of what is past.**

This is the difference in this passage and the one in the first chapter. There he simply stated the fact, here he makes the application. We cannot change anything God has done, but He will require an account of what we did while we were here. All that is in the world is designed to lead us to this conclusion. God wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. He does not want any to perish but all to come to repentance.

*The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. 2 Pet 3:9*

*This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (NAS) 1 Tim 2:3-4*

The material creation is designed to lead men to this. Since all must give an account of what it past, it is an act of love that all that man does in rebellion against God would end in utter failure.

There is a definite break here. The chapter can be summarized up to this point in the following way:

**3:1-8** There is a time for everything that happens in this life, and when that time comes it will occur. There is no one with the power to stop or in any way hinder these things when the time for them to come occurs.

**3:9-15** Everything is beautiful in its time. Those who learn how to view each thing in it's proper light can learn to be content in whatever circumstance the find themselves. All who want be happy must learn to live within God's system. They must learn to fear God and to live with the understanding that God will require an account of what is past.

In this final section, Solomon now opens one of the most difficult of all the things that a close scrutiny of “life under the sun” brings to the mind. Not all is as it should be here. There are things “under the sun” that are not just or fair. He introduces two ideas here that he will elaborate on more fully later in the book. First, man’s treatment of his fellow man is often unfair and unjust. Second, the nature by which death takes both man and beast is a very humbling experience.

### **16. Moreover I saw under the sun: In the place of judgment, Wickedness was there;**

The author now returns to what exists “under the sun.” To the life men live out of the “presence of Jehovah.” To those who reject God and His ways. His impartial evaluation of the judges and the judgment that man gives to their fellow man “under the sun” is no what it ought to be. Can we honestly say that the world we live in shows anything different? The place of judgment refers to the courts. The place where judgment takes place.

4941 mishpat- judgment, justice, ordinance a) judgment 1) act of deciding a case 2) a place, a court, a seat of judgment 3) a process, a procedure, a litigation (before judges) 4) a case, a cause (presented for judgment) 5) a sentence, a decision (of judgment) 6) an execution (of judgment) 7) time (of judgment) b) justice, right, rectitude (attributes of God or man) c) ordinance d) decision (in law) e) right, privilege, due (legal) f) proper, fitting, measure, fitness, custom, manner, plan (BDB)

When Solomon looked at the various courts and judgment seats in the world as they exist in those places where God is not acknowledged and His presence no longer, he saw that wickedness existed within them. This term describes those who are “impious” or “ungodly.” It also the reason why many “confound all right and wrong, just and unjust, truth and falsehood, good and evil.” It causes people to “think and act as if there were no difference of persons, things or actions.” It throws “the state of human affairs into the greatest confusion.”

"... There can be no doubt but that the general meaning of this word is, to be wicked, impious, ungodly, ...but there is difficulty in ascertaining the primary sense. I fully acquiesce in that which has been mostly adopted, to be in a restless, unquiet state, answering to the description in Isa 57:20-21, tossed with various evil passions, distracted by many forms of wickedness, and having no peace of conscience. It has the meaning of giving trouble, in *opp.* to quietness. It is descriptive of the wicked in respect to their internal state, their violent commotions within, the disquietude spring from sinful desires which constantly impels them to fresh misdeeds. ... to confound all right and wrong, just and unjust, truth and falsehood, good and evil; or to think and act as if there were no difference of persons, things, or actions. this is to throw the state of human affairs into the greatest confusion, this is to be wicked, or do wrong. Wilson p. 481

There really is nothing new under the sun here. This is as true and as timely today as it was when written. Lot found it to be true in Sodom also.

*and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked 8 (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)-- (NKJ) II Pet 2:7-8*

As one looks at the courts one does not always see justice where it ought to be. What one often sees is wickedness. People confounding all right and wrong, confusing justice and injustice, and replacing truth with falsehood, and good with evil. It is a sore travail for a righteous man to look at such things.

### **And in the place of righteousness, iniquity was there.**

The term righteousness is defined “to be right, straight, just righteous in dispensing justice.” It is “exhibited in punishing the wicked” and “avenging, delivering and rewarding the righteous.”

