

Ecclesiastes 3.1-11

All in God's Time

BEST KNOWN Chapter of Ecclesiastes > Esp vs. 1-8 BEAUTIFUL POEM

Put to Music by PETE SEEGER – *'Turn, Turn, Turn'* – popular FOLK SONG

1960's Sung by AMERICAN Youth as PROTEST Song for Peace song

"a time for war and a time for peace" The Byrds added *"I swear it's not too late"*

CHRISTIAN Chorus from v. 11 *'In His Time'* > He makes all things Beautiful!

TIMELESS Words about HUMAN Struggle that Relate to ALL PEOPLE

Ecclesiastes – God's Message from SEEKER – Search ALL are STILL ON

Ch 2: Looked for Meaning in PLEASURE, WISDOM, and WORK > Not Found

From ch 2 – The Searcher's LIFE to ch 3 his WORLD-VIEW

KEY: Looks in VAIN for MEANING > Try's EVERYTHING, still EMPTY

1. An Experience of Life

a. Control Impt. SEARCH in Ancient Near East Wisdom Lit: PROPER TIME!

v. 1 ...a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven...

14 Couplets > 28 Events > Clusters of 7 > Whole Range of HUMAN ACTIVITY

vs. 2-8 born and die...plant and uproot...kill and heal...tear down and build...
weep and laugh...mourn and dance...scatter stones and gather them...embrace
and refrain... search and give up...keep and throw away...tear and mend...be
silent and speak... love and hate...war and peace

GOD is the KING over ALL TIME – Eternity to Eternity – Birth to Death

MERISM > Fixed POLES: COVERS EVERY Activity in btwn: Born & Die

Entire Cycle of Life: from Birth to Death

Human Activities: plant and uproot...kill (WAR or DEATH PENALTY of Gov't, NOT MURDER) and heal...tear down and build...

Emotions: weep and laugh...mourn and dance

Work and Warmth: scatter stones & gather them (clear field and make wall? Or Weapons of WAR hurled on Catapult?) ...embrace and refrain

Possessions: search and give up...keep and throw away

Mourning? : tear and mend (sign of lament)...be silent and speak

Closure: love and hate...war and peace

BEAUTY of Poem OBSCURES what for MANY is a BLEAK message

Context: FUTILITY > World GOES ON without OUR CONTROL or CHANGE

Everything is FRUSTRATINGLY Out of the CONTROL of Human Beings

Popular Tract: "God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life" *Really?*

Life is the INTERVAL Between DELIVERY ROOM and the CEMETARY

Is it ALL Beautiful? v. 11 He has made everything beautiful in its time.

ECHO CREATION Story: God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.
Genesis 1.31

Along that LINE > BEAUTIFUL would MEAN
APPROPRIATE, FITTING, SENSIBLE, MEANINGFUL
ie. The WORLD WORKS > because GOD is the MAKER of ALL

vs. 14 I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God has done it so that people fear before him.

FEAR > God wants men to FEAR HIM

FEAR of God one of MOST PIOUS Statements in Bible > Positive & Negative

Q's FEAR of God starts being AFRAID – Not sure if led then to ADORATION

b. Conflict

Right BEFORE we are Told EVERYTHING IS BEAUTIFUL....(vs. 11)

vs. 9,10 What does the worker gain from *his toil*? I have seen *the burden* God has laid on men.

IF RIGHT AFTER Time Poem: Then ALL Things = INTRINSICALLY Beautiful
But vs. 9 & 10 SHADE Meaning of BEAUTIFUL includes TOIL and BURDEN

For Koheleth the whole range of life is beyond human control, though by nature we have to share in these activities. Our toil is basically profitless because God has so planned and controlled the events in our lives that all our efforts make almost no significant change.

