

# ECCLESIASTES 3

written and compiled by Gary Kukis

## Ecclesiastes 3:1–22

## To Everything There is a Season

These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God.” (John 3:16–18). “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!” (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10).

### Document Navigation

[Preface and Quotations](#)

[Outline of Chapter](#)

[Charts, Graphics, Short Doctrines](#)

[Doctrines Alluded to](#)

[Dictionary of Terms](#)

[Introduction and Text](#)

[Chapter Summary](#)

[Addendum](#)

[A Complete Translation](#)

### Verse Navigation

[Ecclesiastes 3:1](#)

[Ecclesiastes 3:2–5](#)

[Ecclesiastes 3:6–8](#)

[Ecclesiastes 3:9–10](#)

[Ecclesiastes 3:11](#)

[Ecclesiastes 3:12–13](#)

[Ecclesiastes 3:14](#)

[Ecclesiastes 3:15](#)

[Ecclesiastes 3:16](#)

[Ecclesiastes 3:17](#)

[Ecclesiastes 3:18–19](#)

[Ecclesiastes 3:20](#)

[Ecclesiastes 3:21](#)

[Ecclesiastes 3:22](#)

These exegetical studies are *not* designed for you to read each and every word. For instance, the Hebrew exegesis is put into greyish tables, so that if you want to skip over them, that is fine. If you question a translation, you can always refer back to the appropriate Hebrew tables to sort it all out. The intent is to make this particular study the most complete and most accurate examination of Ecclesiastes 3 which is available in writing. The idea is to make every phrase, verse and passage understandable and to make correct application of all that is studied.

Besides teaching you the doctrinal principles related to this chapter, this commentary is also to help bring this narrative to life, so that you can understand the various characters, their motivations, and the choices that they make. Ideally, you will be able to visualize the peoples, their temporal and spiritual leaders, and their armies as they move across the landscape of the Land of Promise. I hope to provide not only an accurate exegesis of the chapter in view, but to also quote many of the great insights that past commentators have offered us.

Although much of this chapter is based upon narrative from the book of Kings, I will make every attempt possible to provide enough historical information and theological context so that you will have a sufficient background to understand what is going on.

### Preface:

This should be the most extensive examination of Ecclesiastes 3 available, where you will be able to examine in depth every word of the original text.

### Quotations:

Matthew Henry: *[W]e live in a world of changes, that the several events of time, and conditions of human life, are vastly different from one another, and yet occur promiscuously, and we are continually passing and repassing between them, as in the revolutions of every day and every year. In the wheel of nature (James 3:6) sometimes one spoke is uppermost and by and by the contrary; there is a constant ebbing and flowing, waxing and waning; from one extreme to the other.*<sup>1</sup>

William Shakespear: "All the world's a stage,  
                     And all the men and women merely players;  
                     They have their exits and their entrances;  
     And one man in his time plays many parts,  
                     His acts being seven ages." ('As You Like It,' act it. sc. 7.).<sup>2</sup>

Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus: The age of Vespasian, for example. People doing the exact same things: marrying, raising children, getting sick, dying, waging war, throwing parties, doing business, farming, flattering, boasting, distrusting, plotting, hoping others will die, complaining about their own lives, falling in love, putting away money, seeking high office and power.<sup>3</sup> All of Book IV of Meditations is found in the **Addendum**.

Inscribed on the monument erected in Westminster Abbey, by the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, to the memory of the poet Gay, written by Gay himself—

"Life is a jest, and all things show it;  
 I thought so once, but now I know it."<sup>4</sup>

W. Walters (referring to the poem above): What a miserable estimate of the grand existence of man on earth! What a gross misrepresentation of the lessons taught by God's works and ways! What a libel on the momentous revelations of the future world!<sup>5</sup>

W. Walters: We should not be slothful in our secular pursuits; yet, at the same time, we should see that we have them all in subordination to our spiritual interests, and the life to come.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.

<sup>2</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, homiletics; Ecclesiastes 3:1–9.

<sup>3</sup> Taken from <http://seinfeld.co/library/meditations.pdf>; book IV v. 32.

<sup>4</sup> *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>5</sup> *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>6</sup> *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (edited).

The Pulpit Commentary: Dependence: no such thing as independence, self-subsistence, self-origination, self-regulation, in mundane affairs. The universe, out to its circumference and in to its center, from its mightiest Structure down to its smallest detail, is the handiwork of God.<sup>7</sup>

D. Thomas: *The author of Ecclesiastes was too wise to take what we call a one-sided view of human life. No doubt there are times and moods in which this human existence seems to us to be all made up of either toil or endurance, delight or disappointment.*<sup>8</sup>

From the diary of Dr. Chalmers, dated March 12th, 1812: I am reading the life of Dr. Doddridge, and am greatly struck with the quantity of business which he put through his hands. O God, impress upon me the value of time, and give regulation to all my thoughts and to all my movements. May I be strong in faith, instant in prayer, high in my sense of duty, and vigorous in the occupation of it! When I detect myself in unprofitable reverie, let me make an instant transition from dreaming to doing.<sup>9</sup>

Chuck Smith: *Now [with Ecclesiastes 3] we get into the weary, monotony of life.*<sup>10</sup>

## Outline of Chapter 3:

### Preface Introduction

vv. 1–  
vv.  
vv.  
vv.  
vv.

### Chapter Summary Addendum

## Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines:

### Preface

### Quotations

Introduction	<b>Ecclesiastes 3 Our timing and His timing aren't the same</b> (Bible journaling)
Introduction	<b>Ecclesiastes 3 God's Timing</b> (Bible journaling)
Introduction	<b>Titles and/or Brief Descriptions of Ecclesiastes 3</b> (by Various Commentators)
Introduction	<b>Brief, but insightful observations of Ecclesiastes 3</b> (various commentators)
Introduction	<b>Fundamental Questions About Ecclesiastes 3</b>
Introduction	<b>The Keys to Interpreting Ecclesiastes</b> (from Dr. Bob Utley)
Introduction	<b>The Prequel of Ecclesiastes 3</b>
Introduction	<b>The Principals of Ecclesiastes 3</b>
Introduction	<b>The Places of Ecclesiastes 3</b>
Introduction	<b>By the Numbers</b>

<sup>7</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, homiletics; Ecclesiastes 3:11–14.

<sup>8</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by D. Thomas; Ecclesiastes 3:9–13.

<sup>9</sup> *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>10</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

Introduction  
 Introduction  
 Introduction  
 Introduction  
 Introduction  
 Introduction  
 Introduction  
 Introduction  
 Introduction  
 Introduction  
 Introduction  
 Introduction

## A Synopsis of Ecclesiastes 3

**Outlines and Summaries of Ecclesiastes 3** (Various Commentators)

**929 Chapters Outline of Ecclesiastes 3** (David Z. Moster)

**A Synopsis of Ecclesiastes 3 from the Summarized Bible**

## The Big Picture (Ecclesiastes –)

**A Bird's Eye View of Ecclesiastes 3:1–5:7** (from B. H. Carroll)

**Paragraph Divisions of Modern Translation for Ecclesiastes 3**

## Changes—additions and subtractions

- v. 1 **Outline or Summary of Ecclesiastes 3:1–8** (various commentators)
- v. 1 **Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 Modified KJV** (graphic)
- v. 1 **Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 KJV** (graphic)
- v. 1 **Introductory Commentary of Ecclesiastes 3:1–8** (various commentators)
- v. 1 **Commentary on Ecclesiastes 3:1–15** (various commentators)
- v. 1 **Ecclesiastes 3:1a There is a season...** (various commentators)
- v. 1 **Ecclesiastes 3:1a To everything there is a season** (Bible journaling)
- v. 1
- v. 1 **Ecclesiastes 3:1b And a time to every purpose under heaven** (commentators)
- v. 1 **Ecclesiastes 3:1 There is a time for everything** (Bible journaling)
- v. 1 **Ecclesiastes 3:1** (a graphic)
- v. 1 **Ecclesiastes 3:1 There is a season and there is a time** (various commentators)
- v. 1 **There is a season and time; but what about free will?** (W. Clarkson)
- v. 2 **Ecclesiastes 3:2–8 An introduction to a poem/psalm of Solomon** (commentators)
- v. 2 **Ecclesiastes 3:2a A time to give birth; a time to be born** (various commentators)
- v. 2 **Ecclesiastes 3:2a There is a time to be born** (various commentators)
- v. 2 **Ecclesiastes 3:2b There is a time to die** (various commentators)
- v. 2 **Ecclesiastes 3:2a-b A time to live and a time to die** (various commentators)
- v. 2 **Ecclesiastes 3:2d A time to uproot that which was planted** (various commentators)
- v. 2 **Ecclesiastes 3:2c-d A time to plant and a time to uproot** (various commentators)
- v. 2 **Ecclesiastes 3:2 Being born, dying, planting, uprooting** (various commentators)
- v. 3 **Ecclesiastes 3:3b A time to heal** (various commentators)
- v. 3 **Ecclesiastes 3:3a-b A time to kill, a time to heal** (various commentators)
- v. 3
- v. 3 **Ecclesiastes 3:3c-d A time to build and a time to break down** (commentators)
- v. 3
- v. 3
- v. 4 **Ecclesiastes 3:4a-b Laughing and Weeping** (various commentators)
- v. 4
- v. 4 **Ecclesiastes 3:4c-d Mourning and Dancing** (various commentators)
- v. 4 **Ecclesiastes 3:4** (a graphic)
- v. 4 **Ecclesiastes 3:4 Weeping, laughing, mourning, and rejoicing** (commentators)
- v. 4
- v. 5 **Ecclesiastes 3:5a-b Casting stones and gathering stones** (various commentators)
- v. 5 **Ecclesiastes 3:5c-d Embracing and not embracing** (various commentators)
- v. 5 **Ecclesiastes 3:5 Stones and Embracing** (various commentators)
- v. 6 **Ecclesiastes 3:6a-b A time to seek and a time to lose** (various commentators)
- v. 6 **Ecclesiastes 3:6c-d A time to keep and a time to throw away** (commentators)
- v. 6 **Ecclesiastes 3:6 Seeking, Losing, Keeping, Casting Off** (various commentators)
- v. 6



v.	7	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:7a-b Tearing and Mending</b> (various commentators)
v.	7	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:7a-b A time to tear and a time to mend</b> (Bible journaling)
v.	7	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:7c-d Knowing when to be quiet and when to speak</b> (commentators)
v.	7	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:7 Tearing, sewing, being silent and speaking</b> (commentators)
v.	8	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:8a-b Hate and Love</b> (various commentators)
v.	8	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:8c-d A time of war, a time of peace</b> (various commentators)
v.	8	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:8 A time for peace, war, love and hate</b> (various commentators)
v.	8	<b>Concluding Remarks for Ecclesiastes 3:1–8</b> (various commentators)
v.	8	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 A time for every matter</b> (Bible journaling)
v.		
v.	9	<b>Introducing Ecclesiastes 3:9–11</b> (various commentators)
v.		
v.		
v.	10	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:10 Is there any true profit to great labor?</b> (various commentators)
v.	10	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:9–10 Conclusions drawn</b> (various commentators)
v.		
v.	11	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:11a He has made everything beautiful in its time</b> (a graphic)
v.	11	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:11a God has made everything beautiful in its time</b> (commentators)
v.	11	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:11a God has made everything beautiful in its time</b> (Bible Journaling)
v.	11	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:11b God has placed eternity in our hearts</b> (various commentators)
v.	11	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:11c Man cannot fully discover all the works of God</b> (commentary)
v.	11	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:11</b> (a graphic)
v.	12	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:12a There is nothing better for man than to be happy</b> (commentary)
v.	12	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:12b ...to do good in one's life</b> (various commentators)
v.		
v.	13	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:13 Take pleasure in one's work</b> (various commentators)
v.	13	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:12–13</b> (a graphic)
v.	13	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:12–13 God's simple pleasures allotted to mankind</b> (commentators)
v.		
v.	14	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:14a Whatever God does is forever</b> (various commentators)
v.	14	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:14b Nothing can be added to or taken from God's Work</b> (comments)
v.	14	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:14c God acts and men fear Him</b> (various commentators)
v.	14	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:14 Concerning what God does</b> (various commentators)
v.	14	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:14</b> (a graphic)
v.		
v.	15	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:15a What is happening today has already taken place</b> (commentary)
v.	15	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:15b That which will be already was</b> (various commentators)
v.		
v.	15	<b>Interpreting Ecclesiastes 3:15c</b> (various translations)
v.	15	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:15c God requires that which is past</b> (various commentators)
v.	15	<b>Requiring that which is past</b> (from the Pulpit Commentary)
v.	15	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:15 The present and the past</b> (various commentators)
v.	16	<b>Introduction to Ecclesiastes 3:16–22</b> (Arno Gaebelein)
v.	16	<b>Introducing Ecclesiastes 3:16–17 God's justice/man's injustice</b> (commentators)
v.	16	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:16a There is injustice where justice should be</b> (commentators)
v.	16	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:16b In the place of righteousness, there is malevolence</b> (comments)
v.		
v.	16	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:16 In the place of justice, Solomon saw maleficence</b> (commentators)
v.	17	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:17a God will judge the righteous and the unrighteous</b> (comments)
v.		
v.	17	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:17 Solomon's conclusion regarding God's justice</b> (commentators)
v.	17	<b>Wickedness in the place of judgment</b> (from the Pulpit Commentary)
v.		

v. 18	<b>Introducing Ecclesiastes 3:18–21: Considering man and animals</b> (commentators)
v.	
v. 18	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:18c Men are just animals</b> (various commentators)
v.	
v. 19	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:19a What befalls man happens also to animals</b> (commentators)
v. 19	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:19b Death befalls man and animals alike</b> (various commentators)
v. 19	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:19c Man and animals all have the same breath</b> (commentators)
v. 19	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:19d Does man have an advantage of animals?</b> (commentators)
v. 20	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:20a Men and animals all go to one place</b> (various commentators)
v. 20	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:20b Everything came from dust and returns to dust</b> (commentators)
v. 20	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:20 All things go to one place—dust</b> (Bible journaling)
v. 20	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:18–20 Comparing animals to people</b> (various commentators)
v. 20	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:18–20 How men and beasts are alike</b> (by J. Willcock)
v. 21	<b>Are men no better than beasts?</b> (The Pulpit Commentary)
v. 21	<b>The Superiority of Men over Beasts</b> (D. Thomas)
v. 22	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:22a Nothing better for a man than to rejoice in his work</b> (comments)
v. 22	<b>Ecclesiastes 3:22c Who will bring a man back to see what happens after him?</b>
v. 22	<b>Conclusions Drawn in Ecclesiastes 3:22</b> (by D. Thomas)
v. 22	<b>Summarizing Ecclesiastes 3:17–22</b> (by Ray Stedman)
v.	
Summary	<b>A Set of Summary Doctrines and Commentary</b>
Summary	<b>Why Ecclesiastes 3 is in the Word of God</b>
Summary	<b>What We Learn from Ecclesiastes 3</b>
Summary	<b>Jesus Christ in Ecclesiastes 3</b>
Summary	<b>All things beautiful; or, God, man, and the world</b> (from the Pulpit Commentary)
Summary	<b>The Mystery and the Meaning of Life</b> (by D. Thomas)
Summary	
Addendum	<b>Marcus Aurelius Meditations Book IV</b> (translation by Gregory Hays)
Addendum	<b>Does the use of the word z<sup>o</sup>mân mean Ecclesiastes is a later book?</b> (Bullinger)
Addendum	<b>God's Divine Control</b> (Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary)
Addendum	<b>The Clock of Destiny</b> (by Dr. J. Hamilton)
Addendum	<b>An Overview of Ecclesiastes 1:12-3:22</b> (from the Sermon Bible Commentary)
Addendum	
Addendum	<b>A Complete Translation of Ecclesiastes 3</b>
Addendum	<b>Word Cloud from a Reasonably Literal Paraphrase of Ecclesiastes 3</b>
Addendum	<b>Doctrinal Teachers Who Have Taught Ecclesiastes 3</b>
Addendum	<b>Word Cloud from Exegesis of Ecclesiastes 3</b>

Chapter Outline	Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines	
Beginning of Document	Verse Navigation	Introduction and Text
First Verse	Chapter Summary	Addendum
www.kukis.org		Exegetical Studies in Ecclesiastes

Doctrines Covered or Alluded To			

## Chapters of the Bible Alluded To or Appropriately Exegeted with this Chapter

### Psalm 7

Many who read and study this chapter are 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> generation students of R. B. Thieme, Jr., so that much of this vocabulary is second nature. One of Bob's contributions to theology is a fresh vocabulary along with a number of concepts which are theologically new or reworked, yet still orthodox. Therefore, if you are unfamiliar with his work, the definitions below will help you to fully understand all that is being said. Also included are various technical terms from Christian theology along with a few new terms and concepts which I have developed.

Sometimes the terms in the exegesis of this chapter are simply alluded to, without any in-depth explanation of them. Sometimes, these terms are explained in detail and illustrated. A collection of all these terms is found here: ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). Often, the terms below are linked to complete doctrines.

### Definition of Terms

<b>Client nation</b>	The client nation is a nation where there are a lot of believers and a lot of mature and growing believers. This nation is known for its evangelization, for its Bible teaching, its Bible scholarship, and missionary activity. The government and leaders may or may not be supportive of such activity. However, generally speaking, such activity is allowed within the national entity. It is this activity which preserves such a national entity. Doctrine of the <b>Client Nation</b> ( <a href="#">HTML</a> ) ( <a href="#">PDF</a> ) ( <a href="#">WPD</a> ).
<b>Pivot</b>	A pivot it is the accumulation of mature believers living in a client nation or under civil government in a specific geographical location. While a pivot is composed primarily of mature believers, it may also include those positive believers whose momentum has carried them into spiritual adulthood. For more information, see <a href="#">R. B. Thieme, Jr.</a>
<b>Rebound (Restoration to fellowship with God)</b>	In the New Testament, this is naming your sins to God, so that you are both restored to temporal fellowship with God and are then filled with the Spirit of God. In the Old Testament, naming your sins to God would result in a restoration of fellowship and, in some cases, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit once again (the Holy Spirit was not given to all Old Testament believers). The <b>Doctrine of Rebound</b> ( <a href="#">HTML</a> ) ( <a href="#">PDF</a> ).
<b>The Revealed God (or, the Revealed Lord)</b>	We all come to a time of God-consciousness where we understand the concept and possibility of the existence of God. At that point, we face 2 great questions: (1) do we want to know this God and (2) are will willing to believe in God as He has revealed Himself or do we make a god in our own image and worship that? In both the Old and New Testaments, God will make Himself known (He reveals Himself) to those who will believe in Him and to others as well. We know Him firmly and concretely as Jesus Christ; and in the Old Testament, He is known as the God of the Jews, the Creator of the Universe, the God of Moses (or of Abraham), etc.
<b>Sin unto death</b>	When a believer stays out of fellowship for an extended period of time and consistently acts against the plan of God, God may remove him from this life painfully using discipline that will result in his death. For more information, see the <b>Doctrine of the Sin unto Death</b> ( <a href="#">HTML</a> ) ( <a href="#">PDF</a> ) ( <a href="#">WPD</a> ).