"... to be right, straight; to be just, righteous, in dispensing justice; to have a just cause, to be in the right;... rightness, straightness; rectitude, right, just; justice, of a judge, of a king, of God;... exhibited in punishing the wicked, or in avenging delivering, rewarding the righteous. ... spoken of a judge or king who dispenses justice and defends the right..." (Wilson p 357)

Hebrew poetry often speaks the same thing in two different ways to help illustrate or elaborate upon it. As the author looks at the places where righteousness ought to be dispensed, as he looks at the place where just causes are taken, where those who are in the right go for help, where avenging and delivering and rewarding of the righteous ought to occur, what he finds is iniquity. Though the translators have given this a different translation, it is the same term as wickedness. When right and wrong are confused. Life under the sun is not a life of fairness and justice. Those who refuse to submit to the authority of God and who refuse to take his standards as their own will always find this to be true. It makes for a life of trial and trouble for those who are seeking help in a just cause. Man can attempt to stop such things, but the only real answer is to turn to God. Yet even in this, there is consolation to the one who loves God. But not to those who do not. To the former a looking forward to the time when God will over rule all the wickedness of men gives comfort(3:17). To the rest, it is a time of continued travail as God tests them in hopes of their turning to him(3:18-20).

### **17. I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked,**

This is the great hope of the righteous. This is the consolation of all who love God and yet are in sore travail as they look at the evil and wickedness which those in authority and power wield. God will judge them. Good commentaries on this passage would be **Psalm 73:1-28; Romans 2:1-11.**

Though the frustrations of this life be many and varied. Though we see wickedness and corruption all around us, still, this thought will guard our hearts and keep us waiting patiently. God will finally and completely render to all their just due. He will absolutely and completely pay all back. Everyone will get exactly what is coming to them.

### **For there shall be a time there for every purpose and for every work.**

Solomon again goes beyond “life under the sun.” God sees all these things just as we do. But there is a time (season) for everything that happens. In the wisdom of God, there is a time to allow even oppression and injustice. If God’s desire that all be saved and come to repentance, then there must be a season in which the injustice and wickedness of people are given time to repent. God's wisdom and understanding of all things and His overruling power of providence work in the best interests of men and the salvation of as many as possible. Things must therefore operate on His time frame and not on ours. Often men wonder why God does not do something. Habakkuk wondered why God wasn’t doing anything, only to be told He was.

*How long, O LORD, will I call for help, and Thou wilt not hear? I cry out to Thee, "Violence!" Yet Thou dost not save. 3 Why dost Thou make me see iniquity, and cause me to look on wickedness? Yes, destruction and violence are before me; strife exists and contention arises. 4 Therefore, the law is ignored and justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore, justice comes out perverted. 5 "Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because I am doing something in your days-- you would not believe if you were told. 6 "For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that fierce and impetuous people who march throughout the earth to seize dwelling places which are not theirs. 7 "They are dreaded and feared. Their justice and authority originate with themselves. Hab 1:1-7*

Both sides of this dilemma are here set forth. God allows the wickedness of Judah to continue longer than Habakkuk can see as being fair. Yet when he raises up the Chaldeans to punish them, Habakkuk sees unfairness here also.

*Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil, and Thou canst not look on wickedness with favor. Why dost Thou look with favor On those who deal treacherously? Why art Thou silent when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they? 14 Why hast Thou made men like the fish of the sea, like creeping things without a ruler over them? Hab 1:13-14*

The early Christians must have wondered about the severe persecution of Saul of Tarsus. In order to give Saul time to repent, He allowed him to do wickedness. There is a time for every purpose and for every work

of God. For those who fully trust in the Lord this is the answer which soothes the heart and gives confidence in the worst of trials. God will sooner or later resolve this in the best of ways for all concerned.

### **18. I said in my heart, concerning the estate of the sons of men,**

All that Solomon saw led him to a very startling conclusion. This conclusion is “concerning” the estate of the sons of men. This “preposition” gives the “ground of” or the “account of” something.

5921 `al- as a preposition: 1) upon, on the ground of, according to, on account of, on behalf of, concerning, beside, in addition to, together with, beyond, above, over, by, on to, toward, to, against a) upon, on the ground of, on the basis of, on account of, because of, therefore, on behalf of, for the sake of, for, with, in spite of, notwithstanding, concerning, in the matter of, as regards b) above, beyond, over (used of excess) ...

The grounds for his conclusion are given in verse 16-17. There is wickedness in the place of justice. Yet God will judge all and rectify it all in His own good time. This leads to the following conclusion regarding the “estate” of the sons of men. The term “estate” refers to the “cause,” “manner” or “reason.” Solomon’s next statement is the ground, reason and manner which those “under the sun” are forced to if they look at things as deeply as Solomon did. What conclusions do the wicked draw when they see such things?

