

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Review:

It appears that Solomon waited until he had completed his investigation of *"life under the sun,"* before he began the book with his sweeping conclusion that all is *"vanity of vanities"*(1:2). Throughout the first two chapters he offers proof after irrefutable proof that his conclusion 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 will feel any differently than Solomon. 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, like we were never here at all.

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 wish to spend their lives on an all consuming crusade to make the world a better place are doomed to failure. Although there are multitudes of things that are crooked or lacking that can be made into a cause or idealistic goal, in the end, there is nothing to available to straighten or make them whole. Those who spend their lives seeking to correct the uncorrectable are doomed to disillusionment and failure. At the end of their lives, they too will have accomplished nothing.

4. **2:1-11** Since the honorable and useful path of making the world a better place leads to a dead end and a wasted life, Solomon moves to the captivating and exciting quest to become wealthy and comfortable. In this wealth and comfort he sought to find pleasure(gaiety, mirth, ease and enjoyment) and found that it too was doomed to futility and emptiness. Man was not created to live such a life. There is no real contentment in them for several reasons. First, their lack of any real accomplishment weighs the mind down and leads to discontentment and frustration. Second, the emotions of pleasure and joy cannot be sustained for more than a few moments before needing something new to stimulate it. After all preparations to feel joy based on leisure and pleasure one often finds only disappointment. But Solomon 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 the enjoyment in acquiring them soon becomes empty, meaningless, and futile. One cannot find true happiness in materialism.

5. **2:12-23** Solomon saved to the very end, the real problem with *"life under the sun."* He did this be dividing men and women into three distinct categories. The person who acts *"mad,"* the one who acts like a *"fool,"* and the one who acts with *"wisdom"* as they live their *"threescore years and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore years"* of *"life under the sun."*(Ps 90:10). Some people squander their 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 *"under the sun,"* he will die and leave it all 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** Thus Solomon concludes the second chapter with his first major conclusion. After all that Solomon had done and observed, he found just three things that man could enjoy and find meaning for his life. He can enjoy his food, his beverages, and his labor. The labor includes both his job, and the hobbies that interest him. Yet even in this, the moral component had to be added, for it is only to *"to a person who is good in His sight He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy."* Ecc. 2:26

Yet even with all this, one cannot escape that the moments of enjoyment and even one's service to God cannot remove the fact that "*this too is vanity and striving after wind.*" Even one's service to God cannot remove the fact that "*life under the sun*" itself will still end in vanity and chasing the wind. It is only the life that comes after that will have true meaning.

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 or we will have to make up whatever is lacking through suffering and paying a deep personal price. They cannot be straightened or made whole. For the mental health of God's children, these things must be accepted and endured. Each of the things listed below has two distinct components. It is either something in life that is joyful and exciting or something that is sober or 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 that these things will lead to without this wisdom and insight. Forewarned is forearmed. Many of these things will come upon us in our "*life under the sun*." We must be prepared to make the best of them. Paul gave an excellent summary of what this section 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

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

This word is used in Nehemiah and Esther to describe a set period of time he would be away to help rebuild Jerusalem. Probable a month, day, and year of departure and a month, day, and year to 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 a specific month, day and duration it would be celebrated annually.

*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.

And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.' Acts 17:26-28

Even today we use “season” and to describe 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 during 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 looks at it from the perspective of a definite beginning and end, this word is defines what happens within this beginning and end. It is both “a period of time” “*appointed time*” and “*season*” on the one had and an “*appropriate time*” or an “*opportunity*” on the other.

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 and suitable time in which to do everything that can 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?” ... *chepes* 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, and we have no control over their duration, or their quality. The creation has times of drought and times of abundant water and times of health and times of plague. Nations enjoy peace and war, prosperity and adversity, and a rising and fall. Where we live in these things is not within our control. So life can be vastly different depending upon these things. Look back at the generations before us. There were those who lived through the great depression and World War II. There are those who have lived in times of abundance, prosperity, and peace.

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. Those who are born in a time when they should not have been conceived for there is no loving and nurturing environment can still live productive and useful lives, but they have missed a wonderful opportunity.

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 revealed that both physical and spiritual death entered the world and passed to all men through sin.

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. There is a time when each of us will die spiritually as we enter the age of accountability and commit sin.

I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. 10 And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. 11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. Rom 7:9-12

There is also a time we do not know when physical death will occur. Although no one knows the day, we all know there is a time for it to occur. 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

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

Even Solomon acknowledged this truth.

A good name is better than precious ointment, And the day of death than the day of one's birth; 2 Better to go to the house of mourning Than to go to the house of feasting, For that is the end of all men; And the living will take it to heart. 3 Sorrow is better than laughter, For by a sad countenance the heart is made better. 4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, But the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. Eccl 7:1-4

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 God revealed 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 is primarily used for the physical act of breaking things down, but can also be used emotionally.

6555 *parats-to* break through, down or over, to burst, to breach a) (Qal) 1) to break or burst out (from womb or enclosure) ...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)... 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 the work of one generation in order to build up and develop the ideas of the next generation.