Some of these definitions are taken from

<https://www.gotquestions.org/>  
<http://rickhughesministries.org/content/Biblical-Terms.pdf>  
<http://www.gbible.org/index.php?proc=d4d>  
<http://www.wordoftruthministries.org/terms-and-definitions/>  
<http://www.theopedia.com/>

## An Introduction to Ecclesiastes 3

**Introduction:** Ecclesiastes 3 has several interpretations; the chief one being, it is a human viewpoint way of looking at things. Some have labeled this as fatalistic. Whatever the case, this beginning psalm or poem appears to be, if nothing else, true. Furthermore, everything that we read appears to be normal, human activity, whether the person is a believer or not; whether he is a mature believer or not.

Solomon, in this book, is clearly not an unbeliever. He speaks of God on several occasions and of man's interactions with God.

We know from Solomon's history that he began as a strong believer, and believer who learned and depended upon the Word of God. However, given his position in life, he began to pursue a whole host of earthly pleasures, as Solomon could pursue anything which caught his eye.

Ecclesiastes appears to be a lifelong perspective of life, viewed at life from nearly the end. Is this a collect of essays and observations made by Solomon over a period of a few decades? Did he sit down and write this book all at once? Although we do not know the answers to those questions, this particular chapter gives us even more insight into Solomon's thinking.

Part of what we should consider is, Solomon has, at some point in his life, reached a place where he has tried to gain pleasure from a multitude of things, and none of these things have provided him with any lasting contentment. He may have enjoyed some short-term stimulation, but that is it.

I don't know if I should share this story, but I knew a guy once who slept with quite a number of women, and he confided to me that, once it was over, he could not wait for them to leave. He did not want to hear what they had to say or bask in the afterglow; he just wanted them gone (this is something which he obviously did not share with these women). This guy obviously enjoyed short-term stimulation; but no long-term satisfaction.

I believe that this was Solomon's experience in life, to some extent. And so, after those experiments trying to find happiness in life through life's stimulations, he began considering the things found in this chapter. Solomon is called *the Searcher* and Kohaleth.

There are phrases in this chapter which suggest Solomon's philosophical musings. "*I said in my heart...*" is found in vv. 17 and 18. We have his personal observations: *I saw under the sun* (v. 16); *I know that* (vv. 12 & 14). These are words and phrases which suggest Solomon's personal observations, as opposed to God's absolute truth (which does not mean that Solomon is not recording his observations accurately). Now, since God the Holy Spirit has to help guide Solomon as the writer of Scripture, we must reasonably assume that Solomon writes this book while in fellowship, perhaps years later, when in recovery. Yet Solomon is moved by God the Holy Spirit to share what he observed and thought when out of fellowship (near the end of this book, Solomon is going to describe his body falling apart late in life).

I believe that this adds to the evidence that we are seeing the world through Solomon's eyes, a very intelligent man who is out of fellowship, and not completely and personally connected to God. Solomon has not cast God out of his worldview; but there is a certain fatalism which seems to be a part of this chapter, which is not to be a part of the believer's life on earth.

One might ask, *is the reward of life herein described the portion of the unbeliever?*

R. B. Thieme, Jr. taught this as if Solomon is offering up differing philosophies to explain life. That may help to explain why pulling together a cohesive theme for this chapter seems difficult, if not impossible, to do.

It seems that Solomon, even as a believer, acted very much like an unbeliever. However, we often think that, when a person goes astray, it is deep into sin. That is not always the case. A person can get very wrapped up in earthly philosophies and opinions, without committed a lot of sins. During part of Solomon's search for truth, it is reasonable to assume that he came to a variety of conclusions, some of them being contradictory. Should we understand that this is what is going on and sort of just go with it? Solomon was a wise believer early on in his life; and it appears, late in life as well. So, we know that Solomon will reach some semi-reasonable conclusions (some human viewpoint philosophies are not necessarily super-wrong); and that, hopefully, Solomon will land on divine truth at some point.

There will be times when Solomon appears to have a particular viewpoint and then, in the following verse (or even in mid-verse), he might present a different view or perspective. When it comes to consistency, the only consistent beings in this universe are the Members of the Godhead.

Perhaps Solomon is on a specific quest to determine just what he is able to conclude based upon human observation alone—which he finds necessary to intersperse with divine revelation. Or is Solomon arguing with himself, between what he learned from his father David and what he has observed on earth with human viewpoint thinking?

**Ecclesiastes 3 Our timing and His timing aren't the same** (Bible journaling); from [Pinterest](#); accessed March 22, 2020.





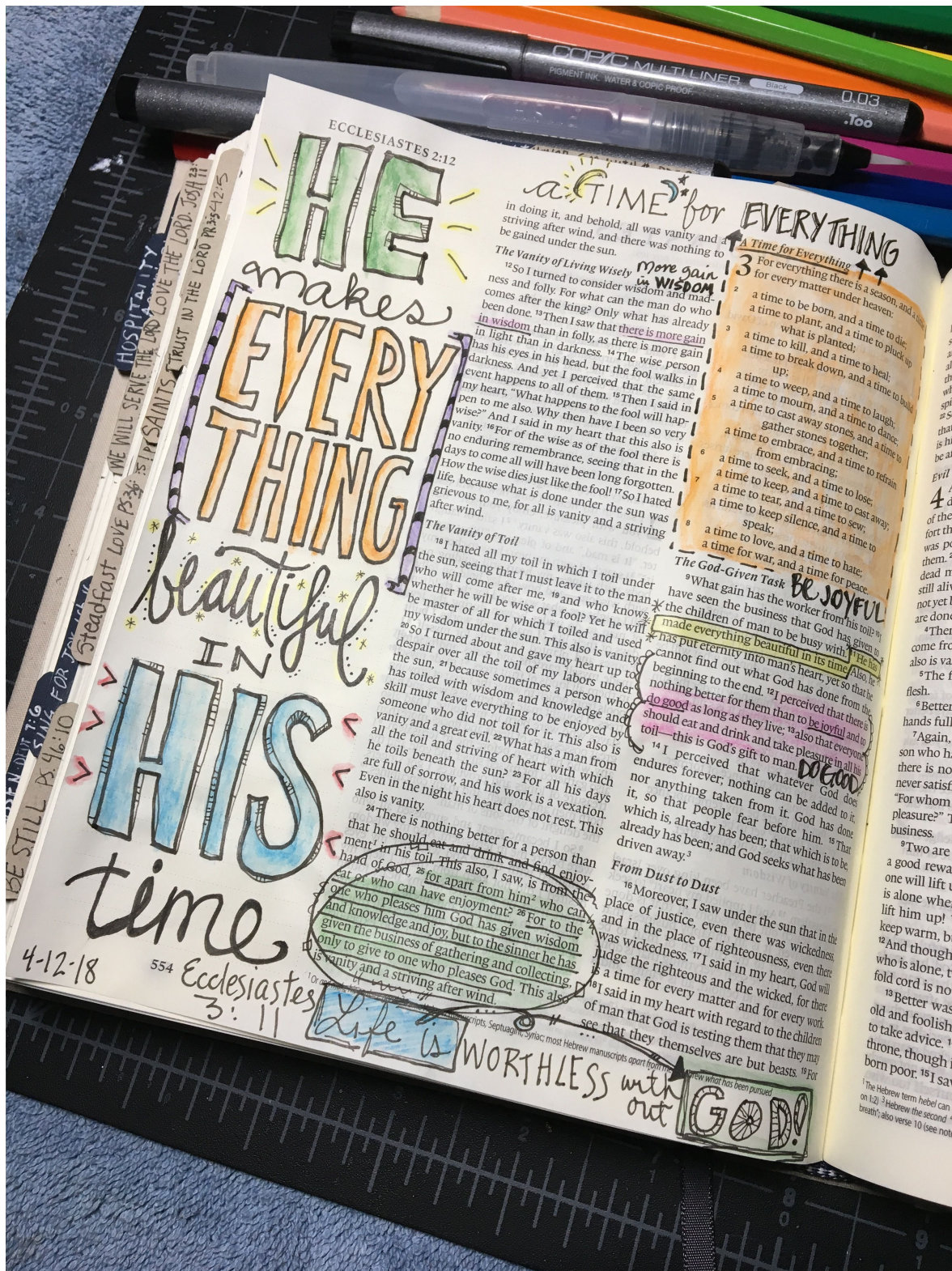
## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

People really loved getting artsy with this particular chapter. I included as many of these examples of Bible journaling as I felt I could get away with. Knowing exactly what is being said in this chapter is quite difficult to apprehend, but what is said seems to stand out to many people.

**Ecclesiastes 3 God's Timing** (Bible journaling); from [Pinterest](#); accessed March 22, 2020.





Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

This graphic is a good overall exposure to the chapter we are studying.

A title or one or two sentences which describe Ecclesiastes 3.

### **Titles and/or Brief Descriptions of Ecclesiastes 3 (by Various Commentators)**

Dr. John Gill: *The general design of this chapter is to confirm what is before observed, the vanity and inconstancy of all things; the frailty of man, and changes respecting him; his fruitless toil and labour in all his works; that it is best to be content with present things, and cheerful in them, and thankful for them; that all comes from the hand of God; that such good men, who have not at present that joy that others have, may have it, since there is a time for it; and that sinners should not please themselves with riches gathered by them, since they may be soon taken from them.*<sup>11</sup>

Matthew Henry: *Solomon, having shown the vanity of studies, pleasures, and business, made it to appear that happiness is not to be found in the schools of the learned, nor in the gardens of Epicurus, nor upon the exchange. He proceeds, in this chapter, further to prove his doctrine, and the inference he had drawn from it. Therefore we should cheerfully content ourselves with, and make use of, what God has given us.*<sup>12</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *There Is A Right Time For Everything. There Is Also Transient Beauty In The World and Man Has Everlastingness In His Heart. But There Is Also Injustice, And In The End All Die.*<sup>13</sup> This appears to be Pett's title of this chapter.

Ray Stedman entitled a series on Ecclesiastes as *Things that don't work*.<sup>14</sup>

This is a very difficult chapter to describe briefly. Whereas, most chapters in the Bible can be summed up in one or two sentences, Ecclesiastes defies such summarization, given its complex and varied subject matter.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Sometimes, a commentator will begin with a good observation of this chapter of the Bible.

### **Brief, but insightful observations of Ecclesiastes 3 (various commentators)**

Rev. Joseph Benson: *Solomon having mentioned God's overruling providence in the latter end of the previous chapter, proceeds in this to illustrate the imperfection of human wisdom, which is confined to a certain season for all things that it would effect, which if we neglect, or let slip, all our contrivances signify nothing.*

Benson continues: *He then shows that the utmost perfection at which our wisdom can arrive in this world, consists: first, In being contented with this order in which God has placed all things, and not disquieting ourselves about that which it is not in our power to alter. Second, In observing and taking the fittest opportunity of doing every thing, as the most certain means to tranquillity. Third, In taking the comfort of what we have at present, and making a seasonable and legitimate use of it. Finally, in bearing the vicissitudes which we find in all human things with an equal mind; because they are ordered by a powerful, wise, and gracious Providence.*<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3 (chapter comments) (slightly edited).

<sup>12</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3 (chapter comments) (slightly edited).

<sup>13</sup> Dr. Peter Pett, *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3 (chapter comments).

<sup>14</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

<sup>15</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1 (edited).



### Brief, but insightful observations of Ecclesiastes 3 (various commentators)

Expositor's Bible Commentary: *IF the true Good is not to be found in the School where Wisdom utters her voice, nor in the Garden in which Pleasure spreads her lures: may it not be found in the Market, in devotion to Business and Public Affairs? The Preacher will try this experiment also. He gives himself to study and consider it. But at the very outset he discovers that he is in the iron grip of immutable Divine ordinances, by which "seasons" are appointed for every undertaking under heaven (Ecclesiastes 3:1), ordinances which derange man's best-laid schemes, and "shape his ends, rough hew them how he will," that no one can do anything to purpose "apart from God," except by conforming to the ordinances, or laws, in which He has expressed His will. (comp. Ecclesiastes 2:24-26).*<sup>16</sup>

Matthew Henry: *To expect unchanging happiness in a changing world, must end in disappointment. To bring ourselves to our state in life, is our duty and wisdom in this world. God's whole plan for the government of the world will be found altogether wise, just, and good. Then let us seize the favourable opportunity for every good purpose and work. The time to die is fast approaching. Thus labour and sorrow fill the world. This is given us, that we may always have something to do; none were sent into the world to be idle.*<sup>17</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *[Solomon's] experiments are now over but he continues to think about all the events and occurrences of life, and how they reveal the meaninglessness of it all, with the occasional glimmer of hope. And he sees that even the man with the open heart towards God is as much caught up in the time-line as everyone else. We know that he is included because of Ecclesiastes 3:9. In Ecclesiastes 2:24 he found enjoyment in his toil. Now the question is, what gain would he have finally from his toil?*

Pett continues: *[Solomon's] thoughts move now to the repeated continuity of life. Along the time-line, which is everlasting (Ecclesiastes 3:11), various things are seen as occurring repetitively, each in its time. They come and they go, but they are but temporary. Only time moves on continually leaving man behind, even the godly man.*<sup>18</sup>

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *Man forms designs for his own happiness, gives free scope to his powers, and traces out the course of his life. Yet there is over him a higher system of things, a stern and terrible Power by which he is overmastered and subdued. He is made, after all, to fulfil the designs of heaven. The Divine control over every domain of creation is supreme over all other sovereignties.*<sup>19</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *In confirmation of the truth that man's happiness depends upon the will of God, Koheleth proceeds to show how Providence arranges even the minutest concerns; that man can alter nothing, must make the best of things as they are, bear with anomalies, bounding his desires by this present life.*<sup>20</sup>

Ray C. Stedman: *I am amazed at the variety of things that are offered to us every day to help us find the secret of successful living. Magazine articles by the dozens tell us how to cope with various problems; TV commercials -- dozens to a program it seems -- bombard us, telling us how to be successful in life, or at least how to look successful even if we really are not, health clubs offer us saunas and whirlpool baths to relax us so we can face life with equanimity; while various kinds of drugs are available to turn us on, turn us off, take us out, or whatever.*

Ray C. Stedman: *All this is evidence of the universal search for the secret of enjoyment of life. Billions of dollars are spent every day on this quest. That is the very quest that the book of Ecclesiastes tells us about. The greatest experiment ever performed in the history of mankind to test the various approaches to success, enjoyment or contentment in life is recorded in this 3,000 year old book.*

<sup>16</sup> *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1.

<sup>17</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1-10.

<sup>18</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3 (chapter comments).

<sup>19</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1-8.

<sup>20</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1-22.

### Brief, but insightful observations of Ecclesiastes 3 (various commentators)

Ray C. Stedman: *We now have come to the third chapter, which describes the combination of opposites in our experience. We read, for instance, "There is a time to weep and a time to laugh" (Verse 4). Throughout this chapter the idea is propounded that there is an appropriate time for all of life's experiences...Ron Ritchie won a kind of immortality for himself at Dallas Theological Seminary when, on the day of graduation, that most solemn occasion in educational life, he walked down the aisle, dressed in his sombre graduation robe, holding a coffee cup in his hand. He is remembered in the annals of Dallas Seminary as a man who did not know the appropriate action for a certain time.*<sup>21</sup>

Ray C. Stedman: *There is an appropriate time for everything, the unpleasant as well as pleasant experiences. That is the argument of Ecclesiastes 3. This is not merely a description of what happens in life, it is a description of what God sends. Many of us are familiar with Bill Bright's Four Spiritual Laws, the first of which is, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." When talking to someone about his relationship with God, that is an appropriate place to begin. That is the plan that is set forth here. All along, the Searcher, the author of this book, is saying that God desires to bring joy into human experience. Many people think Ecclesiastes is a book of gloom and pessimism because, on the level of the writer's limitations -- which, he says, are, "under the sun," i.e., the visible things of life -- his findings are gloomy and pessimistic. But that is not the message of the book. God intends us to have joy and his program to bring it about includes all these opposites.*<sup>22</sup>

Ray C. Stedman: *This is the Searcher's thesis: God desires us to learn the secret of enjoyment. That enjoyment will not come from a variety of experiences. Those will bring but momentary pleasure, but not the secret of contentment, of continual enjoyment.*<sup>23</sup>

The key to enjoyment in life is our relationship with God.

Whedon: *Koheleth now proceeds to inquire what business, so attractive to healthy and energetic natures, can do for the happiness of man. He at once finds that social law is rigorous and inevitable, and that he is helpless before it. Every effort can go but a little way before a counter effort must surely topple over and destroy all the results that it has accomplished.*<sup>24</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

One of the most difficult things is, *how does one approach the book of Ecclesiastes?*

### The Keys to Interpreting Ecclesiastes (from Dr. Bob Utley)

Although this chapter is usually interpreted as dealing with the timeliness or appropriateness of human actions, in context, it deals with God's sovereignty (cf. Ecclesiastes 2:24-26; Ecclesiastes 3:14).

- A. When interpreting the book of Ecclesiastes it is very important that we see it is satire based on two key phrases:
  1. "all is vanity" (i.e., transitoriness of human life and effort)
  2. "under the sun" (i.e., physical life, earthly life viewed apart from God, i.e., agnostically)
- B. The central answer to a meaningless and frustrated life is found in
  1. faith and obedience (cf. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)
  2. the simple pleasures of life as provided by God (cf. Ecclesiastes 2:24; Ecclesiastes 3:12-13; Ecclesiastes 3:22; Ecclesiastes 5:18; Ecclesiastes 6:12; Ecclesiastes 8:15; Ecclesiastes 9:7)

<sup>21</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

<sup>22</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

<sup>23</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3 (slightly edited).