David Allan Hubbard

We live with EVER-PRESENT LIMITS to HUMAN FREEDOM

Every Moment we FACE Possibility of DISASTER

At Times > you cry your eyes out / Other Times > laugh your head off

Ecclesiastes > MEANINGLESSNESS of Life > repeated **40** times - Heb '*hevel*'

= **meaningless**, Fleeting, empty, vanity, futility, Puff of Air: NOTHING

THEME VERSE: "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."
Ecclesiastes 1.2

Who, in his right mind, would choose a time to weep and mourn and die, and so he is pointing to the fact that the great events that characterize the stages of our lives, are out of our control.

J. Ligon Duncan

CONTEXT > Qohelet STRUGGLES to UNDERSTAND it ALL

v. 10 I have seen the burden...

v. 12 I know that there is nothing... v. 14 I know that everything God does...

DEBATING, WRESTLING, WONDERING

STRUGGLE of OUR HUMANITY > Cog in Wheels of God's Machine?

Is God's Control a **STRAIGHT-JACKET** or a **SECURITY BLANKET**?

v. 11 He has also set eternity in the hearts of men....

Whole Chapter > All about FINITE Time > THEN comes Word "Eternity"

We are TEMPORAL, Defined by Limits of TIME > ALSO ETERNAL

The FIRST WORDS Children Learn: **'Why'?? / 'When'?? / 'What for'??**

CURIOSITY > Sign of IMAGE of God > Evidence of ETERNITY

Normally Animal NOT RESTLESS when PHYSICAL NEEDS are Met

Stomach Full – Warm & Comfortable - Sleeps SOUNDLY and PEACEFULLY

PEOPLE – even FED & WARM – RESTLESS, LOOKING,

WONDERING Something Beyond Watches, Calendars, & History Books

“The universe is indifferent...so we create a fake world for ourselves, and we exist within that fake world...a world that in fact means nothing in all, when you step back. It's meaningless. But it's important that we create some sense of meaning, because no perceptible meaning exists for anybody” Woody Allen

c. Contribution? **'Contribute to your Destiny'** > Make PLANS & DECIDE

BASIC PREMISE of Modern Society > YOU can Make THINGS BETTER

SELF & FAMILY: Hard Work – Education – Diligent – ATTEND CHURCH!

Prosperity Preachers promise “YOUR BEST LIFE EVER”

FIRST Step is to BUY their BOOKS!

Enough DILLIGENCE and DISCERNMENT you'll SHAPE your DESTINY

POLITICAL CANDIDATES PROMISE “Change” > We all WANT IT
NO Agreement on WHAT will Change, HOW, WHEN, and by WHOM!

One American PRESIDENT quoted Eccles 3 POEM in Speech he Wrote
INTENDED words to Speak about OPPORTUNITIES > NOW is OUR Time
SPEECH written for November 22, 1963 > NEVER Delivered
President John Kennedy DIED on the WAY to giving THAT SPEECH

FULFILLED True MEANING of Words > We DO NOT KNOW the TIMES
ULTIMATE DECISIONS and PLANS NOT OURS to MAKE

Cannot KNOW ANY Part of God’s Plan BEGINNING, END, or IN BETWEEN
Did NOT FIX Time to ENTER WORLD / & will not CHOOSE when to LEAVE

Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.
Proverbs 19:21

“See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make
alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.”
Deuteronomy 32.39

2. An Entrance into Life

a. God Rules over All Time

Not Clear from Ecclesiastes how CLEARLY/FULLY Q knows Living GOD
But it is VERY CLEAR that he is NOT an Atheist...

for God is in heaven and you are on earth Ecclesiastes 5.2
Is TRUTH of God’s Time **STRAIGHT-JACKET** or **SECURITY BLANKET?**

Qohelet admits POWER and PLAN behind EVENTS of LIFE

Cannot SEE HIS FACE > Is God JUST? Are Humans just ERECT ANIMALS?

Cannot SEE BEYOND the SUN > Limited KNOWLEDGE of this HORIZON

If a time-traveler from the Early Church secretly followed you from Monday till Saturday evening, would they be able to tell you're a Christian?