### **God tests them, that they may see that they themselves are like beasts.**

The term "test" has a variety of meanings. It can mean to “purify” or “select” either by purging out or by selecting and choosing.

1305 barar- to purify, to select, to polish, to choose, to purge, to cleanse or to make bright, to test (prove) a) (Qal) 1) to purge, to purge out, to purify 2) to choose, to select 3) to cleanse, to make shining, to polish 4) to test, to prove b) (Niphal) to purify oneself c) (Piel) to purify d) (Hiphil) 1) to purify 2) to polish arrows e) (Hithpael) 1) to purify oneself 2) to show oneself pure, just, or kind

Two passages in Daniel using this term, seem to have the same idea as the one set forth here.

*And some of those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge, and make them pure, until the end time; because it is still to come at the appointed time. Dan 11:35*

*Many will be purged, purified and refined; but the wicked will act wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand. Dan 12:10*

In Daniel 11, God allowed some who had insight to fall in order to purge them. God will allow adversities, tribulations, persecutions, etc to purify and strengthen His saints. This is the same point in Daniel 12. While his people are being purged, purified and refined by the works around them, the wicked will not understand, but those with insight will. This verse in Ecclesiastes is one of those verses that give insight. God has made a time and a purpose for everything under heaven. All that happens is to help man see that “life under the sun” without God leaves man just like the beasts. In the next few verses he will make his points of comparison.

### **19. For what happens to the sons of men also happens to beasts;**

The term “for” is generally used to give the reason or purpose of a previous thought. That is certainly the case here. It could also have been translated “because” or “since.”

3588 kiy- that, for, because, when, as though, as, because that, but, then, certainly, except, surely, since a) that; yea, indeed... (BDB)

The reason that man will see themselves as beasts is “because” or “since” what happens to the sons of men also happens to the beasts. When men “go out from the presence of Jehovah” and live their lives “under the sun” with no thought of eternity or righteousness, then what happens to the beasts also happens to man. But

what specific thing does he speak of?

**one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other.**

With the entrance of sin, and the curse, death passed to all men. Now, even a casual look at the death of man and the death of beasts will convince all of their similarity. Man can even be hunted down and killed by a beast. Some of those in evolution today have actually concluded that the similarity is so great that man is in fact a beast. Many will die like an animal. In war, in crime and in accidents, the death of man and beast is the same. Those who love God and trust His word understand that there is a difference. But those living “under the sun” may not see it.

**Surely they all have one breath; man has no advantage over beasts, for all is vanity.**

This is a terrible outcome of the curse against man. In spite of the fact that God placed eternity in his heart, the physical side of his nature shares much in common with the beast. They all have one breath. The term “breath” is a very comprehensive term.

ruach 7307, "breath; air; strength; wind; breeze; spirit; courage; temper; Spirit." This noun has cognates in Ugaritic, Aramaic, and Arabic. The word occurs about 378 times and in all periods of biblical Hebrew. First, this word means "breath," air for breathing, air that is being breathed.... Second, this word can be used with emphasis on the invisible, intangible, fleeting quality of "air": ... Third, ruach can mean "wind." ... Fourth, the wind represents direction. ... Fifth, ruach frequently represents the element of life in a man, his natural "spirit"... Sixth, ruach is often used of a man's mind-set, disposition, or "temper":... Seventh, the Bible often speaks of God's "Spirit," the third person of the Trinity. This is the use of the word in its first biblical occurrence: "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. ... Eighth, the non-material beings (angels) in heaven are sometimes called "spirits": ... Ninth, the "spirit" may also be used of that which enables a man to do a particular job or that which represents the essence of a quality of man... (Vine's)

It appears to be used in its general sense of “breath” or “air for breathing.” Both the man and the beast breath oxygen. They have lungs, blood and a heart. They both live by the same mechanism, and they both die by the same mechanism. Both have been killed by the same things. For those “under the sun” Life drops to the level of the animals. Man has breath and that breath keeps him alive. When he stops breathing he stops living. Animals have breath, that breath also keeps them alive. When they stop breathing they too stop living. What then is the difference between man and the animals. If one rejects the existence of God, then there is no difference and man simply becomes like an animal. This is the proving and testing which God leaves for man to wrestle with. Many are not content with that answer, they leave that camp and become believers in Jehovah God. Others remain are sorely distressed with such thoughts.