<sup>24</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3 chapter comments.

## The Keys to Interpreting Ecclesiastes (from Dr. Bob Utley)

- C. Ecclesiastes is one of the books of the Bible that must be interpreted in its totality. Proof-texting this book or missing its tongue-in-cheek world-view will prove to be a hermeneutical disaster.

Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Ecclesiastes 3 chapter comments.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

As I study a chapter, questions will occur to me—some of them important and many of them minor. Not all of these questions will be satisfactorily answered.

## Fundamental Questions About Ecclesiastes 3

1. What is Solomon's philosophy or set of central ideas?
2. Are there several philosophical systems to be found in Ecclesiastes 3?
3. Could we read this chapter to be Solomon speaking to the rewards of life which the unbeliever may claim to?
- 4.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

It is important to understand what has gone before.

## The Prequel of Ecclesiastes 3

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

We need to know who the people are who populate this chapter.

## The Principals of Ecclesiastes 3

Characters	Biographical Material

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

We need to know where this chapter takes place. I may need to eliminate this one.

The Places of Ecclesiastes 3	
Place	Description
Chapter Outline	Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

By the Numbers	
Item	Date; duration; size; number
Chapter Outline	Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

At this point, we begin to gather up more details on this chapter.	
A Synopsis of Ecclesiastes 3	
Chapter Outline	Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

--	--



## Outlines and Summaries of Ecclesiastes 3 (Various Commentators)

Albert Barnes:<sup>25</sup>

It follows from Eccles. 2:26 (*For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.*—ESV) that the works of people are subject in their results to another will (God's) besides that of the doer. Here is the germ of the great question of later times - *how to reconcile man's free will with God's decrees.*

Solomon's way of stating it is that to every separate work, which goes to make up the great aggregate of human activity (the "travail," Eccles. 3:10), there is a season, an appropriate time which God appoints for its being done (Eccles. 3:1-8). To the question (Eccles. 3:9) What profit? he answers that the works of people, if done according to God's appointment, are a part of that beautifully arranged scheme of Divine Providence which, as a whole, is, by reason of its extent and duration, incomprehensible to us (Eccles. 3:11).

Man's good is to rejoice and do good in his lifetime, which he can do only as God appoints (Eccles. 3:12-13). God's work, of which this would be a part, is forever, is perfect (and so not subject to vanity), and is calculated to teach people to revere Him (Eccles. 3:14). His work, which was begun long ago, is now going on to completion; His work hereafter will be a complement of something which was done previously; and He recalls the past in order to add to it what shall make it complete and perfect (Eccles. 3:15). The principle of divine government - that every work in order to be permanent and successful must be God's work as well as man's work - is also declared in Psalm 127:1-2 (attributed to Solomon).

Rev. Joseph Benson:<sup>26</sup>

Solomon proves that we ought to make use of what God has given us, by showing the mutability of all human affairs (Eccles. 3:1-10). The immutability and unsearchableness of the divine counsels (Eccles. 3:11-15). The vanity of honour and power, often an instrument of oppression, for which God will judge the oppressors (Eccles. 3:16-17); whose condition in this world is no better than that of brutes (Eccles. 3:18-21). Therefore live well (Eccles. 3:22).

Adam Clarke:<sup>27</sup>

Every thing has its time and season (Eccles. 3:1-8. Men are exercised with labor (Eccles. 3:9-10). Every thing is beautiful in its season (Eccles. 3:11. Men should enjoy thankfully the gifts of God (Eccles. 3:12-13). What God does is for ever (Eccles. 3:14). There is nothing new (Eccles. 3:15). The corruption of judgment; but the judgments of God are right (Eccles. 3:16-17). Man is brutish, and men and brutes die in like manner (Eccles. 3:18-21). Man may enjoy the fruit of his own labors (Eccles. 3:22).

Gary H. Everett gives<sup>28</sup> a broad outline for the first two verses:

1. The Preacher Concludes God Has a Purpose — Ecclesiastes 3:1-8
2. The Preacher Explains His Conclusion — Ecclesiastes 3:9-15

Arno Gaebelein:<sup>29</sup>

1. The times of man under the sun (Ecclesiastes 3:1-11)
2. When then is the good? (Ecclesiastes 3:12-15)
3. Concerning judgment and the future (Ecclesiastes 3:16-22)

<sup>25</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3 (chapter comments) (slightly edited).

<sup>26</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3 (chapter comments).

<sup>27</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3 (chapter comments) (slightly edited).

<sup>28</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1-15.

<sup>29</sup> Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1-22.

## Outlines and Summaries of Ecclesiastes 3 (Various Commentators)

Dr. John Gill.<sup>30</sup>

There is a time for everything (Ecclesiastes 3:1); of which there is an induction of particulars (Ecclesiastes 3:2); so that though every thing is certain with God, nothing is certain with men, nor to be depended on, nor can happiness be placed therein. There is no striving against the providence of God, nor altering the course of things.

The labour of man is unprofitable, and his travail affliction and vexation (Ecclesiastes 3:9). Though all God's works are beautiful in their season, they are unsearchable to man (Ecclesiastes 3:11); wherefore it is best cheerfully to enjoy the present good things of life (Ecclesiastes 3:12); and be content; for the will and ways and works of God are unalterable, permanent, and perfect (Ecclesiastes 3:14).

Though wicked men may abuse the power reposed in them, and pervert public justice, they will be called to an account for it in the general judgment, for which there is a time set (Ecclesiastes 3:16). Yet, such is the stupidity of the generality of men, that they have no more sense of death and judgment than the brutes, and live and die like them (Ecclesiastes 3:18). Therefore it is best of all to make a right use of power and riches, or what God has given to men, for their own good and that of others, since they know not what shall be after them (Ecclesiastes 3:22).

David Guzik.<sup>31</sup>

### THE REIGN OF TIME, A GLIMMER OF HOPE

- A. God and time.
  - 1. (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8) A time for every purpose.
  - 2. (Ecclesiastes 3:9-11) A glimmer of hope in seeing God as the master of time.
  - 3. (Ecclesiastes 3:12-15) What the Preacher knows.
- B. Injustice is unanswered by death.
  - 1. (Ecclesiastes 3:16-17) The problem of injustice and an uneasy assurance of solving this problem.
  - 2. (Ecclesiastes 3:18-21) The common fate of animals and humans under the sun.
  - 3. (Ecclesiastes 3:22) Finding peace under the sun.

Matthew Henry.<sup>32</sup>

- I. The mutability of all human affairs (Ecclesiastes 3:1-10).
- II. The immutability of the divine counsels concerning them and the unsearchableness of those counsels (Ecclesiastes 3:11-15).
- III. The vanity of worldly honour and power, which are abused for the support of oppression and persecution if men be not governed by the fear of God in the use of them (Ecclesiastes 3:16). For a check to proud oppressors, and to show them their vanity, he reminds them,
  - 1. That they will be called to account for it in the other world (Ecclesiastes 3:17).
  - 2. That their condition, in reference to this world (for of that he speaks), is no better than that of the beasts (Ecclesiastes 3:18-21).

Solomon concludes that it is our wisdom to make use of what power we have for our own comfort, and not to oppress others with it.

Matthew Henry.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3 (chapter comments) (edited).

<sup>31</sup> David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

<sup>32</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3 (chapter comments) (slightly edited).

<sup>33</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3 (chapter comments).

## Outlines and Summaries of Ecclesiastes 3 (Various Commentators)

(Ecclesiastes 3:1-10)	The changes of human affairs.
(Ecclesiastes 3:11-15)	The Divine counsels unchangeable.
(Ecclesiastes 3:16-22)	The vanity of worldly power.

Matthew Poole.<sup>34</sup>

Every thing has its time; in which, to enjoy it, and therewith do good to others, is our good (Ecclesiastes 3:1-13). God does all according to his decree that we should fear him, and there is nothing new (Ecclesiastes 3:14,15). The vanity of unjust judgment; God is the great Judge of all (Ecclesiastes 3:16,17); and he will make men know that they are here but as brute beasts (Ecclesiastes 3:18-22).

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge.<sup>35</sup>

Ecclesiastes 3:1–10: By the necessary change of times, vanity is added to human travail;  
 Ecclesiastes 3:11–15: There is an excellency in God's works;  
 Ecclesiastes 3:16–22: But as for man, God shall judge his works hereafter, though here he be like a beast.

Ray Steadman.<sup>36</sup>

If you look carefully you will see that these eight opening verses gather around three major divisions which correspond, amazingly enough, to the divisions of our humanity: body, soul, and spirit. The first four pairs deal with the body:

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:  
 a time to be born, and a time to die;  
 a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;  
 a time to kill, and a time to heal;  
 a time to break down, and a time to build up; (Ecclesiastes 3:1-3 RSV)

Then the Searcher moves into the realm of the soul, with its functions of thinking, feeling and choosing, the social areas, and all the interrelationships of life that flow from that.

a time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
 a time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
 a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;  
 a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; (Ecclesiastes 3:4-5 RSV)

The last six of these opposites relate to the spirit, to the inner decisions, the deep commitments.

a time to seek, and a time to lose;  
 a time to keep, and a time to cast away;  
 a time to rend, and a time to sew;  
 a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
 a time to love, and a time to hate;  
 a time for war, and a time for peace. (Ecclesiastes 3:6-8 RSV)

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

<sup>34</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1: (slightly edited).

<sup>35</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, ecc3 (chapter comments) (edited).

<sup>36</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

929 Chapters Outline of Ecclesiastes 3 (David Z. Moster)

Ecclesiastes 3 – “Reflections”

- I. Summary

Qohelet reflects upon time, the fate of man, and tells people to enjoy their lives.
- II. Photo (Photo from [www.omnisalsa.com](http://www.omnisalsa.com))

Qohelet teaches a lesson: “A season is set for everything... A time for wailing and a time for dancing.” (vv. 1, 4).
- III. Select Verses

1-8:

A season is set for everything, a time for every experience under heaven: A time for being born and a time for dying, A time for planting and a time for uprooting the planted; A time for slaying and a time for healing, A time for tearing down and a time for building up; A time for weeping and a time for laughing, A time for wailing and a time for dancing; A time for throwing stones and a time for gathering stones, A time for embracing and a time for shunning embraces; A time for seeking and a time for losing, A time for keeping and a time for discarding; A time for ripping and a time for sewing, A time for silence and a time for speaking; A time for loving and a time for hating; A time for war and a time for peace.

12-13:

Thus I realized that the only worthwhile thing there is for them is to enjoy themselves and do what is good in their lifetime; also, that whenever a man does eat and drink and get enjoyment out of all his wealth, it is a gift of God

19-21:

For in respect of the fate of man and the fate of beast, they have one and the same fate: as the one dies so dies the other, and both have the same lifebreath; man has no superiority over beast, since both amount to nothing. Both go to the same place; both came from dust and both return to dust. Who knows if a man’s lifebreath does rise upward and if a beast’s breath does sink down into the earth?
- IV. Outline

1-8

A time for everything

9-15

God has set man’s place; Enjoy life

16-22

The fate of all living things is the same; Enjoy life



From [929chapters.com](http://929chapters.com) accessed March 11, 2020.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

A Synopsis of Ecclesiastes 3 from the Summarized Bible

- Contents:

The mutability of all human affairs and the unchangeableness and unsearchableness of the divine counsels.
- Characters:

God, Solomon.
- Conclusion:

We live in a world of changes. The events of time and the conditions of human life are continually passing and repassing, yet every change is determined by the supreme power and

## A Synopsis of Ecclesiastes 3 from the Summarized Bible

	we should therefore accommodate ourselves to His purposes. The only true pleasure of life is in making good use of the things God has given us, making ourselves serviceable to those about us.
<b>Key Word:</b>	Man's portion, Ecclesiastes 3:22.
<b>Strong Verses:</b>	Ecclesiastes 3:12, Ecclesiastes 3:14, Ecclesiastes 3:17.
<b>Striking Facts:</b>	Ecclesiastes 3:17. In the midst of all the inequalities of human affairs it is a great comfort to know that the eye of faith can see that Jesus Christ, the Judge, stands before the door and that when He comes, He will reward the righteous and punish the pride and cruelty of oppressors. Though the day of affliction may seem long, we may patiently wait His coming, when there will be an examination into every purpose and every work done under the sun.

Keith L. Brooks, *Summarized Bible; Complete Summary of the Bible*; ©1919; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

It is helpful to see what came before and what follows in a brief summary.

## The Big Picture (Ecclesiastes –)

Scripture	Text/Commentary
Ecclesiastes	
Ecclesiastes	
Ecclesiastes	
Ecclesiastes	
Ecclesiastes	

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

## A Bird's Eye View of Ecclesiastes 3:1–5:7 (from B. H. Carroll)

In Ecclesiastes 3:1-5:9 we have the elements that limit:

- I. The Divine Elements are,
  1. The law of opportunes (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8)  
Things must be done in their time or they are a failure.
  2. The eternity in our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:9-11 a)  
"God has put eternity in our hearts" (Ecclesiastes 3:11) is a great text. This means -that money and worldly things cannot satisfy the yearning of the human heart, which is for eternal things.
  3. The finiteness of man's nature (Ecclesiastes 3:11 b)
  4. The laws of God are infrangible (Ecclesiastes 3:14–15)  
Ecclesiastes 3:14-15 mean that the laws of God are infrangible, i.e., cannot be broken with impunity, and that whoever breaks the laws of the divine limitations him will God break.
- II. The Human Elements are,
  1. Iniquity in the place of justice (Ecclesiastes 3:16–22)
    - a. The observation is that iniquity was in the place of justice; that unjust men in court block the



## A Bird's Eye View of Ecclesiastes 3:1–5:7 (from B. H. Carroll)

- way of the righteous if they appeal to them. This is like the parable of the widow and unjust judge. A modification of this thought is found in the divine element, that God will judge the righteous and the wicked (Ecclesiastes 3:17).
- b. A serious question arises in Ecclesiastes 3:18-21. This is not a proposition but a heart question: Is there a distinction between man and beast?...The conclusion of Ecclesiastes 3:22 is a most natural one. If man dies like a beast and that is the end of all for him, then he can do no better than to make the most of this life.
  2. The oppression of the poor (Ecclesiastes 4:1–3)  
The oppression of the poor and the question arising was a temporary one, as to whether it would not be better to be dead or never to have been born (Ecclesiastes 4:2-3). following that is an observation with respect to labor and a question which arose from it.
  3. Labor and skill actuated only by rivalry with the neighbor (Ecclesiastes 4:4–16)
    - a. The observation was that a man's labor and skill were actuated only by rivalry with his neighbor (Ecclesiastes 4:4) and the question arising from it is this: Is it not better then, just to be a sluggard? (Ecclesiastes 4:5-6).
    - b. Then in Ecclesiastes 4:8 we have an illustration of a miserly bachelor who is never satisfied with -his acquired wealth, notwithstanding that there is no one to whom he might leave his wealth at death. I once knew a man in Austin who had no relatives and owned a great deal of Austin, yet he would go across the street to his neighbor's to warm rather than buy coal.
    - c. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 is a contrast with the condition of the bachelor and is a wonderful gem of literature, expressing the advantages of co-operation. Two are better than one because they can be mutually helpful to each other. This is the foundation principle of all partnerships, whether for business, war or the home. "A threefold cord is not quickly broken."
    - d. In Ecclesiastes 4:13-16 we have an illustration of the same principle in the vanity of kings in acquiring great dominion to be turned over to an ungrateful son. There is doubtless a reference here to Solomon himself and his son, Rehoboam. Solomon foresaw the coming of Rehoboam and his people who would not rejoice in their heritage.
  4. The elements of weakness in human worship (Ecclesiastes 5:1-7)  
The elements of weakness in human worship as noted in Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 are lack of due consideration which results in the sacrifice of fools and rash vowing and then not paying the pledge. Here I give an observation: often let their mouths go off half-cocked and then when settlement day comes say before the messenger, "It was an error." This principle applies in all our general work. For many years I was an agent for different phases of denominational work and handled thousands of dollars for the kingdom enterprises. On many occasions in our conventions pledges were made for some kingdom interest and when I took the matter up with the different ones for collection many of them would not even answer my letters. Then these same ones would come into the convention again and make another pledge and refuse again to pay it. This led me to go through my list of pledges when they were first made and write after each one of these the German word, nix. One would be astonished to go over these lists because of the great number on the list with nix after the name and also because certain ones are in the list whom a credulous person would not suspect. This experience of mine led me to emphasize very strongly this passage in later years: "Keep your foot when you go to the house of God."
  5. Injustice in governmental affairs. (Ecclesiastes 5:8–9)  
Another observation is recorded in Ecclesiastes 5:8-9. This relates to the matter of injustice so often wrought in governmental affairs, but we are admonished to remember that the One who is over all regards, and that his purpose in human government is to secure equal rights to all, since the earth is for all, and all, including the king, must be fed from the field.

B. H. Carroll, *An interpretation of the English Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 1:2–5:9 (edited).



Dr. Thomas Constable sees Ecclesiastes 1:12–6:9 as Solomon describing the futility of work. *The writer proceeded to elaborate on his thesis that all human endeavor lacks permanent value-by citing evidence that he had observed personally, and then evidence that everyone has observed.*<sup>37</sup>

The first chapter heading sometimes does double duty, giving an overall view of the chapter and/or telling what the first section is about. Sometimes, it strict speaks of the first section.

### Paragraph Divisions of Modern Translations for Ecclesiastes 3

New KJV	Expanded Bible	New Life Version	Common English B.	Tree of Life Bible
Everything Has Its Time vv. 1–8	There Is a Time for Everything vv. 1–8	A Time for Everything vv. 1–8	A season for everything vv. 1–8	A Time for Everything vv. 1–8 vv. 9–10
All are broken down into several lines per verse, as poetry, except for the NLV, which presents these in paragraph form.				
The God-Given Task vv. 9–11 vv.12–13 vv. 14–15	God Controls His World vv. 9–14 v. 15	The God-Given Work vv. 9–11 vv. 12–15	Hard work vv. 9–11 vv. 12–15	Yet Eternity In Their Heart vv. 11–14 vv. 15–17 (As poetry)
Injustice Seems to Prevail v. 16 v. 17 vv. 18–22	Unfairness on Earth v.16 v. 17 vv. 18–22	Sin Is Everywhere vv. 16–22	Enjoy what you do now vv. 16–19 v. 20 (as poetry) vv. 21–22	Humans Same As Beasts? vv. 18–22

I was surprised as to how closely most of these translations tracked.

