

Study of Ecclesiastes: Lesson 4 – Chapter 3
Bellevue Church of Christ / Fall-Winter 2020 - 2021

1. What does the Koheleth say about everything under heaven? (vv. 1-8, Deut 32:39)
 - What do these verses say about the nature of God? Man? What are the future plans of man subject to? (vv. James 4:13-16)
 - How do the fourteen contrasted items support these ideas?
2. What question does the Koheleth restate? (vv. 9, 1:3)
3. What does “everything” refer to in verse 11? In what way is “everything” beautiful?
4. What does it mean that “God has put eternity in man's heart?” What does this cause man to do? If man has “eternity” in his heart, then why can he not fathom what God has done from beginning to end? (vv. 11; Gen 1:27; Rom 8:28)
5. What does the Koheleth conclude is best for people to do? (vv. 12-13, 22 ; 2:24-26)
6. Why has God made what He does unchangeable? What does this say to man? (vv. 14)
7. Is verse 15 talking about judgment? How does this relate to 12-14? (vv. 1:9-10)
8. What answer does the Koheleth have for the injustice present in high places? (vv. 16-17; Rom 12:19)
9. What does man have in common with animals? Why does God test us to show us these similarities? (vv. 18-21)

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Notes & Answers

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 (ESV)

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.

Song – “Turn, Turn, Turn (To Everything There is a Season)” – Written by Pete Seeger in the late 1950s and recorded in 1959. Became an international hit when released by The Bryds in 1965.

1. What does the Koheleth say about everything under heaven? (vv. 1-8, Deut 32:39)

- **What do these verses say about the nature of God? Man? What are the future plans of man subject to? (vv. James 4:13-16)**

- **How do the fourteen contrasted items support these ideas?**

Deuteronomy 32:39 (ESV)

³⁹ “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.

This poem illustrates that there is an appropriate time for all activities that constitute human life. Positive events are paralleled with negative ones to reflect reality.¹ There is a similarity to what was presented in 1:4-11:

Ecclesiastes 1:4–11 (ESV)

⁴ A generation goes, and a generation comes,
but the earth remains forever.

⁵ The sun rises, and the sun goes down,
and hastens to the place where it rises.

⁶ The wind blows to the south
and goes around to the north;
around and around goes the wind,
and on its circuits the wind returns.

⁷ All streams run to the sea,
but the sea is not full;

¹ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Ec 3:1–8). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

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to the place where the streams flow,
there they flow again.

⁸ All things are full of weariness;
a man cannot utter it;
the eye is not satisfied with seeing,
nor the ear filled with hearing.

⁹ What has been is what will be,
and what has been done is what will be done,
and there is nothing new under the sun.

¹⁰ Is there a thing of which it is said,
“See, this is new”?

It has been already
in the ages before us.

¹¹ There is no remembrance of former things,
nor will there be any remembrance
of later things yet to be
among those who come after.

Man is to take his life day by day from the hand of God (2:24–26; 3:12–13), realizing that God has a fitting time for each thing to be done (v. 1). The significance of this section is that man is responsible to discern the right times for the right actions; and when he does the right action according to God’s time, the result is “beautiful” (v. 11).²

1. A time to be born, and a time to die – *These are the boundaries of life under the sun*
2. A time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted – *There is an appropriate season for each, which requires the discernment of man. This could be natural or metaphorical.*
3. A time to kill, and a time to heal – *Both of these are part of the reality of life (i.e. in war of self-defense or capital offenses).*

When should aggression be met by resistance and when should there be some healing compromise? When does an offender need a life sentence, and when does he need psychiatric treatment?³

4. A time to break down, and a time to build up – *As in building or destroying cities.*
5. A time to weep, and a time to laugh – *Man must discern the appropriate time for each:*

Romans 12:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ *Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.*

² Wright, J. S. (1991). [Ecclesiastes](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (Vol. 5, p. 1160). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

³ Wright, J. S. (1991). [Ecclesiastes](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (Vol. 5, p. 1161). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

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6. A time to mourn, and a time to dance – *See #5*
7. A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together – *See #4*
8. A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing – *In a marriage relationship.*
9. A time to seek, and a time to lose – *Acquisition and sacrifice*
10. A time to keep, and a time to cast away – *See #9*
11. A time to tear, and a time to sew – *Tearing up and repairing*
12. A time to keep silence, and a time to speak – *Again, man must discern the appropriate time for each:*
James 1:19 (ESV)
¹⁹ Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;
13. A time to love, and a time to hate – *Both are needed provided we love and hate the proper things:*
Romans 12:9 (ESV)
⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.
14. A time for war, and a time for peace. – *See #3*

The future plans of man are subject to the will of God...

James 4:13-17 (ESV)

¹³ Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”— ¹⁴ yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” ¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

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Romans 8:28 (ESV)

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

5. What does the Koheleth conclude is best for people to do? (vv. 12-13, 22 ; 2:24-26)

¹² I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; ¹³ also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God’s gift to man.

Ecclesiastes 2:24-26 (ESV)

²⁴ There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, ²⁵ for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment? ²⁶ For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

6. Why has God made what He does unchangeable? What does this say to man? (vv. 14)

Anticipating that people who cannot understand God’s plan might accuse Him of being arbitrary, Solomon described the nature of God’s plan and the response it should elicit.⁴

God is in control / God sets the rules / God sets the standards / God is truth / God is unchanging

7. Is verse 15 talking about judgment? How does this relate to 12-14? (vv. 1:9-10)

God has been consistent in His workings / standards throughout history / Even though we may discard history, God does not, and He can see infinitely

Ecclesiastes 1:9-10 (ESV)

⁹ What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. ¹⁰ Is there a thing of which it is said, “See, this is new”? It has been already in the ages before us.

⁴ Glenn, D. R. (1985). [Ecclesiastes](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 985). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