**20. All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust.**

Another similarity between animals and man from the perspective of those who live “life under the sun” away from the “presence of Jehovah” is the inability to see the difference. When a man dies, he is buried in the earth and his body returns to the dust, when an animal dies, he is buried and his body returns to the dust. All are made of dust and all return to the dust. Death takes them both and they all leave this world never to return. God told Adam that this was the result of the curse.

*By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Gen 3:19*

**21. Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward,**

From a purely physical viewpoint, this question cannot be answered. The author will answer it in Chapter Twelve from God’s revelation.

*then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it. Eccl 12:7*

But this will never be enough for those living “life under the sun.” The wicked see life only from the perspective of their own eyes. They do not know that the spirit of the sons of men goes upward when it leaves mans body. Even with the superior information found in the gospel, there are still those today who still do not know. Those who still reject the plain teaching even here that the spirit of the sons of man goes upward.

4605 ma`al- as a substantive: a higher part, an upper part as an adverb: above as a preposition: on the top of, above, on higher ground than with locative: upward, higher, above

### **and the spirit of the beast, which goes down to the earth?**

Who knows that the spirit of the beast simply goes down to the earth? This distinction which is so clearly understood by the righteous is not seen by the wicked. This leads to further testing on the part of the wicked. They are forced to the conclusion that if there is more to life than this, and if they are to destroy the unsatisfactory and illogical conclusion that men are simply beasts, then they must concede that there is a God.

4295 mattah- downward, below a) downward b) under (used of age) c) beneath

### **22. So I perceived that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own works,**

This verse tells the righteous what they must do while they live here and wait to be taken upward. Since there is wickedness in the place of justice and righteousness and God will do nothing until the exact right moment. Since at that time God will rectify all the wrongs done in life, there is nothing better for a man to do than to rejoice in his own works. Seldom will one get satisfaction from seeking to right wrongs for they cannot be righted by single individuals who believe in God. Vengeance is forbidden to man, and God may not take it while we live. Therefore the best man can do is to rejoice in his own works, and in the things he himself has control over. This is now the third time Solomon has recommended this:

*And all that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor. Eccl 2:10*

*I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime; Eccl 3:12*

Rejoice is summed up with “be joyful,” “a spontaneous emotion of extreme happiness,” “jubilation. God wants the righteous to enjoy and gain happiness and jubilation from their own works. The things that we do ought to make us happy. God wants us to be happy as we live our lives. The enjoyment from accomplishing things we set out to do is one area where we can enjoy such happiness. There is so little else that we control that we have to listen to God in this.

### **for that is his heritage.**

"Heritage" is defined:

"to divide, to divide out as a spoil... that which is assigned to man by God for his enjoyment:..." (Wilson p 318)

Each person must learn to live within the world as God has made it. There is a time set forth by God for all things to be done. The portion for those who fear him and long to do His will is that they rejoice in their own works. Let them be content and happy to do what they can do. Let them not fret over what cannot be done, but instead leave it in the hands of God. This and this alone is what God has divided out to man as his spoil.

### **For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?**

Think back to the purpose of this chapter and one will see why it is concluded thus. It began with the truths that God is ruling over the earth and there is a time for every purpose and plan that He brings into being. God

has made everything beautiful in its time, and man has control over none of it. Not only can the righteous man not control any of these events when they occur, but he cannot control the unrighteous things that occur in the world either.

Since the servant of the LORD can fully trust Him to deal with all of these things, what should his stance be while he lives here? He should do good as he has opportunity(3:12), he should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor(3:13), and he should rejoice in his own labor. If man has so little control over the world he lives in, how much less the world that shall be after him? Let each man do what he can do, and rejoice in his works which he has an opportunity to do, and let him trust in God to do the rest. If each man would simply enjoy that which he can do(and do it with all his might) while he is here, and trust in God to give the increase, it would be a much better world than one in which men are depressed and downtrodden because there is nothing they can personally do to stop all the evil and corruption around them.

Elijah at the beginning of his ministry concerned himself in rejoicing in his labor, but soon become downtrodden at the ineffectiveness of it all. God quickly cleared his mind, and left him prepared to labor on. The Jews felt the same way when they returned to Jerusalem after Babylonian captivity and wept over the size and lack of expensive quality of the new temple. God told them not to despise the day of small things. God could do great things even with this. We just do not know what will happen tomorrow, and we can grow old and grey in discouragement thinking about it, or we can trust in the Lord fully to rule the universe as he sees fit and do what we can in our own circle. This is what the author would have us see here.