From [www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ecclesiastes%205&version=NASB;NKJV;NRSV;CEB;CEV](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ecclesiastes%205&version=NASB;NKJV;NRSV;CEB;CEV); concept inspired by Dr. Bob Utley.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

#### Changes—additions and subtractions:

I began this study with quite a number of recently added charts: Titles and/or Brief Descriptions of Ecclesiastes 3 (by Various Commentators); Brief, but insightful observations of Ecclesiastes 3 (various commentators); Fundamental Questions About Ecclesiastes 3; A Synopsis of Ecclesiastes 3; Outlines of Ecclesiastes 3 (Various Commentators); A Synopsis of Ecclesiastes 3 from the Summarized Bible; and The Big Picture (Ecclesiastes –), all added to the introduction.

Many of these new charts and ideas will be eventually added to previous chapters of Ecclesiastes.

I drew from hundreds of sources for this chapter. I literally stand on the shoulders of thousands of men in order to put this document together.

I make an honest attempt to display as few translations as possible, so that you do not see the same translation several times. I had trouble eliminating translations in this chapter, as so many of them attempted to translate and interpret certain verses (this is not at all uncommon in paraphrases or simple English translations). There seemed to be an abundance of different translations for many verses and passages.

<sup>37</sup> Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 1:12–6:9.

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

## Outline or Summary of Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (various commentators)

Dr. Thomas Constable: *As is customary in Ecclesiastes, the writer began this section by stating a thesis (Ecclesiastes 3:1). He then proceeded to illustrate and to prove it true (Ecclesiastes 3:2-8).*<sup>38</sup>

Gary H. Everett:

1. General Summary — Ecclesiastes 3:1
2. The Vanity of Wisdom — Ecclesiastes 3:2-3
3. The Vanity of Mirth and Pleasure — Ecclesiastes 3:4
4. The Vanity of Strength and Conquest — Ecclesiastes 3:5
5. The Vanity of Riches — Ecclesiastes 3:6
6. The Vanity of the King's Rule over Israel and the Nations — Ecclesiastes 3:7-8<sup>39</sup>

David Guzik: *To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven: This list — describing the different seasons and facets of life — is beautiful. Yet it also casts a dark shadow, because it reminds us of the inevitability of trouble and evil, and of the relentless monotony of life.*<sup>40</sup>

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

<sup>38</sup> Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>39</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

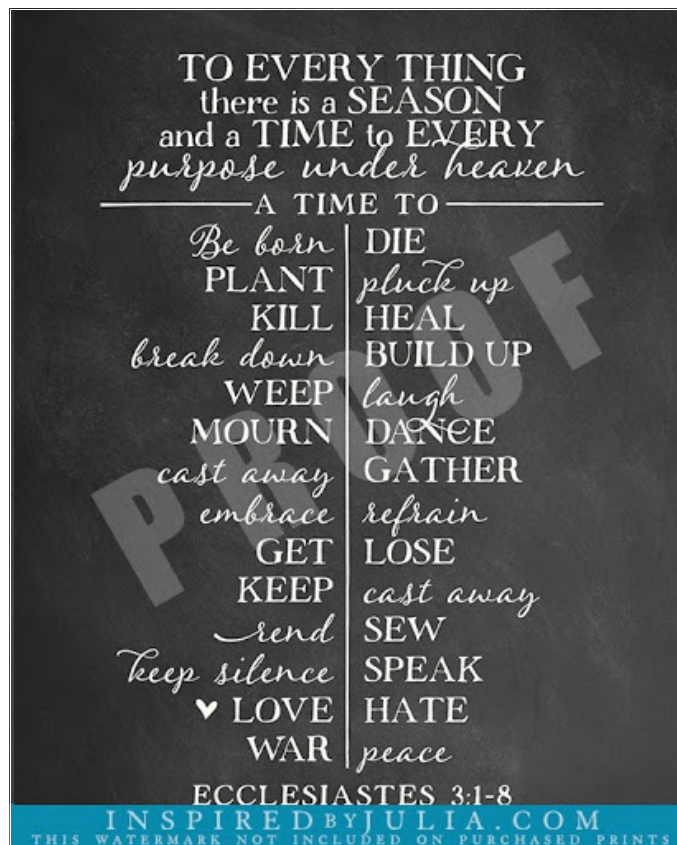
<sup>40</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

**Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 Modified KJV** (graphic); from [Inspirational Word Art](#); accessed March 22, 2020.

Modified KJV is the term that they used, but I do not believe that is an official translation of the Bible.

Solomon is listing varied activities which every person enjoys or endures in life. Every person is born; every person dies. We all have these terminal points in our life.

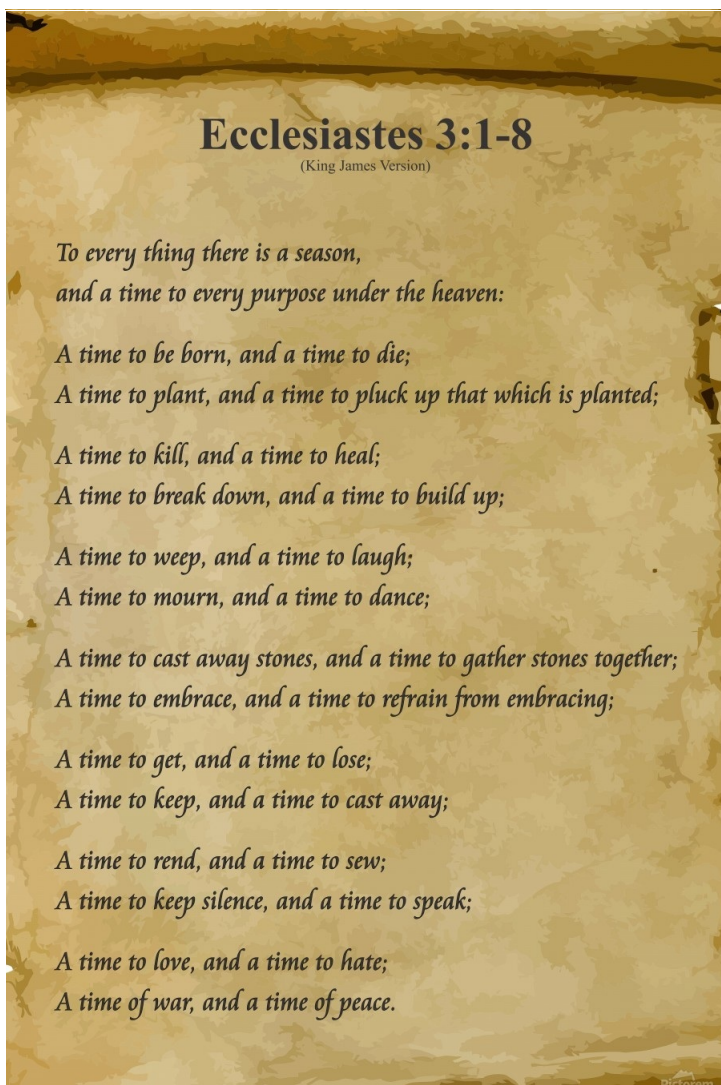
There are times in this chapter where Solomon seems to take on a very philosophical view of life, looking only at man and his activities. Although Solomon will mention God from time to time, for the most part he looks only at man and his relationship to life.



**Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 KJV** (graphic); from [Pictorem](#); accessed March 22, 2020.

In some cases, the KJV is hard to follow because of being so archaic; but in this passage, it is quite easy to read.

Chuck Smith has the unusual point of view of this passage: *The idea of the Hebrew is, it's just monotony. Life seems to be ordered in these things. Just a time, a time, a time, a time. And the Hebrew idea is that of the monotony of life. It isn't, "Oh, the glorious time to love and a time to plant," you know, as we make it very romantic today. It was really being*



*expressed in a very life-gets-so-tedious, don't it?* <sup>41</sup>

I don't have the same feeling when reading these verses, and perhaps emotionally this is because I originally heard this passage as a song by the Byrds, so I associate it with the unrealistic hippie philosophy.

There will be portions of this chapter which seem to affirm a monotonous life; and then affirm happiness in the basic pleasures of life.

What I do not see in this passage is, *there is a time to do a good thing* followed by, *there is a time to do a bad thing*. For the most part, in that era, this are things which are a part of every person's life. One day you weep; the next day you laugh; one day it is best to remain silent; the next day, you have your say. There is a time when you enjoy the embrace of a loved one; and there is a time you are unable to have that embrace.

Sometimes, the commentary covers more verses than those named below.

### **Introductory Commentary of Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (various commentators)**

The Cambridge Bible: *The survey of human occupations and interests that follows has a striking parallel in the Meditations of Marcus Aurelius (iv. 32), who, from his Stoic standpoint, sees in their perpetual recurrence, evidence of the monotonous iteration of the phenomena of man's life, analogous to that of the phenomena of Nature.* <sup>42</sup>

Adam Clarke: *Two general remarks may be made on the first eight verses of this chapter.*

1. *God by his providence governs the world, and has determined particular things and operations to particular times. In those times such things may be done with propriety and success; but if we neglect the appointed seasons, we sin against this providence, and become the authors of our own distresses.*
2. *God has given to man that portion of duration called Time; the space in which all the operations of nature, of animals, and intellectual beings, are carried on; but while nature is steady in its course, and animals faithful to their instincts, man devotes it to a great variety of purposes; but very frequently to that for which God never made time, space, or opportunity. And all we can say, when an evil deed is done, is, there was a time in which it was done, though God never made it for that purpose.*

Clarke continues: *To say any farther on this subject is needless, as the words themselves give in general their own meaning. The Jews, it is true, see in these times and seasons all the events of their own nation, from the birth of Abraham to the present times.* <sup>43</sup>

College Press Bible Study: *In this section the reader is confronted with seven parallel passages demonstrating the theme that God, the Creator, is in control of His world. More than this, it illustrates the various activities which take place in the lifetime of one generation. The Preacher has observed that one generation passes away while another generation moves in to take its place (Ecclesiastes 1:4). Here he gives a detailed account of the activities of each generation from birth to death.*

<sup>41</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–22 (edited).

<sup>42</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1.

<sup>43</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1.



## Introductory Commentary of Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (various commentators)

The College Press continues: *Parallelisms were popular with the writers of the Old Testament. One is tempted to be carried away with the poetic beauty of the passage and possibly miss the message which it contains. This popular passage from Ecclesiastes has made its way into the forms of art, poetry and song in our present generation. It should be emphasized once again, however, that the theme discussed in chapter two is still under consideration. Some have written that this is an unrelated insertion of material without appropriate relationship to the context of the discussion, but a cursory reading of the two chapters together would dispense with such an argument. The lesson is that God controls through orderly laws and principles. Man may run contrary to God's appointed times and seasons, but if he does, he will experience frustration and failure. The "good man" of the preceding chapter attempts to live in harmony with God's order, while the "sinner" has little regard for it.*

The College Press concludes with these 5 points: *Certain qualities mark the comparisons. (1) The list is rather extended. This may serve the purpose of demonstrating that the many sides of life are under God's control, or it may have been Solomon's intention to show the various activities of man from the time of his birth until the time of his death. (2) Nothing evil is included in the list. Some of the activities are difficult to interpret as to exact meanings, but nothing needs to be placed in the category of immoral behaviour. This is very clear. The contrary is actually true. Since the second line of the couplet partially explains the first line, the meaning of each line interprets the meaning of the other. The meaning of the event must be in harmony with the parts of the comparison. Nothing in any of the descriptions suggests evil activities. Hate, kill, rend and war are all extreme in nature, but are approved by God under qualifying circumstances. (3) Some events are inevitable. It is obvious that no one has control over the time of his death (Ecclesiastes 8:8). We are also subjected to a "time" to give birth, to weep and to heal. These circumstances of life are beyond our control. God controls them in the sense that His laws are active in His world. It is improper to read predestination into the passage. (4) Some events can be experienced at one's own discretion. Man controls such activities as loving and refraining from love, deciding what to keep and what to cast away. Even in these areas, however, there are times and seasons within God's order when good judgment dictates policy. (5) Sometimes one works contrary to the seasons. One may keep silent when he should be speaking. He may laugh when he should be mourning. The wise man interprets the times and adjusts his activities accordingly.*<sup>44</sup>

Dunagan: *These verses really strike at human independence. We may think that we have control over our lives and what we will do each day, but a closer look makes us realize that often we are doing nothing more than reacting instead of acting.*

Dunagan continues: *The things in this chapter basically happen to every generation. And people may try to laugh, when it is a time to mourn, but they will only experience frustration and failure.*

Dunagan concludes: *While the sinner becomes frustrated at life, realizing that they are not marching to a tune of their own making, the Christian seeks to accept the fact that many unexpected things will happen in life, and that life isn't going to always follow our game plan.*<sup>45</sup>

Gary H. Everett: *Ecclesiastes 3:1-15 represents the Preacher's next phase of learning when he tells us that our life is made up of times and seasons, or periods of change; and we learn that these seasons have been divinely placed within our lives by God (Ecclesiastes 3:1). The Preacher lists these divine seasons in Ecclesiastes 3:2-8. We clearly identify with such a description of our lives as we recall how we move from birth to childhood to adolescence to adulthood to old age and finally to death.*<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>45</sup> Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1 (slightly edited).

<sup>46</sup> Gary H. Everett Gary Everett's Bible Commentary; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

## Introductory Commentary of Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (various commentators)

Gary H. Everett: *Having pursued every vanity of life that was with his reach, and having found all of life's pleasures unfulfilling, King Solomon now turns his attention to the divine element of life. In Ecclesiastes 3:1 he reflects upon God's divine timetable for every aspect of creation. He acknowledges that every person, every nation, every aspect of creation, has a purpose and plan that God Himself embedded within its design. God has a plan that is made up of times and seasons, which were beyond Solomon or man's ability to determine and orchestrate. King Solomon had spent much of his life trying to orchestrate the affairs of his kingdom, pursuing wisdom, mirth, building projects and the acquisition of great wealth. Yet in all of these pursuits the king realized he was subject to the design and predetermined plan of his Creator, the God of Israel.*

Everett continues: *Our life is a series of seasons. When we yield our lives into the hands of divine providence and provision, God is allowed to orchestrate these seasons in a magnificent way. I have seen these seasons very clearly in my life as God has orchestrated them towards a greater level of sacrifice and service. I began making a sacrifice as a Seminary student, and watched God's hand provide my needs. As I continued to serve the Lord, I have had the experiences of sensing seasons of change soon before they arrive.*

Everett concludes: *For example, in 1988, the Lord dealt with me about returning to Fort Worth to finish my Seminary degree. In 1993 I received a promotion with DMJ Management, where I served for 4 years. It was a season of learning how to deal with Christian business ethics in a corporate world. In 1997, I sensed a season of change coming just before being called into the mission field. In 2010-2011, I took a sabbatical of rest and saw God's divine hand of provision. After one year, I was called back into the mission field in an amazing series of divinely orchestrated events. In contrast, I have observed men and women as they orchestrate their own careers apart from divine intervention. They do reach their peaks of success, but in an exhausted state of ill marriage or ill health or broken marriages. Such individuals have not relinquished their lives unto divine providence and provision. Thus, life is busy and difficult and eventually failures await them in some form or manner. This is the vanity that the preachers describes in the first chapters of Ecclesiastes.<sup>47</sup>*

Later, Everett writes: *There are twenty-eight seasons listed in the following verses. It is in these seasons of life orchestrated by God that we find meaning and purpose in our lives.<sup>48</sup>*

David Guzik: *A time to be born, and a time to die . . . a time to break down, and a time to build up: A bad facet answers each good facet. The Preacher understood that though there are good things in life, the bad things can't be escaped.<sup>49</sup>*

Personally, I did not see this as a good, bad; good, bad; good bad; but more taking in the whole realm of human experience in the typical person's lifetime.

Kidner: *Obviously, we have little say in the situations which move us to weep or laugh, mourn or dance.... 'Who would imagined', we sometimes say, 'that the day would come when I should find myself doing such-and-such, and seeing it as my duty! So the peace-loving nation prepares for war; or the shepherd takes the knife to the creature he has earlier nursed back to health. The collector disperses his hoard; friends part in bitter conflict; the need to speak out follows the need to be silent.'<sup>50</sup>*

Kidner: *The repetition of 'a time . . . , and a time . . . ' begins to be oppressive. Whatever may be our skill and initiative, our real masters seem to be these inexorable seasons: not only those of the calendar, but that tide of events which moves us now to one kind of action which seems fitting, now to another which puts all into reverse.<sup>51</sup>*

<sup>47</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1.

<sup>48</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–15.

<sup>49</sup> David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

<sup>50</sup> Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1.

<sup>51</sup> David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.



## Introductory Commentary of Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (various commentators)

H. Macmillan, D. D.: *At no period of the year are the sunsets so varied and beautiful as in autumn. The many-coloured woods of the year's eventide correspond to the many-coloured clouds of the sunset sky; and as the heavens burst into their brightest hues, and exhibit their loveliest transfigurations when the daylight is fading into the gloom of night, so the year unfolds its richest tints and its fairest charms when it is about to sink into the darkness and desolation of winter.*

Macmillan took this opportunity to wax on and on and on about the fall: *No one can take a walk in the melancholy woodland in the calm October days without being deeply impressed by the thought of the great waste of beauty and creative skill seen in the faded leaves which rustle beneath his feet. Take up and examine one of these leaves attentively, and you are astonished at the wealth of ingenuity displayed in it. It is a miracle of design, elaborately formed and richly coloured—in reality more precious than any jewel; and yet it is dropped off the bough as if it had no value, and rots away unheeded in the depths of the forest.*

Macmillan does eventually draw a conclusion from all of this: *Myriads of similar gems are heaped beneath the leafless trees, to moulder away in the rains of November. It saddens us to think of this continual lavish production and careless discarding of forms of beauty and wonder, which we see everywhere throughout nature. Could not the foliage be so contrived as to remain permanently on the trees, and only suffer such a periodical change as the evergreen ivy undergoes? Must the web of nature's fairest embroidery be taken down every year, and every year woven back again to its old completeness and beauty?...Yes! she weaves and unweaves her web of loveliness each season—not in order to mock us with delusive hopes, but to wean us from all false loves, and teach us to wait and prepare for the true love of our souls, which is found, not in the passing things of earth, but in the abiding realities of heaven.*

Even Macmillan's conclusion gets drawn out: *This is the secret of all her lavish wastefulness. For this she perpetually sacrifices and perpetually renews her beauty; for this she counts all her most precious things but as dross. By the pathos of her autumn loveliness she is appealing to all that is deepest and truest in our spiritual nature; and through her fading flowers and her withering grass, and all her fleeting glories, she is speaking to us words of eternal life, whereby our souls may be enriched and beautified for ever.*<sup>52</sup>

Morgan: *His ceaseless reiteration of the words, 'A time . . . a time . . . a time,' are intended to indicate his sense of the monotony of all things, rather than of their variety.*<sup>53</sup>

It is A. H. Moment who observes that this song/poem/psalm is divided into 7 stanzas, the number of perfection and completeness.<sup>54</sup> V. 1 is the title.

