

LIFE UNDER THE SUN



STUDIES IN ECCLESIASTES

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הַבַּיִת

“Like the seasons of the year, life changes frequently and drastically. You enjoy it or endure it as it comes and goes, as it ebbs and flows.”

— Burgess Meredith

Ecclesiastes Part 6 - “Seeing Beyond the Seasons of Life”

Introduction: What is your favorite season? (If it isn't fall, you need to examine your heart)

Qohelet's Consideration of the Times & Seasons of Life—Ecclesiastes 3:1-22

Key Word: “time”— תַּיִת (‘*etb*) — Time, the time of an event. Used of experiences, occurrences, or occasions. (3:1-8, 11, 17)

⇒ The term can refer to a particular moment or extended period of time and is translated *καιρός* (*kairos*) in the LXX.

The emphasis here is on the _____ of God over the appointed times and seasons of life.

His Opening Poem (3:1-8)

“The pairing of the varying aspects of human life indicates the universality of God's control. For the expression of totality in pairs is a common Old Testament idiom.” — Michael A. Eaton

Eccl. 3:1-2a— *For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die;*

Observation: Qohelet employs the poem to place before us once again both the _____ and _____ of life.

God's Providence & the Frustrations of Life (3:8-15)

A familiar question:

Eccl. 3:9—*What gain has the worker from his toil?*

Qohelet's observations about why life is frustrating:

Eccl. 3:10-11— *I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. 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.*

1. Along with hardship, the experiences of life also include great _____.

2. God has made us to desire _____ but He has only allowed us to have a _____ understanding of things.

What then can man do?

Eccl. 3:12-13—*I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God's gift to man.*

Qohelet's observations about the purpose of life's frustrations:

Eccl. 3:14—*I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him.*

1. God is sovereign over the times and seasons of life...the beauty and the frustrations.

2. The beauty of life and our frustrations with our own limited perspective on things are to lead us to _____ God.

“fear”— יָרָא (*yare'*) — To fear, stand in awe of; to reverence. The term is used by Qohelet 8 times in Ecclesiastes, most significantly in 12:13.

The Difficulty of Reconciling God's Sovereignty with Our Experiences & Perceptions (3:16-22)

The Problem: People don't tend to respond to God in worship, but instead with _____.

Eccl. 3:16—*Moreover, I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness, and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness.*

Two Comments:

1. God is not indifferent to _____, but intends to fully judge the wicked.

Eccl. 3:17— *I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter and for every work.*

2. That life contains both beauty and hardship is intended by God to frustrate us and to illustrate for us that, _____ from Him, we are no better off than the animals.

Eccl. 3:18— *I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that God is testing them that they may see that they themselves are but beasts.*

Reality Check:

Eccl. 3:19-20— *For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return.*

- These words of Qohelet echo those of God which were spoken to Adam in the Garden after the Lord pronounced the curse on the earth (Gen. 3:19). They are also similar to those of Psalm 49.

Despair at the Unknown

Eccl. 3:21-22— *Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth? So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his work, for that is his lot. Who can bring him to see what will be after him?*

Important Observations:

1. The times and seasons of life meet the human need for both _____ & _____.
2. It is exceedingly frustrating that joy and hardship are mingled together in our experience of life and that all of this comes to an abrupt end with our _____.
3. Although Qohelet possessed great wisdom, he has given to us no additional knowledge of the _____.

The Wisdom & Work of a Greater King

1. Jesus spoke _____ and _____ about the afterlife. (Luke 16:19-31)

2. Jesus promised His people that He would give them _____ life.

John 20:27-28—²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

3. Jesus promised a bodily _____ for His people.

John 6:38-40—³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

4. Jesus' resurrection secures bodily resurrection for all who _____ in Him.

1 Cor. 15:20-22—²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

5. Jesus' resurrection secures the future of His people to experience eternal life with Him in the _____.

Rev. 22:1-5—¹ Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.