Many Christians live like SECULARISTS > Look like the WORLD

Secularism > Default State of our Culture > Water we Swim In—Air we Breathe

The problem is “practical atheism.” It's not that people do not believe in God, it's that they live as if God is largely irrelevant. That's what secularism does to us. It doesn't disprove our faith, it dismisses it. It makes faith an issue of personal, private belief, disconnected from the outside world.

Craig Gay, "The Way of the Modern World"

Give STARS and RAINBOWS as PRIZES to Reward how GREAT We Are
RARELY Hear Stars / Rainbows -CREATIONS of GOD to Reveal His GLORY
MANY People – even those say Xtians – go Thru DAY Never Think of GOD

Shaped by Secular Assumptions & Rituals, Know Technology Not THEOLOGY
REWARDS of Life Earned and Deserved by our HARD WORK
NOT Undeserved GIFTS from the Gracious Hands of our Loving Father

When Pastored ICF Almaty, KZ > Preached thru Ecclesiastes
Member from BELGIUM led KAZAKH Man/ Friend followed Jesus, then QUIT

Renee to KZ: ‘Can we at least meet and read a book together?’ / Kazak: YES!

MET regularly and READ Ecclesiastes > Chapter by Chapter

At First KAZAKH Man SAW self > Agreed with his FUTILITY, MISERY

Midway thru BOOK > K man 'That GUY is CRAZY' – There is Meaning, Hope

KAZAKH Brother returned to FOLLOWING JESUS

HOW to CHANGE ATTITUDE? > from GRUDGE to GLADNESS?

Understand Difference between PROVIDENCE and FATALISM

Heidelberg Catechism Q 27: What do you understand by the providence of God?

Answer: God's providence is His almighty and ever present power, whereby, as with His hand, He still upholds heaven and earth and all creatures, and so governs them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, food and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, indeed, all things, come not by chance but by His fatherly hand.

Heidelberg Catechism Question 28: What does it benefit us to know that God has created all things and still upholds them by His providence?

Answer: We can be patient in adversity, thankful in prosperity, and with a view to the future we can have a firm confidence in our faithful God and Father that no creature shall separate us from His love; for all creatures are so completely in His hand that without His will they cannot so much as move.

You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You.
Augustine

KNOW a HEAVENLY FATHER > not Blind Chance > CONTROLS our LIFE

TRACE His HAND of BLESSING thru LIFE and IN SCRIPTURE

BIGGEST Event on GOD'S CALENDAR > Sending of HIS SON

v. 11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

“...the kaleidoscopic movement of innumerable processes, each with its own character and its period of blossoming and ripening, beautiful in its time and contributing to the over-all masterpiece which is the work of one Creator”

Derek Kidner

“The sweetest thing in all my life has been the longing...to find the place where all beauty comes from...the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have not yet visited” C.S. Lewis

b. God Redeems in Time

...when the *time had fully come*, God sent his Son... Galatians 4:4

Biggest RED LETTER DAY in HISTORY > Jesus CAME

Came as MASTER of GOD'S TIME CLOCK

Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "*The time has come*," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" Mark 1:14-15

Qohelet speaks TENTATIVELY and with UNCERTAINTY

God sent his SON to SAVE and ALL Could See and KNOW

King HEROD Called Wise Men – Knew Star Appeared over Bethlehem

Even SAMARITAN Woman knew GREAT PROPHET was Coming

Jesus knew had ENDURE 40 Terrible Days with SATAN in Wilderness

DEMONS knew that their Time for Judgment had COME in Jesus

When FINAL Passover came Jesus KNEW his HOUR had COME

Knew PETER would deny him THREE Times before COCK Crowed

KNEW hang THREE Agonizing HOURS on ROMAN Cross

KNOW be RESTORED to FULL Eternal GLORY with his FATHER

Jesus WALKED thru GOSPELS – On Time, Never Late – Doing Work of Father
 Knew TIME to Preach / Keep Silent – HEAL & Walk Away
 ENDLESS Grace to HUMBLE – RESISTED the PROUD, esp Religious

Jesus speaks CONFIDENTLY and TRIUMPHANTLY....this WILL HAPPEN!