Dr. Peter Pett: *This list is made up of fourteen contrasting phrases depicting opposites. The fourteen is intended to convey the idea of the divine perfection of the list. It is the perfect seven twofold. It is noteworthy that the first two in the list stress the idea of death, both the death of man and the death of plants. The Preacher is very much aware of the reality of death. But against it he sets the reality of new life. That too he is aware of. We again have illustrated the continual repetition of birth and death. Things are born and they die, and new life replaces them. And all in their time. The time line goes on, with all these activities continually repeating themselves.*<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>53</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

<sup>54</sup> *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>55</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

### Introductory Commentary of Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *The providence of God disposes and arranges every detail of man's life. This proposition is stated first generally, and then worked out in particular by means of antithetical sentences. In Hebrew manuscripts and most printed texts Ecclesiastes 3:2-8 are arranged in two parallel columns, so that one "time" always stands under another. A similar arrangement is found in Joshua 12:9, etc; containing the catalogue of the conquered Canaanite kings; and in Esther 9:7, etc; giving the names of Haman's tensions. In the present passage we have fourteen pairs of contrasts, ranging from external circumstances to the inner affections of man's being.*<sup>56</sup>

W. Walters: *I think it was Sir James Mackintosh who said that whenever he died, he should die with a host of unaccomplished purposes and unfinished plans in his brain. So every earnest man will leave behind him many a half-finished, and even many an unattempted work. Nevertheless, with a true and earnest heart we may complete some things—we may weave the threads of life into a fabric of varied use and beauty—and, like David of old, serve our generation by the will of God before we fall on sleep, and are laid among our fathers.*<sup>57</sup>

J. Willcock: *Our author makes a fresh start. He drops the autobiographical style of the first two chapters, and casts his thoughts into the form of aphorisms, based not merely upon the reminiscences of his own life, but upon the experience of all men. He gives a long list of the events, actions, emotions, and feelings which go to make up human life, and asserts of them that they are governed by fixed laws above our knowledge, out of our control. The time of our entrance into the world, the condition of life in which we are placed, are determined for us by a higher will than our own, and the same sovereign power fixes the moment of our departure from life; and in like manner all that is done, enjoyed, and suffered between birth and death is governed by forces which we cannot bend or mold, or even fully understand. That there is a fixed order in the events of life is, to a certain extent, an instinctive belief which we all hold. The thought of an untimely birth or of an untimely death shocks us as something contrary to our sense of that which is fit and becoming, and those crimes by which either is caused are generally regarded as specially repulsive. Yet there is an appointed season for the other incidents of life, though less clearly manifest to us.*

Willcock continues: *Our wisdom lies, not in mere acquiescence in the events of life, but in knowing our duty for the time. The circumstances in which we are placed are so fluctuating, and the conditions in the midst of which we find ourselves are so varying, that a large space is left for us to exercise our discretion, to discern that which is opportune, and to do the right thing at the right time. The first class of events alluded to, the time of birth and the time of death, is that of those which are involuntary; they are events with which there can be no interference without the guilt of gross and exceptional wickedness. The actions and emotions that follow are voluntary, they are within our power, though the circumstances that call them forth at a precise time are not. The relations of life which are determined for us by a higher power give us the opportunity for playing our part, and we either succeed or fail according as we take advantage of the time or neglect it.*

Willcock continues: *The catalogue given of the events, actions, and emotions which make up life seems to be drawn up without any logical order; the various items are apparently taken capriciously as examples of those things that occupy men's time and thoughts, and at first sight the teaching of our author does not seem to be of a distinctively spiritual character. To a superficial reader it might appear as if we had not in it much more than the commonplace prudence to be found in the maxims and proverbs current in every country...But we are taught by Christ himself that knowing how to act opportunely is a large part of that wisdom which is needed for our salvation. He himself came to earth in the "fullness of time" (Gal. 4:4), when the Jewish people and the nations of the world were prepared by Divine discipline for his teaching and work (Acts 17:30–31; Luke 2:30–31). The purpose of the mission of John the Baptist, calculated as it was to lead men to godly sorrow for sin, was in harmony with the austerity of his life and the sternness of his exhortations. It was a time to mourn (Matt. 11:18).*

<sup>56</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>57</sup> *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

## Introductory Commentary of Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (various commentators)

Willcock concludes: *The purpose of Christ's own mission was to reconcile the world to God and to manifest the Father to men, so that joy was becoming in his disciples (Mark 2:18-20). He taught that there was a time to lose, when all possessions that would alienate the heart from him should be parted with; and that there would be a time of gain, when in heaven the accumulated treasures would become an abiding possession (Matt. 6:19, Matt. 6:20). "That which the Preacher insists on is the thought that the circumstances and events of life form part of a Divine order, are not things that come at random, and that wisdom, and therefore such a measure of happiness as is attainable, lies in adapting ourselves to the order, and accepting the guidance of events in great things and small, while shame and confusion come from resisting it." But such teaching is applicable, as we have seen, to the conduct of our spiritual as well as of our secular concerns. The fact that there are great changes through which we must pass in order to be duly prepared for the heavenly state, that we may have to forfeit the temporal to secure the eternal, that the new life has new duties for the discernment and fulfillment of which all our powers and faculties need to be called into full exercise—should make us earnestly desire to be filled with this wisdom that prompts to opportune action. "If any of you lack wisdom," says St. James, "let him ask of God, that give to all men liberally...and it will be given him" (James 1:5).*<sup>58</sup>

J. S. Wright: *Verses 1-8 have an important connection with the theme of the book and relate closely to what precedes and to what follows. Man is to take his life day by day from the hand of God (Ecclesiastes 2:24-26; Ecclesiastes 3:12-13), realizing that God has a fitting time for each thing to be done (Ecclesiastes 3:1). The significance of this section is that man is responsible to discern the right times for the right actions; and when he does the right action according to God's time, the result is 'beautiful' (Ecclesiastes 3:11).*<sup>59</sup>

Although Kidner and Morgan both spoke of the monotony and oppression of the repetition of the words, that is not at all how I felt about reading this poem.

Some of these can be moved to the end of v. 8

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

## Commentary on Ecclesiastes 3:1–15 (various commentators)

Bridgeway Bible Commentary: *Events controlled by God's fixed order (3:1-15): In 1:1-11 the author considered the ceaseless toil and repetition in the natural world and decided that life was useless. Now (ignoring for the moment the conclusions he has just outlined in 2:24-26) he considers the fixed order of events in the world. It appears to him that everything happens at the time God has decided it will happen. In view of this, all human effort to improve life is useless. People can change nothing (3:1-9).*

The Bridgeway Bible Commentary continues: *The writer is confident that God does everything perfectly according to his plan, but he is also frustrated because he does not know what that plan is. People can only accept whatever God sends them and find pleasure in it (10-13). They can change nothing; events will go on repeating themselves according to God's fixed purposes. Their realization of this keeps them in a state of fear before God (14-15).*<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by J. Willcock; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 slightly edited).

<sup>59</sup> Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>60</sup> Don Fleming, *Bridgeway Bible Commentary*; ©1988, 1994, 2005; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–15.

## Commentary on Ecclesiastes 3:1–15 (various commentators)

Gary H. Everett introduces vv. 1–15: *God's Calling Through His Divine Intervention in the Affairs of Mankind (The Seasons of Our Life) – After the Preacher concludes that God has predestined mankind and creation to vanity based upon reflects upon his own frustrations of life (Ecclesiastes 1:12 to Ecclesiastes 2:11) and upon those of others (Ecclesiastes 2:12-26), he turns himself to a wider search by looking above. He realizes that God has a purpose for mankind based upon the realization that He continually intervenes in the affairs of mankind, and because His divine laws govern the outcome of men's lives. We call this divine calling, in which we come to realize that God has a redemptive purpose and plan in His creation.*

Everett continues: *Ecclesiastes 3:1-15 represents the Preacher's next phase of learning when he teaches us that our life is made up of times and seasons, or periods that change into another period of life. We learn that these seasons have been divinely placed within our lives by God (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Once the Preacher recognizes these divine seasons of life (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8), he concludes that man should simply rest in God and enjoy each day's journey, knowing that God will work in his life each day (Ecclesiastes 3:9-15).*<sup>61</sup>

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *Earthly pursuits are no doubt lawful in their proper time and order (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8), but unprofitable when out of time and place; as for instance, when pursued as the solid and chief good (Ecclesiastes 3:9–10); whereas God makes everything beautiful in its season, which man obscurely comprehends (Ecclesiastes 3:11). God allows man to enjoy moderately and virtuously His earthly gifts (Ecclesiastes 3:12–13). What consoles us amidst the instability of earthly blessings is, God's counsels are immutable (Ecclesiastes 3:14).*<sup>62</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

As always, 3 separate translations will be produced for each verse. The slavishly literal translation attempts to preserve word order and number, making it more literal than Young's translation (however, I do not preserve the consistency of the translation that Young does). The moderately literal translation may add or delete a definite article, change the number of a noun to correspond with the English sense of thinking, and the order is often changed in order to better represent our English sentence structure. The paraphrase is an attempt to give a thought-for-thought interpretation of what each verse tells us.

Kukis slavishly literal:

**To the everything a set time and a time for every matter under the [two] heavens.** Ecclesiastes 3:1

Kukis moderately literal:

**[There is] a season for everything and a time for every matter under the heavens.**

Kukis paraphrase

**There is a season for everything and a time for every matter under the heavens.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Note: I compare the Hebrew text to English translations of the Latin, Syriac (= Aramaic) and Greek texts, using the Douay-Rheims translation<sup>63</sup>; George Lamsa's translation, and Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton's translation as revised and edited by Paul W. Esposito, respectively. I often update these texts with non-substantive changes (e.g., *you* for *thou*, etc.). I often use the text of the Complete

<sup>61</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–15.

<sup>62</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1.

<sup>63</sup> I have begun to doubt my e-sword Douay-Rheims version, so I now use [www.latinvulgate.com](http://www.latinvulgate.com).



Apostles' Bible instead of Brenton's translation, because it updates the English text. In Kings, I have used the [webpage](#) of Ernest C. Marsh.

The Septuagint was the earliest known translation of a book (circa 200 B.C.). Since this translation was made before the textual criticism had been developed into a science and because different books appear to be translated by different men, the Greek translation can sometimes be very uneven.

Sometimes, when there are serious disparities between my translation and Brenton's (or the text of the Complete Apostles' Bible), I look at the Greek text of the Septuagint (the LXX) to see if a substantive difference actually exists (and I reflect these changes in the English rendering of the Greek text). I use the Greek LXX with Strong's numbers and morphology available for e-sword. The only problem with this resource (which is a problem for similar resources) is, there is no way to further explore Greek verbs which are not found in the New Testament. Although I usually quote the Complete Apostles' Bible here, I have begun to make changes in the translation when their translation conflicts with the Greek and note what those changes are.

The Masoretic text is the Hebrew text with all of the vowels (vowel points) inserted (the original Hebrew text lacked vowels). We take the Masoretic text to be the text closest to the original. However, differences between the Masoretic text and the Greek, Latin and Syriac are worth noting and, once in a great while, represent a more accurate text possessed by those other ancient translators.

In general, the Latin text is an outstanding translation from the Hebrew text into Latin and very trustworthy (I say this as a non-Catholic). Unfortunately, I do not read Latin—apart from some very obvious words—so I am dependent upon the English translation of the Latin (principally, the Douay-Rheims translation).

Underlined words indicate differences in the text.

Bracketed portions of the Dead Sea Scrolls are words, letters and phrases lost in the scroll due to various types of damage. Underlined words or phrases are those in the Dead Sea Scrolls but not in the Masoretic text.

I will only list the translation from the Dead Sea Scrolls if it exists and if it is different from the Masoretic text.

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	To the everything a set time and a time for every matter under the [two] heavens.
Dead Sea Scrolls	.
Targum of Onkelos	.
Jerusalem targum	.
Targum	To every man a time shall come, and a season to every business under heaven... This was from Dr. John Gill; I do not know to which targum he referred.
Aramaic targum	To every <u>man</u> <u>comes</u> a time, and to every thing an opportune season under the <u>sun</u> :....
Revised Douay-Rheims	All things <u>have</u> their season, and in their times all things pass under heaven.
Latin Vulgate	.
Plain English Aramaic Bible	.
Peshitta (Syriac)	TO everything <u>there is</u> a season, and a time for every purpose under the sun:...
Septuagint (Greek)	To everything <u>there is</u> a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven.

NETS (Greek) .  
Brenton's Septuagint .

Significant differences: The Aramaic targum has *man* rather than *thing*. The targum and the Latin, Greek and Aramaic all add a verb (and sometimes more) to the first phrase to smooth it out.

The targum has *sun* rather than *heavens*. The second phrase in the Latin has a lot of additional language not found in the Hebrew.

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English Easy English	For everything there is a fixed time, and a time for every business under the sun. <b>A right time for everything</b> There is a right time for everything that we do under the sun.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	<b>A Time for Everything</b> There is a right time for everything, and everything on earth will happen at the right time.
God's Word™	Everything in God's Own Time Everything has its own time, and there is a specific time for every activity under heaven:...
Good News Bible (TEV)	<b>A Time for Everything</b> Everything that happens in this world happens at the time God chooses.
The Message	<b>There's a Right Time for Everything</b> There's an opportune time to do things, a right time for everything on the earth:...
Names of God Bible	.
NIRV	<b>There Is a Time for Everything</b> There is a time for everything. There's a time for everything that is done on earth.
New Simplified Bible	.

### Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study <sup>64</sup>	To everything there is a season, and a time to every delight under heaven.
Contemporary English V.	Everything on earth has its own time and its own season.
The Living Bible	There is a right time for everything:...
New Berkeley Version	.
New Century Version	.
New Life Version	<b>A Time for Everything</b> There is a special time for everything. There is a time for everything that happens under heaven.
New Living Translation	.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	There is a right time for everything, a time for everything that we do in this world.

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	For all that's under the sky There is a season and time...
Beck's American Translation	.
Common English Bible	<b>A season for everything</b>

<sup>64</sup> I don't know who actually does the paraphrase for College Press Bible Study, but it is pretty good.

International Standard V	There's a season for everything and a time for every matter under the heavens:.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	<b><i>The Purposes in God's Timing</i></b> There is a season for everything, and a time for every event under heaven:... [I.e. from a heavenly perspective]
Knox Bible ('you' version) Translation for Translators	Everything must be done by turns; no activity, here beneath the heavens, but has its allotted time for beginning and coming to an end. . <b>There is a right time for everything</b> There is a right/correct time for everything, a time for everything that we do in this world.

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Christian Standard Bible Conservapedia Translation Ferrar-Fenton Bible	. Every thing has its season, and a proper time for every purpose:.. <b>Lecture 3: On the Regular Periodicity of the Laws of Existence.</b> There is a period for every purpose, And for every desire under the sun.
God's Truth (Tyndale)	<b>The 3rd Chapter</b> Every thing has a time, yes all that is under the heaven, has is convenient season.
HCSB	<b>The Mystery of Time</b> There is an occasion for everything, and a time for every activity under heaven:...
Jubilee Bible 2000	For all things <i>there is</i> a season, and every will under the heaven <i>has its</i> time <i>determined</i> .
Lexham English Bible NIV, ©2011	. .
Peter Pett's translation Unlocked Literal Bible	To everything there is a fixed season, and a time for every matter under heaven:.. For everything there is an appointed time, and a season for every purpose under heaven.
Urim-Thummim Version Wikipedia Bible Project	To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the cosmos. To everything there is a moment, a time for all that's sought under the sky.

### Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988) The Heritage Bible	There is a given time for everything and a time for every happening under heaven:.. To every thing there is an appointed time, and a time to every pursuit under the heavens;...
New American Bible (2002)	.
New American Bible (2011)	NO ONE CAN DETERMINE THE RIGHT TIME TO ACT * There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens. * [3:1–8] The fourteen pairs of opposites describe various human activities. The poem affirms that God has determined the appropriate moment or "time" for each. Human beings cannot know that moment; further, the wider course of events and purposes fixed by God are beyond them as well.
New English Bible–1970	<b><i>A time for everything.</i></b> FOR EVERYTHING ITS SEASON, and for every activity under heaven its time:...
New Jerusalem Bible New RSV	There is a season for everything, a time for every occupation under heaven:.. .
Revised English Bible–1989	.

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	For everything there is a season, a right time for every intention under heaven —...
The Complete Tanach <sup>65</sup> exeGesés companion Bible	. <b>TIME</b> To all there is a season and a time to every desire under the heavens;...
Hebraic Roots Version	To all there is an appointed time, even a time for every purpose under the heavens:...
Israel Bible <sup>66</sup> JPS (Tanakh—1985) Kaplan Translation Orthodox Jewish Bible <i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	A season is set for everything, a time for every experience under heaven:...
Sefaria Tanakh Tree of Life Version	. For every <i>matter</i> there is an appointed time, even a time for every pursuit under the heavens:...
	For everything there is a season and a time for every activity under heaven:...

### Weird English, Old English, Anachronistic English Translations:

Alpha & Omega Bible	(A time for everything) TO ALL THINGS THERE IS A TIME, AND A SEASON FOR EVERY MATTER UNDER HEAVEN.
Awful Scroll Bible	There are to be appointed times, even the occasions of time for pursuits under the expanse:...
Charles Thompson OT Concordant Literal Version	. For everything there is a stated time, And a season for every event under the heavens:"
Darby Translation exeGesés companion Bible Orthodox Jewish Bible	. To every thing there is a zeman (time), and an et (season) for every matter under Shomayim;...
Rotherham's <i>Emphasized B.</i>	For, every thing, there is a season,—and a time for every pursuit, under the heavens:—...
Third Millennium Bible	.