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) ... 2) to build a house (that is, to establish a family) b) (Niphal) 1) to be built 2) to be rebuilt 3) established ...

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 ... 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 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 ... b) (Piel) to dance, to leap (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 frolic 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... (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 will be 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. Job told his three friends that their words were out of place and unwise. It was time for them to keep silent.

But you forgers of lies, You are all worthless physicians. 5 Oh, that you would be silent, And it would be your wisdom! Job 13:4-5

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.

Ecclesiastes 3:9-22

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 no control. A world where all labor done in one seasonable time is undone without warning as 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 both the time to mourn and refrain from embracing comes.

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 the heart. It had 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 had seen that God had given the sons of men “tasks” with which each is “occupied.” Although both terms come from the same root, the first simply has 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; ... (generally) employment ...” (Strongs) ... “...labor, toil; events which occasion much trouble and fatigue...” (Wilson p 452) “... *inyan*- an occupation, a task, a job(BDB)

Hence the task God gave to the sons of men living “life under the sun” is 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

All who live “under the sun” will struggle and toil to gain food clothing and shelter. We must do this between the seasons God has appointed where labor is first done then undone. While “occupied” is a neutral term in English, the Hebrew word it translates emphasizes “afflictions” that lead one to “bow down” and feel “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)

When God cursed “life under the sun” it was done for the purpose of humbling and afflicting 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 reminded Israel that God did not always give them everything they wanted as soon as they wanted it. He allowed them to hunger and thirst from time to time to teach them something. He humbled them in these activities. The two underlined words in this passage are also “*anah*.”

“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 us. What happened to Israel in the wilderness is not an exception. Solomon here revealed that it is the way “*life under the sun*” works for all. Everyone must learn “*man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*” Even Jesus learned and understood this.

But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’” Mt 4:4

The adversities and trials that result from the inflexibility of the times and seasons God set as a result of the curse create a difficult and fatiguing task that afflicts and humbles man. Although this creates a terrible problem for those who live “*life under the sun*” out of the presence of Jehovah, it is a great blessing for those who love the LORD with all their heart, soul, strength and mind.

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. God 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, but after “*sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned*” (Rom 5:12), this was the result. It requires 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 “*under the sun*” and in the presence of Jehovah, we have God’s assurance that He will make it so.

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the 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 (BDB)

God has “given,” “granted,” and “appointed” eternity in the hearts of man. This is a key concept in the book, for it both transcends “life under the sun” and reveals its true purpose. “*Eternity*” is often translated “for ever” or “everlasting.” Although it cannot be seen “under the sun” and does not fit with any of the conclusions Solomon drew in the first chapter, God placed it in the heart of everyone.

`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. Where then did the idea of eternity come from?

No one can deny that everyone holds the concept of unending eternity. It has been placed within every heart, and we all see ourselves as immortal. 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,” “without that” or “besides that.” (Delitzsch Vol 6 p. 260). Our translations have “Yet so that” (NAS; ASV; ESV); “so that” (KJV) or “yet (NIV). It is evident that this is some type of exception clause. An additional explanation to the fact that man has eternity in his heart, yet 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 are 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. Even with the added light of the gospel it requires effort to continually see and understand it.

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 2 Cor 4:16-18

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

Before moving on to fully conclude the matter above, Solomon takes 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, “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 #8055)

“...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)

After revealing the lack of control we have over our lives, the amazing thoughts of eternity, and the inability of man to use it, how can Solomon reason that we should rejoice? It is one of the secrets of life that once grasped and comprehended will lead to the most enjoyable possible “*life under the sun.*” 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 this system to 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.

Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 1 Tim 6:6-9

and to do good in their lives,

There is also nothing better for a man to do if we want the best possible life “under the sun” than to do good. There is great joy and satisfaction in seeking to contribute to the good things of life. 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. This 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, even though our "labor" is "troublesome work."

`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)

All the "toil," and "labor," we must do even though it be "troublesome" and "burdensome" still gives pleasure if we look at it properly. Enjoy the challenges and accomplishments in the labor itself. Man has been designed by God to be productive and to be able to enjoy labor and its fruit. Regardless of the difficulties involved, man can still derive great pleasure and satisfaction from it. Once seen in this light, it can be seen as 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 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. This "forever" is the "eternity" God placed in man's heart in verse 11. When God put "eternity" into our hearts, He made it possible for us to understand that what He does will be for all eternity. God is not confined by time. He is an eternal being working in the realm of eternity. When He does something, it remains like Himself, unchanged forever.

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

This is a truth that God has emphasized again and again 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.