Jesus: "The man who loves his life *will* lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world *will* keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also *will* be. My Father *will* honor the one who serves me ...Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world *will* be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, *will* draw all men to myself."
 John 12:25-33

“Crown Him the Lord of years,
 The Potentate of time.
 Creator of the rolling spheres,
 Ineffably sublime.
 All hail, Redeemer, hail!
 For Thou hast died for me;
 Thy praise shall never, never fail
 Throughout eternity.” Matthew Bridges

CROWN Him the LORD of Years! The Potentate of TIME!

c. God calls us to Redeem Time

One thing to GRUDGINGLY ADMIT > GOD CONTROLS TIME
 Quite another to GLADLY AFFIRM > ‘MY Time is in YOUR HANDS’

“You cannot live any longer than the Lord has prescribed, nor die any sooner.”
 Martin Luther

GREEK Translation of HEBREW Bible SEPTUAGINT – 100 yrs before Jesus
 WORD translators chose TIME Not CHRONOS – MEASUREMENT of Time
 KAIROS: OPPORTUNITY, Opportune Time > NOW is TIME for Good Things

making the best use of the time, because the days are evil Ephesians 5.16

they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength... Isaiah 40.31

STEWARDS of our LIVES – Seconds, Minutes, Hours, Days, Years, Decades
All UNDESERVED Gifts that we will have to ANSWER For to our GIVER

“Only one life, soon it will pass – only what is done for Christ will last”
Anonymous

In the words of OLD Commentator on Ecclesiastes...

“the wise, and regular, and orderly administration of the One, who sees the end from the beginning, and to whom there is no unanticipated contingency; and whose omniscient eye, in the midst of what appears to us inextricable confusion, has a thorough and intuitive perception of the endlessly diversified relations and tendencies of all events, and all their circumstances, discerning throughout the whole the perfection of harmony”
Ralph Wardlaw, 1821

SUMMARY > God does EVERYTHING at JUST the RIGHT Time!

“Each generation has its work assigned it by the sovereign Lord; and each person in the generation has his also. And now is our time. We could not be useful in the generation that went before us; for then we were not: nor can we be useful (personally) in that which shall come after us; for then we shall be off the stage. Now is our time; let us not neglect usefulness in our generation”

Pastor Thomas Boston to his congregation in Scotland early 1700's

Poem of ch 3 > CHOICES: Love & Hate, War & Peace, Mourning & Dancing
One OTHER > Even MORE IMPORTANT Choice > about JESUS, THE SON
Either RECEIVE Him OR REJECT Him > FOLLOW Him or FORSAKE Him

"In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you."
I tell you, *now is the time of God's favor*, now is the day of salvation.

2 Corinthians 6.2

You see, at *just the right time*, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the
ungodly.

Romans 5.6

I have found more in Christ, than I ever expected to want. Charles Bridges

He is ETERNAL GOD > Knows BEGINNING and END > Sees BEYOND SUN
NOT Controlled by TIME – We belong to HIM who CONTROLS Time –
At TIME He CHOOSES Will Stand here Again on Earth - Bring Time to Close

REWARD those WAITING and WATCHING for HIS COMING

ONLY by FAITH in GOD can you SAY -

**I trust in you, O LORD; I say, "You are my God." My times are in your
hands.**

Psalms 31.14,15

So we END with this ANCIENT PRAYER of MOSES...

So, Lord, teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

Psalms 90.12

Ecclesiastes 3.¹ For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

² a time to be born, and a time to die;

a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

³ a time to kill, and a time to heal;

a time to break down, and a time to build up;

⁴ a time to weep, and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

⁵ a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;

a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

⁶ a time to seek, and a time to lose;

a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

⁷ a time to tear, and a time to sew;

a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

⁸ a time to love, and a time to hate;

a time for war, and a time for peace.

⁹ What gain has the worker from his toil? ¹⁰ I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. ¹¹ He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.