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	A Time for Everything There is a season (a time appointed) for everything and a time for every delight <i>and</i> event <i>or</i> purpose under heaven—...
The Expanded Bible	There Is a Time for Everything There is a ·time [season] for everything, and ·everything [every activity] ·on earth [ <sup>L</sup> under heaven] has its ·special season [time].
Kretzmann's Commentary	<b>Verses 1-11</b> The Dependence of Man Upon the Course of NatuRev [natural revelation?]. 1. To everything, all that men undertake or do on earth, there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven, under the government and providence of God.
Syndein/Thieme	{5th Experiment of Solomon - to find Happiness in the Cosmic System - Time Orientation}

<sup>65</sup> With Rashi's [Commentary](#).

<sup>66</sup> The Israel Bible ([link](#)) and the Sefaria Tanakh ([link](#)) appear to be the same translation.



Every thing has an allotted time.

There is a time for every pleasure under heaven:...

The Voice

**Teacher:** For everything *that happens in life*—there is a season, a right time for everything under heaven:.

### Bible Translations with Many Footnotes:

The Complete Tanach<sup>67</sup>

Everything has an appointed season, and there is a time for every matter under the heaven.

**Everything has an appointed season:** Let not the gatherer of wealth from vanity rejoice, for even though it is in his hand now, the righteous will yet inherit it; only the time has not yet arrived, for everything has an appointed season when it will be.

**for every matter:** Heb. מְאֵדָה, for every thing. All things are called מְאֵדָה in the language of the Mishnah.

The Geneva Bible

To every [thing there is] a <sup>(a)</sup> season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:...

<sup>(a)</sup> He speaks of this diversity of time for two causes first to declare that there is nothing in this world perpetual: next to teach us not to be grieved, if we have not all things at once according to our desires, neither enjoy them so long as we would wish.

Kaplan Translation  
NET Bible®

*A Time for All Events in Life*

For everything<sup>1</sup> there is an appointed time,<sup>2</sup>  
and an appropriate time<sup>3</sup> for every activity<sup>4</sup> on earth:<sup>5</sup>...

<sup>1st</sup> Verse 1 is arranged in an ABB'A' chiasm (לְכֹל תִּשְׁעוּ לְזֶמַּן וְלָכֹל לְזֶמַּן, lakkol zýman vÿ'et lÿkhol-khefets): (A) "for everything"; (B) "a season"; (B') "a time"; (A') "for every matter." The terms "season" (זָמַן, zýman) and "time" (עֵת, 'et) are parallel. In the light of its parallelism with "every matter" (כָּל־מְאֵדָה, khol-khefets), the term "everything" (לְכֹל, khol) must refer to events and situations in life.

<sup>2nd</sup> The noun זָמַן (zýman) denotes "appointed time" or "appointed hour" (HALOT 273 s.v. זָמַן; BDB 273 s.v. זָמַן; see Eccl 3:1; Esth 9:27, 31; Neh 2:6; Sir 43:7), e.g., the appointed or designated time for the Jewish feasts (Esth 9:27, 31), the length of time that Nehemiah set for his absence from Susa (Neh 2:6), and the appointed times in the Jewish law for the months to begin (Sir 43:7). It is used in parallelism with דְּעוּמָה ("appointed time"), i.e., חֲרֵי דְעוּמָה ("the appointed time of the moon") parallels קֶה יִנְמָה ("the appointed times of the law"; Sir 43:7). The related verb, a Pual of זָמַן (zaman), means "to be appointed" (HALOT 273 s.v. זָמַן; e.g. Ezra 10:14; Neh 10:35; 13:31. These terms may be related to the noun לְזִמְמָה (zimmah, "plan; intention"; Job 17:11; HALOT 272 s.v. לְזִמְמָה) and מְזִמְמָה (mÿzimmah, "purpose; plan; project"), e.g., the purposes of God (Job 42:2; Jer 23:20; 30:24; 51:11) and man's plan (Isa 5:12); see HALOT 566 s.v. מְזִמְמָה; BDB 273 s.v. מְזִמְמָה.

<sup>3rd</sup> Verses 1-8 refer to God's appointed time-table for human activities or actions whose most appropriate time is determined by men. Verses 9-15 state that God is ultimately responsible for the time in which events in human history occur. This seems to provide a striking balance between the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. Man does what God has willed, but man also does what he "pleases" (see note on the word "matter" in 3:1).

<sup>3rd</sup> The noun עֵת ('et, "point in time") has a basic two-fold range of meanings: (1) "time of an event" and (2) "time for an event" (BDB 773 s.v. עֵת). The latter has subcategories: (a) "usual time," (b) "the proper, suitable or appropriate time," (c) "the appointed time," and (d) "uncertain time" (Eccl 9:11). Here it connotes "a proper, suitable time for an event" (HALOT 900 s.v. עֵת 6; BDB s.v. עֵת 2.b). Examples: "the time for rain" (Ezra 10:13), "a time of judgment for the nations" (Ezek 30:3), "an appropriate time for every occasion" (Eccl 3:1), "the time when mountain goats are born" (Job 39:1), "the rain in its season" (Deut 11:14; Jer 5:24), "the time for the harvest" (Hos 2:11; Ps 1:3), "food in its season" (Ps 104:27), "no one knows his hour of destiny" (Eccl 9:12), "the right moment" (Eccl 8:5); cf. HALOT 900 s.v. עֵת 6.

<sup>67</sup> This is from <https://www.chabad.org> and includes the commentary of Rashi.

<sup>4th</sup> The noun נְהַי (khefets, here “matter, business”) has a broad range of meanings: (1) “delight; joy,” (2) “desire; wish; longing,” (3) “the good pleasure; will; purpose,” (4) “precious stones” (i.e., jewelry), i.e., what someone takes delight in, and (5) “matter; business,” as a metonymy of adjunct to what someone takes delight in (Eccl 3:1, 17; 5:7; 8:6; Isa 53:10; 58:3, 13; Pss 16:3; 111:2; Prov 31:13); see HALOT 340 s.v. נְהַי 4; BDB 343 s.v. נְהַי 4. It is also sometimes used in reference to the “good pleasure” of God, that is, his sovereign plan, e.g., Judg 13:23; Isa 44:28; 46:10; 48:14 (BDB 343 s.v. נְהַי). While the theme of the sovereignty of God permeates Eccl 3:1–4:3, the content of 3:1-8 refers to human activities that are planned and purposed by man. The LXX translated it with πράγματι (pragmati, “matter”). The term is translated variously by modern English versions: “every purpose” (KJV, ASV), “every event” (NASB), “every delight” (NASB margin), “every affair” (NAB), “every matter” (RSV, NRSV), “every activity” (NEB, NIV), “every project” (MLB), and “every experience” (NJPS).  
<sup>5th</sup> Heb “under heaven.”

New American Bible (2011) .

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Benner's Mechanical Trans.	.
Charles Thompson OT	Time is for all things: but there is a particular portion of time for every particular affair under heaven;...
C. Thompson (updated) OT	.
College Press Bible Study	There is an appointed time for everything, And there is a time for every event under heaven—
...	
Concordant Literal Version	.
Context Group Version	For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the skies:...
Darby Translation	.
<i>Emphasized Bible</i>	.
English Standard Version	.
English Standard V. – UK	.
Evidence Bible	.
Green's Literal Translation	.
Modern English Version	.
Modern KJV	.
New American Standard B.	<b>A Time for Everything</b> There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event [Lit <i>delight</i> ] under heaven—...
New European Version	<b>A Time for All Things.</b> For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven:...
New King James Version	<b>Everything Has Its Time</b> To everything <i>there is</i> a season, A time for every purpose under heaven:...
Niobi Study Bible	.
Owen's Translation	.
Restored Holy Bible 6.0	.
Third Millennium Bible	.
Updated Bible Version 2.11	.
A Voice in the Wilderness	.
Webster's Bible Translation	.
World English Bible	.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	.
Young's Updated LT	To everything--a season, and a time to every delight under the heavens:...

**The gist of this passage:** There is a time for every event which takes place under heaven.

Gary H. Everett: Solomon begins by making a general summary of about the divinely orchestrated seasons in the affairs of mankind.<sup>68</sup>

### Ecclesiastes 3:1a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to</i>	directional/relational/possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
kôl (כָּל) [pronounced kohl]; also kol (כֹּל) [pronounced kol]	<i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
z <sup>e</sup> mân (זֶמַן) [pronounced zehm-AWN]	<i>appointed time, set time, time; season, occasion</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2165 BDB #273

This is a rare word, found only 4x in Scripture: twice in Esther, once in Nehemiah and here.

Barnes: *The rare word translated "season" means emphatically "fitting time" (compare Neh. 2:6; Esther 9:27, 31).*<sup>69</sup> Perhaps that could be updated to *the right time*. Or we might understand this to mean, *there is a time and place for all legitimate human activity*.

E. W. Bullinger: *a season = an appointed time. Hebrew. z<sup>e</sup>mân. Compare Ezra 10:14. Neh. 2:6. Est. 9:27. A word is not necessarily a "later" word, because there has not been occasion for it to be used, or needed before.*<sup>70</sup> See [App-76](#) in the addendum.

Dunagan: *"appointed time"—a fixed, definite portion of time, especially, a stated time.*<sup>71</sup>

Whedon: *To every thing — Better, To every enterprise, or undertaking.*<sup>72</sup>

**Translation:** [\[There is\] a season for everything...](#)

This first verse seems like a title to me for the 7 verses which follow.

The word found here is zemân (זֶמַן) [pronounced zehm-AWN], which means, *appointed time, set time, time; season, occasion*. It is a rare word, found only found 4x in Scripture (and only once in Ecclesiastes). Strong's #2165 BDB #273. For all activity which takes place on earth, there appears to be a set apart time for it.

Despite the various ways this first half of the chapter is understood, the writer appears to be making true statements throughout.

The concentration in this poem/song is on activities of men or activities involving men. We are not looking at a *time for snow, a time for rain*.

Ecclesiastes 3:1a [\[There is\] a season for everything...](#)

<sup>68</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1.

<sup>69</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1.

<sup>70</sup> E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, exx 3:1.

<sup>71</sup> Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1.

<sup>72</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1.

### Ecclesiastes 3:1a There is a season... (various commentators)

Rev. Joseph Benson: *[This season is a] certain time appointed by God for its being and continuance, which no human wisdom or providence can alter. And by virtue of this appointment of God, all vicissitudes which happen in the world, whether comforts or calamities, come to pass; which is here added to prove the principal proposition, that all things below are vain, and happiness is not to be found in them, because of their great uncertainty, and mutability, and transitoriness, and because they are so much out of the reach and power of men, and wholly in the disposal of God.*<sup>73</sup>

Dr. Thomas Constable: *"Event" (Ecclesiastes 3:1) means human activity that one engages in by deliberate choice. Each of these events has its proper time and duration.*<sup>74</sup>

Dr. John Gill: *To every thing there is a season,.... A set determined time, when everything shall come into being, how long it shall continue, and in what circumstances; all things that have been, are, or shall be, were foreordained by God, and he has determined the times before appointed for their being, duration, and end; which times and seasons he has in his own power.*

Gill continues: *[T]here was a determined time for the whole universe, and for all persons and things in it; a settled fixed moment for the world to come into being; for it did not exist from everlasting, nor of itself, nor was formed by the fortuitous concourse of atoms, but by the wisdom and power of God; nor could it exist sooner or later than it did; it appeared when it was the will of God it should; in the beginning he created it, and he has fixed the time of its duration and end; for it shall not continue always, but have an end, which when it will be, he only knows.*

Dr. John Gill concludes: *[There is a season for] for the reign and ruin of antichrist; for the reign of Christ on earth, and for his second coming to judgment, though of that day and hour knows no man: and as there is a set time in the counsels and providence of God for these more important events, so for every thing of a lesser nature.*<sup>75</sup>

Matthew Henry: *[This is the] general proposition [that Solomon] laid down: To every thing there is a season, Ecclesiastes 3:1. 1. Those things which seem most contrary the one to the other will, in the revolution of affairs, each take their turn and come into play. The day will give place to the night and the night again to the day. Is it summer? It will be winter. Is it winter? Stay a while, and it will be summer. Every purpose has its time. The clearest sky will be clouded,... Joy succeeds sorrow; and the most clouded sky will clear up.*<sup>76</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *Every thing refers especially to men's movements and actions, and to what concerns them.*<sup>77</sup>

Trapp: *To everything there is a season.] A set time, such as we can neither alter nor order. This is one of those keys that God carries under his own belt. {Acts 1:7} To seek, to do, or get anything before the time, is to pull apples before they are ripe.*<sup>78</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1 (slightly edited).

<sup>74</sup> Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>75</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1 (slightly edited).

<sup>76</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.

<sup>77</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1.

<sup>78</sup> John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1.



### Ecclesiastes 3:1a There is a season... (various commentators)

Dr. Bob Utley: *"There is an appointed time for everything" The "appointed time" (lit. "for everything a season") seems to refer to the common events of human life. The "appointed time" does not speak of the advantageous human time, but of the divinely appointed time. The emphasis of this chapter is on divine appointment. It speaks of the mystery of human effort ("under heaven") as it is compared with the sovereignty of God. In Wisdom Literature "appointed time" is often "appropriate time."*<sup>79</sup>

John Wesley: *A season - A certain time appointed by God for its being and continuance, which no human wit or providence can alter. And by virtue of this appointment of God, all vicissitudes which happen in the world, whether comforts or calamities, come to pass.*<sup>80</sup>

David was a wonderful example of a man who understood this. At a very young age, God told him that he would become king over Israel. However, instead of embarking on a mission to remove Saul from office, David waited for God to do that—then he stepped up.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

**Ecclesiastes 3:1a To everything there is a season** (Bible journaling); from [Pinterest](#); accessed March 22, 2020

<sup>79</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1.

<sup>80</sup> John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1.



## Ecclesiastes 3:1b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ or ו) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
êth (עַתָּה) [pronounced gayth]	time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
<p>The NET Bible: The noun עַתָּה ('et, "point in time") has a basic two-fold range of meanings: (1) "time of an event" and (2) "time for an event" (BDB 773 s.v. עַתָּה). The latter has subcategories: (a) "usual time," (b) "the proper, suitable or appropriate time," (c) "the appointed time," and (d) "uncertain time" (Eccl 9:11). Here it connotes "a proper, suitable time for an event" (HALOT 900 s.v. עַתָּה 6; BDB s.v. עַתָּה 2.b). Examples: "the time for rain" (Ezra 10:13), "a time of judgment for the nations" (Ezek 30:3), "an appropriate time for every occasion" (Eccl 3:1), "the time when mountain goats are born" (Job 39:1), "the rain in its season" (Deut 11:14; Jer 5:24), "the time for the harvest" (Hos 2:11; Ps 1:3), "food in its season" (Ps 104:27), "no one knows his hour of destiny" (Eccl 9:12), "the right moment" (Eccl 8:5); cf. HALOT 900 s.v. עַתָּה 6.<sup>81</sup></p>			
lâmed (ל) [pronounced le]	to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to	directional/relational/possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
kôl (כָּל) [pronounced kohl]	every, each, all of, all; any of, any; some have translated, all manner of	masculine singular construct not followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
chêphets (חֵפֶצִים) [pronounced KHAY-fets]	a delight, a pleasure; desire; will; pursuit, ardor, affair; matter; something precious	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2656 BDB #343

NASB "event"; NKJV "purpose"; NRSV, LXX "matter"; TEV "happens"; NJB "occupation"; REB "activity."

Dr. Bob Utley: The Hebrew word (BDB 343) means "delight" or "pleasure," but here it has the added connotation of activity that brings joy (cf. Ecclesiastes 3:17; Ecclesiastes 8:6; Prov. 31:13). Enjoy life each day! Smell the roses along the path.<sup>82</sup>

The NET Bible: The noun חֵפֶצִים (khefets, here "matter, business") has a broad range of meanings: (1) "delight; joy," (2) "desire; wish; longing," (3) "the good pleasure; will; purpose," (4) "precious stones" (i.e., jewelry), i.e., what someone takes delight in, and (5) "matter; business," as a metonymy of adjunct to what someone takes delight in (Eccl 3:1, 17; 5:7; 8:6; Isa 53:10; 58:3, 13; Pss 16:3; 111:2; Prov 31:13); see HALOT 340 s.v. חֵפֶצִים 4; BDB 343 s.v. חֵפֶצִים 4. It is also sometimes used in reference to the "good pleasure" of God, that is, his sovereign plan, e.g., Judg 13:23; Isa 44:28; 46:10; 48:14 (BDB 343 s.v. חֵפֶצִים). While the theme of the sovereignty of God permeates Eccl 3:1–4:3, the content of 3:1–8 refers to human activities that are planned and purposed by man. The LXX translated it with πράγματι (pragmati, "matter"). The term is translated variously by modern English versions: "every purpose" (KJV, ASV), "every event" (NASB), "every delight" (NASB margin), "every affair" (NAB), "every matter" (RSV, NRSV), "every activity" (NEB, NIV), "every project" (MLB), and "every experience" (NJPS).<sup>83</sup>

John Wesley: Purpose - Not only natural, but even the voluntary actions of men, are ordered and disposed by God. But it must be considered, that he does not here speak of a time allowed by God, wherein all the following things may lawfully be done, but only of a time fixed by God, in which they are actually done.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>81</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc3.htm> (footnote); accessed March 5, 2020.

<sup>82</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1.

<sup>83</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc3.htm> (footnote); accessed March 5, 2020.

<sup>84</sup> John Wesley; Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible; courtesy of e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1.



## Ecclesiastes 3:1b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
Chêphets is also alleged to be a later word, a problem that E. W. Bullinger deals with in <a href="#">App-76</a> .			
tachath (תַּחַת) [pronounced TAH-khahth]	<i>underneath, below, under, beneath; instead of, in lieu of; in the place [in which one stands]; in exchange for; on the basis of</i>	preposition of location or foundation	Strong's #8478 BDB #1065
shâmayîm (שָׁמַיִם) [pronounced shaw-MAH-yim]	<i>heaven, heavens, skies; the visible heavens, as in as abode of the stars or as the visible universe, the sky, atmosphere, etc.; Heaven (as the abode of God)</i>	masculine dual noun with the definite article	Strong's #8064 BDB #1029

**Translation:** ...and a time for every matter under the heavens.

Every matter and every delight, pleasure or act of will, seems to have time designated for it.