'Ayin may be used absolutely, with no suffixes and not in a construct chain. When so used the word signifies nonexistence. ... the word expresses simple negation: "They have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths" Ps 135:17. ... With a suffixed pronoun *'ayin* negates the

existence of the one or thing so represented; with the suffixed pronoun "he," the word means "he was no longer": "And Enoch walked with God: and he was [no longer]; for God took him" Gen 5:24. (Vine's OT:369)

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.

yacaph- to add, to increase, to do again a) ... 2) to be joined, to be added to c) (Hiphil) 1) to cause to add, to increase 2) to do more... (BDB # 3254)

*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 (BDB #1639)

This complements and strengthens the first part of this chapter. When God created a time and season for everything under heaven man cannot add to or diminish them. Nothing can be done to "increase," them and nothing be done to "diminish," "withdraw," or "restrain" them. Man is powerless to bring about 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 grave danger. When man sees the approaching tornado or erupting volcano, he feels fear. It is the sheer terror that death and torture lead the mind toward. Yet fear can also be respect, awe, and reverence. I think both are 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*. ...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 the terror that leads to fear, respect, awe, and reverence. Those who fight God are doomed to 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 and that is their purpose and reason for existence.

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

It is given again in a different context. "Life under the sun" is a time to be tested and proved. A time to work with God and learn to love and honor him. The ever repeating cycles of human existence are designed to lead us to:

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. Eccl 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 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 between his words here and those in the first chapter. First he stated the fact, now 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 they find themselves. All who want to 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 introduced two thoughts 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;

Solomon now offers his impartial evaluation of judges and the judgment man gives to man "under the sun." Those who live "out of the presence of the LORD" do not always have fair judges. When the rich and powerful own the judges, wickedness will abound. The place of judgment refers to the

courts in any land. They are the place where judgment takes place.

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 # 4941)

As Solomon assessed various courts and judgment seats he saw wickedness. This term describes those who are “impious” or “ungodly.” This wickedness “*confounds all right and wrong, just and unjust, truth and falsehood, good and evil*” and “*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. This is what Lot found to be true in Sodom.

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

It is what we are seeing in all of Western Civilization today. Instead of justice with the blindfold over the eyes giving fair judgment, we see blatant wickedness. People confounding what is right and what is wrong, replacing justice with injustice, replacing truth with falsehood, and good with evil. It is a sore travail for a righteous man to look at such things.

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! 21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And prudent in their own sight! 22 Woe to men mighty at drinking wine, Woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink, 23 Who justify the wicked for a bribe, And take away justice from the righteous man! Isa 5:20-23

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 give a different word, it is the same term as wickedness above. 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.

What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, Rom 9:22-24

to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Rom 3:25-26

Since God's desire is that all be saved and come to repentance, then there must be a season in which 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.

The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw. 2 O Lord, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, "Violence!" And You will not save. 3 Why do You show me iniquity, And cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; There is strife, and contention arises. 4 Therefore the law is powerless, And justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore perverse judgment proceeds. 5 "Look among the nations and watch — Be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days Which you would not believe, though it were told you. 6 For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, A bitter and hasty nation Which marches through the breadth of the earth, To possess dwelling places that are not theirs. 7 They are terrible and dreadful; Their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves. 8 Their horses also are swifter than leopards, Hab 1:1-8

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.

You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, And hold Your tongue when the wicked devours A person more righteous than he? 14 Why do You make men like fish of the sea, Like creeping things that have no 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, God 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. Instead of bringing harsh judgment against the Lord, Peter offers a better way.

and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation — as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 2Pet. 3:15-16

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 `a/- 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.” What conclusions are the wicked forced to 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, but here seems to be to “purify” or “select” either by purging out or by selecting and choosing.

barar- to purify, to select, to polish, to choose, to purge, to cleanse or to make bright, to test (prove) ... 1) to purify oneself 2) to show oneself pure, just, or kind (BDB # 1305)

This is the sense Peter used it in his first letter.

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 1Pet, 1:6-8

Just as fire tests gold and trials test faith, so “life under the sun” tests men” to reveal that they have been lowered to the level of a beast if they choose to live “*out of the presence of the LORD.*”

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 with insight to fall in order to purge them. God allows 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 is the purpose of the book of Job. The passage here is designed to give insight and understanding. God has made a time and a purpose for everything under heaven. All that happens helps man see that while living “*life under the sun*” without God man lives just as the beasts. This is the terrible conclusion of Darwin’s evolution. Man is only a more organized and better thinking monkey. This conclusion has some logic, if one lives “*out of the presence of the LORD.*”

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

The term “for” gives the reason or purpose of a previous thought. It could also be translated “*because*” or “*since.*”

kiy- that, for, because, when, as though, as, ... but, then, certainly, except, surely, since...” (BDB # 3588)

The reason man sees 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*” to live life only “*under the sun*” with no thought of eternity or righteousness, then what happens to the beasts also happens to man.

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. Many 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,.... **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 way to discern any difference. Then man simply lives as an animal. This is the proving and testing which God left man to wrestle with. Many are not content with that answer, they leave that camp and become believers in Jehovah God. Others remain sorely distressed and tormented 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, it is buried and its 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 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*,” “*jubilance*.” God wants the righteous to enjoy and gain happiness and jubilance 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.

Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. 2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, And wither as the green herb. 3 Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. 4 Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart. 5 Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass. 6 He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday. 7 Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. 8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret — it only causes harm. 9 For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the Lord, They shall inherit the earth. Ps 37:1-9

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.

With so little control over the world we live, 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.