

## Daily Bible Study

### *“Father Time” Ecclesiastes 3:1-15*

*May 19– May 25, 2013*

**THE LORD’S DAY & MONDAY** –Well, this week we continue our study of the book of **Ecclesiastes** and take as our text, **Ecclesiastes 3:1-15**. We have previously read that Solomon has said life was *vanity*, empty, meaningless, and a *chasing after the wind*. He presented arguments to build his case that life was a monotonous and meaningless affair. Thankfully Solomon was too wise a man to let his own arguments go unchallenged, so now he begins to do so. His first argument was the monotony of life, this circle that keeps going around. You don’t have to be the wisest man alive to know times and seasons are a regular part of life. If there were no God-ordained laws of nature life would literally be uncontrolled and chaotic. What Solomon and we are going to learn here is that not only are there times and seasons in this world, but there is an overruling sovereign Providence in our lives. We are calling this lesson **“Father Time”** to point to that Sovereign One, Our Lord God Almighty; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. From before our birth to the moment of our death, God is accomplishing His divine purposes, even though we may not always understand what He is doing. And the circle of life ends kneeling before the feet of Jesus. Read our text **Ecclesiastes 3:1-15**: *“To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, And a time to die; A time to plant, And a time to pluck what is planted; A time to kill, And a time to heal; A time to break down, And a time to build up; A time to weep, And a time to laugh; A time to mourn, And a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, And a time to gather stones; A time to embrace, And a time to refrain from embracing; A time to gain, And a time to lose; A time to keep, And a time to throw away; A time to tear, And a time to sew; A time to keep silence, And a time to speak; A time to love, And a time to hate; A time of war, And a time of peace. What profit has the worker from that in which he labors? I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied. He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end. I know that nothing is better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—it is the gift of God. I know that whatever God does, It shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, And nothing taken from it. God does it, that men should fear before Him. That which is has already been, And what is to be has already been; and God requires an account of what is past.”*

*Suggestion for Prayer:* God, teach me this week from Sacred Scripture. Help me understand that You control time itself as You live above it. Let me learn to be satisfied with You as I watch You unfold Your Divine plan which You have graciously placed me in.

**TUESDAY – Ecclesiastes 3:1**: *“To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven.”* This verse opens up for us a little poem, consisting of 14 different statements concerning life *“under heaven.”* It is an observation on human life in the human world. Here we will see Solomon affirm that God is at work in our individual lives and He from the events therein accomplishes His will. All of these different events come from God and they are good *in their time*. If we seek and submit to God, life will not be meaningless. Everything will be as He will later say, *“beautiful in its time”* (**verse 11**). That includes even the most difficult experiences of our lives. The Hebrew in **verse 1** refers to specific moments not merely a period of time which tells us that there is a predetermined purpose on which all things depend. By the word *“purpose”*, which means *“the reason for which something is done”* Solomon meant people’s deliberate, willful acts. The Hebrew word for *purpose* is always used of people and could be translated *“desire, delight, longing, pleasure”* or *“what one desires...”* (**Psalm 1:2, Isaiah 58:13**). A form of this word is used in **Psalm 40:8** which is ultimately speaking about Jesus where the Psalmist says, *“I delight (purpose) to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart”*. Solomon says for all these willful and desired acts people will be held accountable (**Ecclesiastes 3:17**). Each activity has its proper *time* (point in time) and *season* (duration). Each of our lives has a span of time and within that there are various. Man may see them as random happenings determined by *“fate”*, *“chance”* or *“the roll of the dice”* but the Bible teaches that God has a chosen purpose for everything and the purpose is always for the good of His people and His glory (**Romans 8:28**). We as human beings have learned to master and control many things, but we have no control over time; each second is God appointed.

*Suggestion for Prayer:* Lord God, thank You that time is in Your hands. Help me to see and understand that every minute is given by You for my good and Your glory. Help me to delight, desire, long to, and purpose to do Your will just like Jesus did.

**WEDNESDAY – Ecclesiastes 3:2-8**: *“A time to be born, And a time to die; A time to plant, And a time to pluck what is planted; A time to kill, And a time to heal; A time to break down, And a time to build up; A time to weep, And a time to laugh; A time to mourn, And a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, And a time to gather stones; A time to embrace, And a time to refrain from embracing; A time to gain, And a time to lose; A time to keep, And a time to throw away; A time to tear, And a time to sew; A time to keep silence, And a time to speak; A time to love, And a time to hate; A time of war, And a time of peace..”* We will today briefly look at this poem and some of the statements in it. **Born & Die**: Things like abortion and birth control make it look like man is in control of birth and death, but Solomon says different. Birth and death are not human accidents; they are Divine appointments, for God is in control. For instance, opening barren wombs is something God does (**Genesis 29:31–30:24, 1 Samuel 1:9–20**). Death also, even when it is taken and attempted to be cut off by man is under Divine Sovereign control (Read **Psalm 139:13–16**). Remember that, *“...It is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgment”* (**Hebrews 9:27**). **Plant & Pluck**: The Jews were agricultural