E. W. Bullinger: *This expression "under the heavens" is peculiar to this book, and occurs 29 times: (Ecclesiastes 1:3, 9, 14 2:11, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22 3:16 4:1, 3, 7, 15 5:13, 18 6:1, 12 8:9, 15, 17 9:3, 6, 9, 11, 13 10:5). It is equivalent to "upon the earth" (Ecclesiastes 5:2 8:14, 16 10:7 11:2, 11:3). It refers to all that is connected with earthly things as such, and with man apart from God, but what is stated is inspired truth. If what is stated here seems to be a "discrepancy" when compared with other scriptures, then these latter must be dealt with and reconciled and harmonized as other supposed "discrepancies" usually are; not cast aside as uninspired. It may be that it is man's theology which has yet to be conformed to these inspired statements.*<sup>85</sup>

Ecclesiastes 3:1b ...and a time for every matter under the heavens.

### Ecclesiastes 3:1b And a time to every purpose under heaven (commentators)

Rev. Joseph Benson: *Not only things natural, but even the voluntary actions of men, are ordered and disposed by God. But it must be considered, that he does not here speak of a time allowed by God, wherein all the following things may lawfully be done, but only of a time fixed by God, in which they are actually done.*<sup>86</sup>

Dr. John Gill: *...and a time to every purpose under the heaven; to every purpose of man that is carried into execution; for some are not, they are superseded by the counsel of God; some obstruction or another is thrown in the way of them, so that they cannot take place; God withdraws men from them by affliction or death, when their purposes are broken; or by some other way; and what are executed he appoints a time for them, and overrules them to answer some ends of his own; for things the most contingent, free, and voluntary, fall under the direction and providence of God.*

Gill continues: *[Furthermore] there is a time for every purpose of his own; all things done in the world are according to his purposes, which are within himself wisely formed, and are eternal and unfrustrable; and there is a time fixed for the execution of them, for every purpose respecting all natural and civil things in providence; and for every purpose of his grace, relating to the redemption of his people, the effectual calling of them, and the bringing them to eternal glory; which are the things that God wills, that he takes delight and pleasure in.*<sup>87</sup>

<sup>85</sup> E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 1:3.

<sup>86</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1.

<sup>87</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1 (slightly edited).



## Ecclesiastes 3:1b And a time to every purpose under heaven (commentators)

Matthew Poole: *To every purpose, or will, or desire, to wit, of man; to all men's designs. attempts, and businesses. Not only natural, but even the free and voluntary actions of men, are ordered and disposed by God to accomplish his own purpose. But it must be considered, that he does not here speak of a time allowed by God, wherein all the following things may lawfully be done, which is wholly besides his scope and business; but only of a time fixed by God, in which they would or should be done.*<sup>88</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *Purpose; chephets, originally meaning "delight," "pleasure," in the later Hebrew came to signify "business," "thing," "matter."*<sup>89</sup>

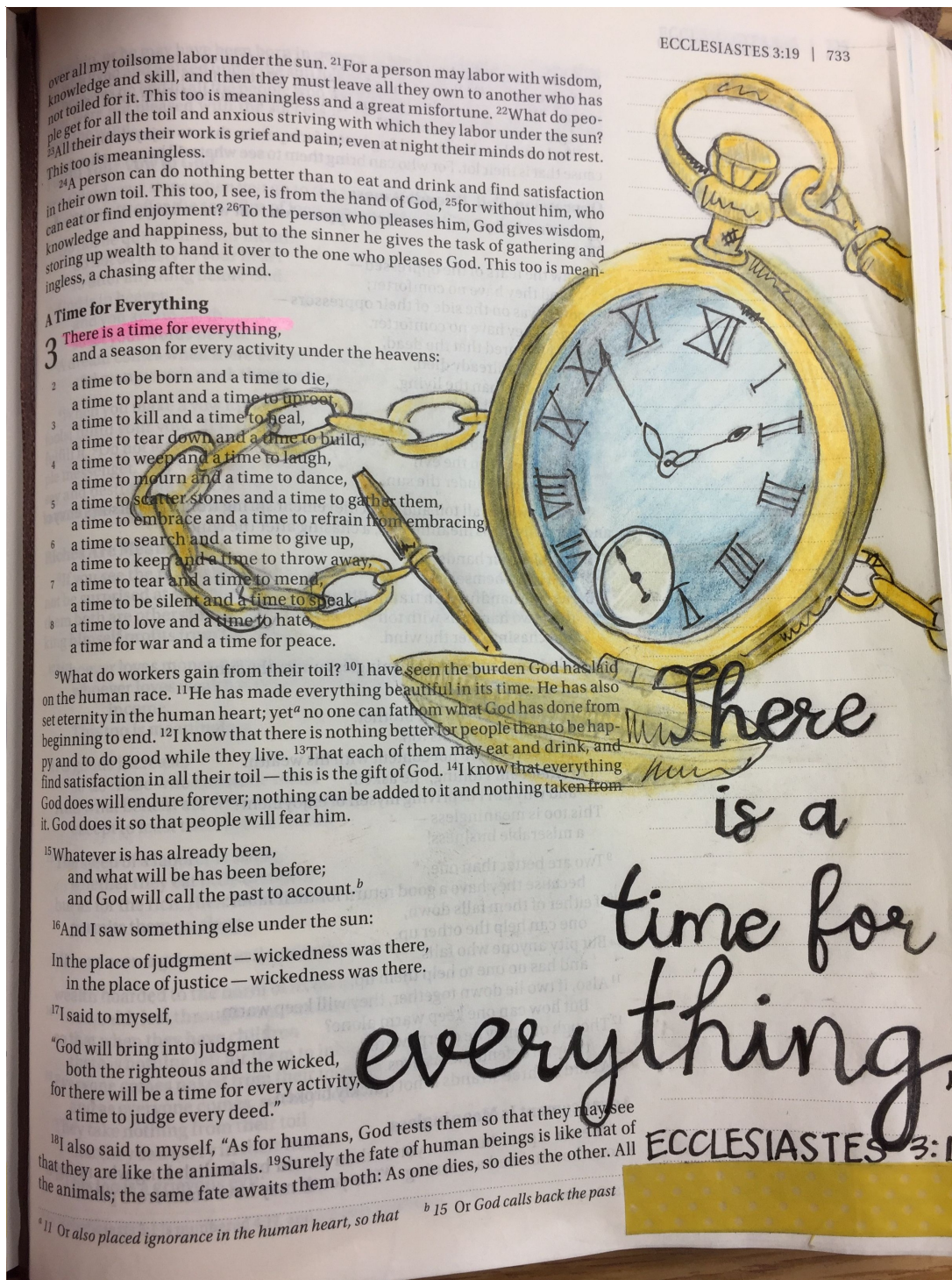
[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 3:1 [\[There is\] a season for everything and a time for every matter under the heavens.](#)

<sup>88</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1 (slightly edited).

<sup>89</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1.



**Ecclesiastes 3:1 There is a time for everything** (Bible journaling); from [Pinterest](#); accessed March 22, 2020.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Solomon, I believe, thought of himself as a philosopher; and these are some of the observations which he made as a man under the sun. Observations made by a philosopher are not necessarily wrong.

These two phrases appear to express the same thought with different words.



**Application:** Those who are familiar with R. B. Thieme, Jr. know that he used to study 8, 10, 12 hours a day, and the depth and excellence of his teaching was a testimony to that. I study and write 3–5 hours each day. No idea about Bobby, Joe Griffin, Robert Dean or any other doctrinal teacher. Does this mean that all believers need to be similarly involved, time-wise, in spiritual pursuits? *Absolutely not!* God gives every man (and woman) a life, and that is taken up by a myriad of responsibilities (I have such responsibilities in my own life, and so does every doctrinal teacher). We live our lives as provided by God, not feeling guilty because we enjoy good times with our family or spend a considerable time at work or sleeping or whatever. The average believer needs accurate Bible teaching in a reasonable amount periodically. It is my opinion this ought to be 30 min. to an hour (or slightly more) each day. As believers involved in a variety of lives, we take advantage of what our pastor-teacher has provided for us; and whatever supplementary material is reasonable (we might listen to previous lessons, we might want to review our notes, we may want to read related reference books, whatever). We are exposed to perhaps 16 hours of human viewpoint every day; the cosmic system seeks to take us captive to its way of thinking every chance that it can. We need enough truth in order to continue to grow spiritually each day and in order to deal with the lies and falsehood which is placed in our periphery.

**Application:** I fully realize that most believers attend church once a week and get a 20 minute sermon and some singing—at best. In no way is that enough. You wonder why America is in such a precarious position today; you wonder why our schools are teaching anti-God perversions in the classroom and calling it sexual education? That is a result of believers not having enough Bible doctrine in their souls.

Isa. 5:13 *Therefore my people go into exile for lack of knowledge; their honored men go hungry, and their multitude is parched with thirst.* The hunger and thirst here is for divine revelation; Bible doctrine.

Hosea 4:6 *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to Me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.* (ESV; capitalized) The law of God was divine revelation for the people of Israel. Bible doctrine, from the Old and New Testaments, is our revelation, and we need it even more than the food we eat.

Matt. 4:4 *But Jesus answered, "It stands written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'* (Deuteronomy 8:3)



**Ecclesiastes 3:1** (a graphic); from [A Little Perspective](#); accessed March 23, 2020.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 *There is a season for everything and a time for every matter under the heavens.*

Ecclesiastes 3:1 *[There is] a season for everything and a time for every matter under the heavens.*

## Ecclesiastes 3:1 There is a season and there is a time (various commentators)

The Cambridge Bible: *[To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose]* The two Hebrew nouns stand to each other in much the same relation as the Greek χρόνος and καιρός, the former expressing a period of duration, the latter the appointed time at which an event happens. Accepting this view, the words “season” and “time” in the A. V. ought, perhaps, to change places.

The Cambridge Bible continues: *[I]t is wisdom to do the right thing at the right time, that inopportuneness is the bane of life.*<sup>90</sup>

College Press Bible Study: *This verse acknowledges what has previously been taught: there is nothing new under the sun, and God seeks that which is past (Ecclesiastes 1:9; Ecclesiastes 3:15). The events peculiar to every generation are set forth. No intention is made for chronological order or arrangement. Each generation may experience different events at varying times, but generally speaking each generation will experience all the events.*<sup>91</sup>

Gary H. Everett: *King Solomon now acknowledges that God has a purpose (or calling) for people based upon His divine intervention in the affairs of mankind. He now attempts to understand the meaning of life in light of God's divine intervention, which the Preacher calls “seasons” and “purpose under heaven.”*<sup>92</sup>

Matthew Henry: *[For] every change concerning us, with the time and season of it, is unalterably fixed and determined by a supreme power; and we must take things as they come, for it is not in our power to change what is appointed for us.*<sup>93</sup>

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *[Just] as there is a fixed “season” in God's “purposes” (for example, He has fixed the “time” when man is “to be born,” and “to die,” Ecclesiastes 3:2), so there is a lawful “time” for man to carry out his “purposes” and inclinations.*<sup>94</sup>

Kidwell: *This verse is not intended to suggest that all things are pre-determined or that man has no choice in arranging certain times and events. If this were true, the distinction between the 'good man' and the 'sinner' would be inappropriate. In addition, there would be little meaning given to admonition and rebuke.*<sup>95</sup>

A. H. Moment: *[T]his earth, as it now exists, is under a [Divine] management that is sufficient, perfect!—a management of which it can be said: “A sparrow cannot fall to the ground without notice”—that is, without permission and purpose.*<sup>96</sup>

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *Season signifies a certain period or term; time denotes a division of time in general.*<sup>97</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *“Season” and “time” are rendered by the LXX. καιρός and χρόνος. The word for “season” (zeman), denotes a fixed, definite portion of time; while eth, “time,” signifies rather the beginning of a period, or is used as a general appellation. The two ideas are sometimes concurrent in the New Testament; e.g. Acts 1:7; 1Thess. 5:1.*

<sup>90</sup> The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1.

<sup>91</sup> The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>92</sup> Gary H. Everett Gary Everett's Bible Commentary; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>93</sup> Matthew Henry, Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.

<sup>94</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible; 1871; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1.

<sup>95</sup> Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1.

<sup>96</sup> The Biblical Illustrator; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (slightly edited).

<sup>97</sup> The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.



## Ecclesiastes 3:1 There is a season and there is a time (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *The proposition is—In human affairs Providence arranges the moment when everything shall happen, the duration of its operation, and the time appropriate thereto. The view of the writer takes in the whole circumstances of men's life from its commencement to its close. But the thought is not, as some have opined, that there is naught but uncertainty, fluctuation, and imperfection in human affairs,...for many of the circumstances mentioned, e.g. birth and death, are entirely beyond men's will and control.*

The Pulpit Commentary concludes: *Koheleth is confirming his assertion, made in the last chapter, that wisdom, wealth, success, happiness, etc; are not in man's hands, that his own efforts can secure none of them—they are distributed at the will of God. He establishes this dictum by entering into details, and showing the ordering of Providence and the supremacy of God in all men's concerns, the most trivial as well as the most important...Koheleth intimates, without attempting to reconcile, the great crux of man's free-will and God's decree.*<sup>98</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *The times and seasons of life [are] appointed by and known only to God. As in the material and natural world the Creator hath appointed times and seasons, as, e.g; to the heavenly bodies for their rising and setting (Psalm 104:19), to plants for their growing and decaying, and to animals for their instinctive actions (Job 39:1, Job 39:2; Jer. 8:7), so in the human and spiritual world has he ordained the same (Acts 17:26; Eph. 1:10; Tit. 1:3); and these times and seasons, both in the natural and in the spiritual world, hath God reserved to himself (Acts 1:7).*<sup>99</sup>

Whedon: *Season... time — Denoting a fixed time, an appointed season. The Great Ordainer has balanced human affairs by setting one thing over against another, and writing this law of changefulness upon the animal and vegetable kingdoms, upon the processes of inanimate nature, and upon the instincts and judgments of mankind.*<sup>100</sup>

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

One might see this as Solomon's underlying question.

## There is a season and time; but what about free will? (W. Clarkson)

There is a season, an "appointed time for every undertaking" (Cox). "What profit has he that works," when all this "travail" with which "the sons of men" are exercised results in such fixed and inevitable changes? That is the spirit of the moralist here. We reply:

1. That it is indeed true that much is already appointed for us. We have no power, or but little, over the seasons and the elements of nature, and not very much (individually) over the institutions and customs of the land in which we live; we are compelled to conform our behavior to forces which are superior to our own.
2. But there is a very large remainder of freedom. Within the lines that are laid down by the ordination of Heaven or the "powers that be" on the earth, there is ample scope for free, wise, life-giving choice of action. We are free to choose our own conduct, to form our own character, to determine the complexion and aspect of our life in the sight of God, to decide upon our destiny.

*The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by W. Clarkson; Ecclesiastes 3:1–10 (slightly edited).

<sup>98</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1.

<sup>99</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, homiletics; Ecclesiastes 3:1–9.

<sup>100</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1.

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

All of the things listed below are normal things that all people engage in. Nothing is specifically sinful; nothing is specifically noteworthy or intrinsically good. Interestingly enough, these are 14 sets of opposite things which are a part of almost every person's life.

As I read through the notes and commentary of some of the translations (the Complete Tanakh or R. B. Thieme, Jr./Syndein translation/commentary) I am at once struck with the universal appeal of these words, even though each set of interpretations and commentary are very different.

This is such an amazing passage that a populist folk singer Pete Seeger made it into a **song** and then a LA hippie rock band the Byrds psyched it up and put their **own folk-rock spin** on it (video replete with a-go-go dancers in the background, making dance turns at the appropriate time).

### Ecclesiastes 3:2–8 An introduction to a poem/psalm of Solomon (commentators)

Donald R. Glenn: *The fact that Solomon utilized polar opposites in a multiple of seven and began his list with birth and death is highly significant. The number seven suggests the idea of completeness and the use of polar opposites—a well-known poetic device called merism—suggests totality (cf. Psalm 139:2-3).*<sup>101</sup>

Matthew Henry notes that there are 28 particulars in this song, which corresponds to the moon's revolution around the earth.<sup>102</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *Throughout the succeeding catalogue marked contrasts are exhibited in pairs, beginning with the entrance and close of life, the rest of the list being occupied with events and circumstances which intervene between those two extremities.*<sup>103</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *As no man can predict the day of his death (Gen. 27:2; Matt. 25:13), any more than know beforehand that of his birth, so neither can he fathom beforehand the incidents that shall happen, or the times when they shall fall out during the course of his life (Prov. 27:1). Nor by any precontriving can he change by so much as a hair's breadth the place into which each incident is fitted, or the moment when it shall happen.*<sup>104</sup>

Bear in mind that we have volition and we make choices throughout our lives, and these choices impact much of what happens in our lives.

<sup>101</sup> Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>102</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.

<sup>103</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:2.

<sup>104</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, homiletics; Ecclesiastes 3:1–9.

## Ecclesiastes 3:2–8 An introduction to a poem/psalm of Solomon (commentators)

D. Thomas: *The reader of this passage is forcibly reminded of the substantial identity of man's life in the different ages of the world. Thousands of years have passed since these words were penned, yet to how large an extent does this description apply to human existence in our own day! Organic activities, industrial avocations, social services, are common to every age of man's history. If men withdraw themselves from practical work, and from the duties of the family and the state, without sufficient justification, they are violating the ordinances of the Creator. He has given to every man a place to fill, a work to do, a service of helpfulness to render to his fellow-creatures.*<sup>105</sup>

John Wesley: *[A]ll things below are vain, and happiness is not to be found in them, because of their great uncertainty, and mutability, and transitoriness, and because they are so much out of the reach and power of men, and wholly in the disposal of God.*<sup>106</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

When interpreting each of these activities, we should first reach deep into the past to activities common to man during that era; but to be careful not to become so specific, that an activity described herein is an activity rare for even that day and time. Secondly, we ought to be able to find a current common activity to which the ancient one corresponds (unless that activity—like embracing—is timeless in human history).

**A time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pull up what is planted; a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to break down and a time to build; a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time of mourning and a time of dancing; a time to cast away stones and a time of gathering stones; a time to embrace and a time to be distant from embracing.**

Ecclesiastes  
3:2–5

**[There is] a time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot what was planted; a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to destroy and a time to build; a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time of mourning and a time of dancing; a time to cast away stones and a time of gathering stones; a time to embrace and a time to be distance from embracing.**

**There is a time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot what you have planted; a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to tear something down and a time to build up; a time to weep and a time when you laugh; a time of mourning and a time to dance and celebrate; a time to throw away stones and a time to gather up stones; a time to embrace, but also a time when you are unable to embrace.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)

A time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pull up what is planted; a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to break down and a time to build; a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time of mourning and a time of dancing; a time to cast away stones and a time of gathering stones; a time to embrace and a time to be distant from embracing.