people that appreciated and understood the seasons. In fact, their religious calendar was based on the agricultural year (**Leviticus 23**). Men plow and sow in the fields, but only God can make it all grow (**Psalms 65:9–13**). “*Plucking*” may refer either to reaping a harvest or pulling up unproductive plants. A successful farmer works with what has naturally been given him; he learns God’s principles and cooperates with them. *Cast & Gather Stones*: In Israel, tour guides will tell you that God gave stones to an angel and told him to distribute them across the world but the angel tripped right over Israel and spilled the stones! Although this is obviously untrue Israel is a rocky land and farmers must clear their fields before they can plow and plant. If you wanted to hurt an enemy, you filled up his field with stones (**2 Kings 3:19, 25**). But people also gathered stones for building walls and houses. Stones themselves are neither good nor bad it just depends on what you do with them. *Embracing & Refraining from Embracing*: People in Solomon’s culture openly showed their affection with kissing and hugging when they met and parted. This means there is a time for hello and goodbye. Also the physical relationship of a husband and wife may be in view (**Leviticus 15:19–31, 1 Corinthians 7:5**). *Love & Hate*: There is a time to hate? The next phrase mentions “*war and peace*” which may suggest the primary thing in Solomon’s mind was concerning the nation but there are some things that God hates and Christians are to as well (**2 Chronicles 19:2, Psalm 97:10, Proverbs 6:16–19, Revelation 2:6, 15**). This poem tells us there is time and purpose for everything. Life is made up of decisions; events of joy and sorrow, building and destroying, living and dying and each comes at the proper time. It also reminds us we are creatures limited by time, not yet able to partake of the joys of eternity. No one can be happy until he understands life is full of changes and we are mortals living in time. We must look to God, seek His wisdom and trust Him.

*Suggestion for Prayer: God, help me learn to trust You in all circumstances. Help me also understand that there are ups and downs in life but I must walk close to You and seek to obey You and Your word and not set all my hope in what I see happening here in this temporal life.*

**THURSDAY – Ecclesiastes 3:9-13**: “*What profit has the worker from that in which he labors? I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied. He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end. I know that nothing is better for them than to rejoice and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—it is the gift of God.*” Solomon after giving us the poem speaking of all the times of life asks if there is any profit. God has His proper time for every event, but what is the point of it all? Our lives are *God-given*, including experiences of day to day life. Sometimes it may seem strange and hard to understand but if we by faith accept life as a gift from God, thanking Him for it, we will be the better for it. Our outlook needs to be up, not confined to “*under heaven*” and we see this point made when we are told *He has made everything beautiful in its time* and that *He has put eternity in their hearts*. Our lives are linked to eternity. We were created in the image of God, where given dominion over creation

(**Genesis 1:26–28**) and are therefore distinct and different from the rest of creation. We have an “*eternity seed*” if you will in us which tells us there is something greater than what we merely see here. This explains why nobody (including Solomon) can be truly satisfied with their pleasures, work, achievements and so forth and why no one is fully able to explain all the strange things in life (**1:12–2:11**). God accomplishes His purposes in His time, but it will not be until we enter eternity that we will begin to comprehend His total plan. In all of this Solomon tells us to enjoy life as it is truly a *gift from God*. We have seen this already in our previous studies and also in the New Testament (**1 Timothy 6:17**). The enjoyment of life is an important theme in Ecclesiastes. Solomon is not encouraging us to merely find pleasure as pagans attempt to in the activities and things themselves, but rather to enjoy God and His gifts and the fruit of one’s labor, no matter how difficult life may be.

*Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me to truly enjoy You, Your gifts, the fruit of my labor and find contentment and satisfaction with an eternal perspective rather than a mere earthly one.*

**FRIDAY & SATURDAY – Ecclesiastes 3:14-15**: “*I know that whatever God does, It shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, And nothing taken from it. God does it, that men should fear before Him. That which is has already been, And what is to be has already been; and God requires an account of what is past.*” Life may appear to be meaningless, temporal and fleeting but *whatever God does, It shall be forever*. When we live for Him and trust Him always and totally life is meaningful and manageable. Instead of complaining about what we don’t have we then enjoy what we do have and thank God for it. As we have said often, Solomon is pointing us too and promoting faith in God, not “*faith in faith*” or a “*pie in the sky*” view of life. Faith is only as good as the *object* of faith, and the greatest object of faith is the Lord Jesus Christ. He can be trusted. Life is not seen as meaningless and monotonous for us when we believe God has made us and we are a part of His eternal plan. We are not merely an insignificant bug but a creation of God, made in His image, and if we are repentant and believing in Jesus, a child of the living God. If we are trusting Jesus for forgiveness of sin we are forgiven, safe in Him and He has prepared an eternal home for us which He will bring us to (**John 14:1–6**). God wants us to *fear before Him*. This doesn’t mean cower before Him as a cruel master but submit and trust Him as an obedient child to a loving parent. If we fear God we don’t have to fear anything else because God is in control. Solomon adds *God requires an account of what is past*. The Hebrew here is complex and this phrase literally says “*God seeks what is pursued.*” Solomon seems to say that time goes by quick, slips away from us but God keeps track of it and will at the end of time, call us to account for what we have done with it. God has a time for everything, including judgment and is working out His eternal purposes in and through the deeds of men, even the deeds of the wicked. Thomas Watson said, “*Eternity to the godly is a day that has no sunset; eternity to the wicked is a night that has no sunrise.*” May we fear God and trust and obey Him.

*Suggestion for Prayer: God, thank You for loving me & sending Jesus to pay the penalty for my sin and live a perfect life acceptable to You for me. Help me trust & obey You “all my days”.*