Dead Sea Scrolls

.

Jerusalem targum

.

Targum (Onkelos)

.

Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan)

.

<sup>105</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by D. Thomas; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>106</sup> John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1.

Aramaic Targum	<p>There is a special time to beget sons and daughters, and a special time for killing disobedient and perverse children, to kill them with stones according to the decree of the judges;</p> <p>and an opportune time for planting a tree, and an opportune time for rooting up a planted tree: an opportune time for killing in war, and an opportune time for healing the sick;</p> <p>an opportune time to destroy a building, and an opportune time to build up a ruin: a time to bewep the dead, and an opportune time to be joyful with laughter; an opportune time to mourn over the slain, and an opportune time to dance at nuptials; an opportune time to throw away a heap of stones, and an opportune time to gather stones for a building; an opportune time to embrace a wife, and an opportune time to abstain from embracing her, in the seven days of mourning;...</p>
Revised Douay-Rheims Douay-Rheims 1899 (Amer.)	<p>.</p> <p>A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted.</p> <p>A time to kill, and a time to heal. A time to destroy, and a time to build.</p> <p>A time to weep, and a time to laugh. A time to mourn, and a time to dance.</p> <p>A time to scatter stones, and a time to gather. A time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces.</p>
Aramaic ESV of Peshitta V. Alexander's Aramaic T. Plain English Aramaic Bible Lamsa's Peshitta (Syriac)	<p>.</p> <p>.</p> <p>.</p> <p>...A time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill and a time to heal; a time to tear down and a time to build up; A time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;...</p>
Updated Brenton (Greek)	<p>A time to give birth, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what has been planted;</p> <p>a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to pull down, and a time to build up;</p> <p>a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to lament, and a time to dance;</p> <p>a time to throw stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;...</p>

Significant differences:

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English Easy English	<p>.</p> <p>There is a time to be born. And there is a time to die.</p> <p>There is a time to plant seeds. Then the seeds will grow and they will become plants. And there is a time to pick the plants.</p> <p>There is a time to kill. And there is a time to make people well.</p> <p>There is a time to destroy something. And there is a time to build it again.</p> <p>There is a time to weep. And there is a time to laugh.</p> <p>There is a time to be sad. And there is a time to dance.</p> <p>There is a time to throw stones away. And there is a time to pick them up.</p> <p>There is a time to kiss. And there is a time to say goodbye.</p>
Easy-to-Read Version–2001 Easy-to-Read Version–2006	<p>.</p> <p>There is a time to be born and a time to die.</p> <p>There is a time to plant and a time to pull up plants.</p> <p>There is a time to kill</p>



and a time to heal.  
 There is a time to destroy  
 and a time to build.  
 There is a time to cry  
 and a time to laugh.  
 There is a time to be sad  
 and a time to dance with joy.  
 There is a time to throw weapons down  
 and a time to pick them up. [Literally, "There is a time to throw stones away  
 and a time to gather stones."]

There is a time to hug someone  
 and a time to stop holding so tightly.  
 ...a time to be born and  
 a time to die,  
 a time to plant and  
 a time to pull out what was planted,  
 a time to kill and  
 a time to heal,  
 a time to tear down and  
 a time to build up,  
 a time to cry and  
 a time to laugh,  
 a time to mourn and  
 a time to dance,  
 a time to scatter stones and  
 a time to gather them, [Hebrew meaning of these two lines uncertain.]  
 a time to hug and  
 a time to stop hugging,...

God's Word™

Good News Bible (TEV)

He sets the time for birth and the time for death,  
 the time for planting and the time for pulling up,  
 the time for killing and the time for healing,  
 the time for tearing down and the time for building.  
 He sets the time for sorrow and the time for joy,  
 the time for mourning and the time for dancing,  
 the time for making love and the time for not making love,  
 the time for kissing and the time for not kissing.

The Message

...A right time for birth and another for death,  
 A right time to plant and another to reap,  
 A right time to kill and another to heal,  
 A right time to destroy and another to construct,  
 A right time to cry and another to laugh,  
 A right time to lament and another to cheer,  
 A right time to make love and another to abstain,  
 A right time to embrace and another to part,...

Names of God Bible  
 NIRV

.  
 There is a time to be born.  
 And there's a time to die.  
 There is a time to plant.  
 And there's a time to pull up what is planted.  
 There is a time to kill.  
 And there's a time to heal.  
 There is a time to tear down.  
 And there's a time to build up.  
 There is a time to weep.

And there's a time to laugh.  
 There is a time to be sad.  
 And there's a time to dance.  
 There is a time to scatter stones.  
 And there's a time to gather them.  
 There is a time to embrace someone.  
 And there's a time not to embrace.

New Simplified Bible .

**Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:**

Casual English Bible .

College Press paraphrase

There is a time for all things to be born, and everything in due season will die; man can take advantage of the seasons and plant when he should, but the time will come when that which has been planted will have to be uprooted. Self-discipline and social justice require the destruction of evil, but a time will come when both the people and their land will be healed; so there is also a time to wreck, and tear down that which is beyond repair, and there is a time to build anew. Many events of life will sadden the heart and cause one to weep, just as other events make the heart merry and result in laughter; since death comes to all, there will be seasons of mourning. On occasion, joy shall also overwhelm one and find expression through dancing. There is an appropriate time for making love, and just as appropriately there is a time to refrain; there is a time when an embrace is proper, and also a time when wisdom leads one to refrain from embracing.

Contemporary English V.

There is a time for birth and death, planting and reaping,  
 for killing and healing, destroying and building,  
 for crying and laughing, weeping and dancing,  
 for throwing stones and gathering stones, embracing and parting.

The Living Bible

...A time to be born;  
 A time to die;  
 A time to plant;  
 A time to harvest;  
 A time to kill;  
 A time to heal;  
 A time to destroy;  
 A time to rebuild;  
 A time to cry;  
 A time to laugh;  
 A time to grieve;  
 A time to dance;  
 A time for scattering stones;  
 A time for gathering stones;  
 A time to hug;  
 A time not to hug;...

New Berkeley Version .

New Life Version

There is a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pick what is planted. There is a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up. There is a time to cry, and a time to laugh; a time to have sorrow, and a time to dance. There is a time to throw stones, and a time to gather stones; a time to kiss, and a time to turn from kissing.

New Living Translation .

Unlocked Dynamic Bible

There is the right time for any certain person to be born, and there is the right time for him to die. There is the right time to plant crops, and there is the right time to harvest crops.

There is the right time to kill people, and there is the right time to heal people. There is the right time to tear things down, and there is the right time to build things. There is the right time to cry, and there is the right time to laugh. There is the right time to mourn, and there is the right time to dance joyfully. There is the right time to throw away stones from a field, and there is the right time to gather stones to build walls. There is the right time to embrace people, and there is the right time to keep from embracing them.

Unfolding Bible Simplified .

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible ...There are times to give birth and times that bring death;  
There are times to plant and to harvest;  
There are times to heal and times to destroy;  
There are times to build and tear down;  
There are times to laugh and to cry;  
There are times for mourning and dancing;  
There are times to pick stones and to throw them;  
There are times to hug and times to reject;...

Beck's American Translation .

Common English Bible ...a time for giving birth and a time for dying,  
a time for planting and a time for uprooting what was planted,  
a time for killing and a time for healing,  
a time for tearing down and a time for building up,  
a time for crying and a time for laughing,  
a time for mourning and a time for dancing,  
a time for throwing stones and a time for gathering stones,  
a time for embracing and a time for avoiding embraces,...

New Advent (Knox) Bible Men are born only to die, plant trees only to displant them. Now we take life, now we save it; now we are destroying, now building. Weep first, then laugh, mourn we and dance; the stones we have scattered we must bring together anew; court we first and then shun the embrace.

Translation for Translators There is a time to be born, and there is a time to die.  
There is a time to plant seeds, and there is a time to harvest crops.  
There is a time to kill *people*, and there is a time to heal *people*.  
There is a time to tear things down, and there is a time to build things.  
There is a time to cry, and there is a time to laugh.  
There is a time to mourn, and there is a time to dance *joyfully*.  
There is a time to throw away stones *from a field*, and there is a time to gather stones *to build walls/houses*.  
There is a time to embrace *people*, and there is a time to not embrace *people*.

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Conservapedia Translation ...A time to be born, and a time to die: a time to plant, and a time to harvest;  
A time to Kill, and a time to heal; a time to destroy, and a time to rebuild;  
A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
A time to throw stones away, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;...

Ferrar-Fenton Bible

...A time for birth, and a time for death;  
A time to plant, and a time to uproot;  
A time to wound, and a time to cure  
A time to pull down, and a time to build;  
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;

God's Truth (Tyndale)	<p>A time to mourn, and a time to dance!  A time to pick stones, and a time to cast out:  A time to fold hands, and a time to unfold;...  ...A time to slay, and a time to make whole  A time to break down, and a time to build up.  A time to weep, and a time to laugh:  A time to mourn, and a time to dance:  A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together:  A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;...</p>
HCSB	<p>...a time to give birth and a time to die;  a time to plant and a time to uproot; [Lit <i>uproot what is planted</i>]  a time to kill and a time to heal;  a time to tear down and a time to build;  a time to weep and a time to laugh;  a time to mourn and a time to dance;  a time to throw stones and a time to gather stones;  a time to embrace and a time to avoid embracing;...</p>
International Standard V Jubilee Bible 2000 H. C. Leupold Lexham English Bible	<p>.  .  .  ...a time to bear and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to root up what is planted;  a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to break down and a time to build up;  a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance;  a time to throw away stones and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;...</p>
NIV, ©2011 Peter Pett's translation Unfolding Bible Literal Text Unlocked Literal Bible	<p>.  .  .  There is a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to pull up plants,  a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build up.  There is a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance,  a time to throw away stones and a time to gather stones, a time to embrace other people, and a time to refrain from embracing.</p>
Urim-Thummim Version	<p>A time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted;  A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down and a time to build up;  A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;  A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;...</p>
Wikipedia Bible Project	.

### Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)	<p>A time for giving birth, a time for dying; a time for planting, a time for uprooting.  A time for killing, a time for healing; a time for knocking down, a time for building.  A time for tears, a time for laughter; a time for mourning, a time for dancing.  A time for throwing stones, a time for gathering stones; a time for embracing, a time to refrain from embracing.</p>
The Heritage Bible	<p>...A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what was planted;  A time to strike fatally, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;</p>



	A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to jump for joy; A time to throw out stones, and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace, and a time to widely distance yourself from embracing;...
New American Bible (2002)	.
New American Bible (2011)	A time to give birth, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant. A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to tear down, and a time to build. A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance. A time to scatter stones, and a time to gather them; a time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces.
New English Bible—1970	.
New Jerusalem Bible	A time for giving birth, a time for dying; a time for planting, a time for uprooting what has been planted. A time for killing, a time for healing; a time for knocking down, a time for building. A time for tears, a time for laughter; a time for mourning, a time for dancing. A time for throwing stones away, a time for gathering them; a time for embracing, a time to refrain from embracing.
New RSV	.
Revised English Bible—1989	.

### **Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:**

Complete Jewish Bible	...a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to throw stones and a time to gather stones, a time to embrace and a time to refrain...
exeGeses companion Bible	...a time to birth and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot the planted; a time to slaughter and a time to heal; a time to breach and a time to build; a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to chop and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace and a time to be far from embracing;...
Hebraic Roots Bible	.
The Israel Bible	...A time for being born and a time for dying, A time for planting and a time for uprooting the planted; A time for slaying and a time for healing, A time for tearing down and a time for building up;

A time for weeping and a time for laughing, A time for wailing and a time for dancing;

A time for throwing stones and a time for gathering stones, A time for embracing and a time for shunning embraces;...

3:5 A time for throwing stones

According to the Sages, the phrase, "a time for throwing stones" is a reference to the destruction of Yerushalayim, when its grand walls were reduced to a heap of rocks. The phrase, "and a time to gather stones" refers to the second stage of exile, when King Yechonya, and those exiled with him, carried the stones and earth of Yerushalayim to Babylonia, in order to build synagogues and study halls from the precious and sacred earth of the Holy Land. Additionally, just as God allowed Yerushalayim to be destroyed and reduced to stones, He also allowed the stones to be gathered for Yerushalayim to be built once again.

Israeli Authorized Version .  
Kaplan Translation .  
Sefaria Tanakh .  
*The Scriptures* 1998 .  
Tree of Life Version .

### Weird English, Old English, Anachronistic English Translations:

Alpha & Omega Bible .  
Awful Scroll Bible ...A time to be born, a time to die; a time to plant, a time to pull up that coming to be planted;  
a time to kill, a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;  
a time to weep, a time to laugh; a time to beat ones breast, a time to dance;  
a time to be cause to cast away stones, a time to gather stones; a time to embrace,  
a time to distant oneself from being he who embraces;...

Charles Thompson OT .  
Concordant Literal Version .  
Darby Translation .  
exeGesés companion Bible .  
Orthodox Jewish Bible ...An et (season) to be born, and an et (season) to die; an et (season) to plant, and an et (season) to uproot that which is planted;  
An et (season) to kill, and an et (season) to heal; an et (season) to tear down, and an et (season) to build up;  
An et (season) to weep, and an et (season) to laugh; an et (season) to mourn, and an et (season) to dance;  
An et (season) to throw stones away, and an et (season) to gather stones together;  
an et (season) to embrace, and an et (season) to refrain from embracing;...

Rotherham's *Emphasized B.* .  
Third Millennium Bible .

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

*The Amplified Bible* .  
The Expanded Bible There is a time to be born  
and a time to die.  
There is a time to plant  
and a time to pull up plants [uproot what has been planted].  
There is a time to kill  
and a time to heal.  
There is a time to destroy [tear down]  
and a time to build.

There is a time to cry  
 and a time to laugh.  
 There is a time to ·be sad [mourn]  
 and a time to dance.  
 There is a time to throw away stones  
 and a time to gather them.  
 There is a time to ·hug [embrace]  
 and a time ·not to hug [to refrain from embracing].

Kretzmann's Commentary

...a time to be born, literally, "to bear," and a time to die, as the Lord has arranged;  
 a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted, these seasons being  
 beyond the control of men;  
 a time to kill, by inflicting mortal wounds, and a time to heal; a time to break down,  
 and a time to build up;  
 a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, on account of some grief or  
 bereavement, and a time to dance, to leap for joy;  
 a time to cast away stones, where they encumber the ground, and a time to gather  
 stones together, as for building purposes; a time to embrace, to show one's love  
 and affection, and a time to refrain from embracing, for to show affection to excess  
 is surfeiting;...

Syndein/Thieme

A time to be born, and a time to die.  
 A time to plant and a time to destroy that which was planted.  
 A time to kill and a time to heal.  
 A time to demolish and a time to build.  
 A time to weep and a time to laugh.  
 A time to mourn and a time to dance.  
 A time to throw stones and a time to gather stones.

The Voice

A time for sex and a time to be far away from sex.  
 A time to be born, a time to die;  
 a time to plant, a time to collect the harvest;  
 A time to kill, a time to heal;  
 a time to tear down, a time to build up;  
 A time to cry, a time to laugh;  
 a time to mourn, a time to dance;  
 A time to scatter stones, a time to pile them up;  
 a time for a warm embrace, a time for keeping your distance;.

### Bible Translations with Many Footnotes:

College Press Bible Study  
 The Complete Tanach

.  
 A time to give birth and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot that which  
 is planted.

**A time to give birth:** at nine months.

**and a time to die:** the limit of the years of every generation.

**a time to plant:** a nation and a kingdom.

**and a time to uproot:** A time will come for it to be uprooted.

A time to kill and a time to heal; a time to break and a time to build.

**A time to kill:** an entire nation, when the day of its visitation arrives, as it is said (Isa. 14:30): "and he shall slay your remnant with the sword (sic)."

**and a time to heal:** their ruin, as it is written concerning Egypt (ibid. 19:22): "and they shall return to the Lord, and He shall accept their prayer and heal them."

**a time to break:** the wall of the city, when it is decreed upon it, as it is said (Neh. 1:3): “and the wall of Jerusalem is breached.”

**and a time to build:** as it is said (Amos 9: 11): “and build it up as in the days of yore.”

*A time to weep and a time to laugh; a time of wailing and a time of dancing.*

**A time to weep:** on the ninth of Av.

**and a time to laugh:** in the future, as it is said (Ps. 126:2): “Then our mouths will be filled with laughter.”

**a time of wailing:** in the days of mourning.

**and a time of dancing:** with bridegrooms and brides.

*A time to cast stones and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing.*

**A time to cast stones:** The youths of Israel scattered during the destruction of the Temple: (Lam. 4: 1): “The holy stones are scattered.”

**and a time to gather:** them from the exile, as it is written (Zech. 9:16): “And the Lord God (sic) shall save them on that day like the flocks of his people, for crown stones are exalted on His land.”

**a time to embrace:** (Jer. 13: 11): “For, just as a girdle clings etc.”

**and a time to refrain from embracing:** (Isa. 6:12): “And the Lord removes the people far away.”

The Geneva Bible  
Kaplan Translation  
NET Bible®

...A time to be born,<sup>6</sup> and a time to die;<sup>7</sup>  
a time to plant, and a time to uproot what was planted;  
A time to kill, and a time to heal;  
a time to break down, and a time to build up;  
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn, and a time to dance.

A time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones;  
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;...

<sup>6</sup>in The verb יָלַד (yalad, “to bear”) is used in the active sense of a mother giving birth to a child (HALOT 413 s.v. יָלַד; BDB 408 s.v. יָלַד). However, in light of its parallelism with “a time to die,” it should be taken as a metonymy of cause (i.e., to give birth to a child) for effect (i.e., to be born).

<sup>7</sup>sn In 3:2-8, Qoheleth uses fourteen sets of merisms (a figure using polar opposites to encompass everything in between, that is, totality), e.g., Deut 6:6-9; Ps 139:2-3 (see E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 435).

New American Bible (2011)

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Brenner’s Mechanical Trans. ....

Charles Thompson OT .

C. Thompson (updated) OT .

Context Group Version .

Concordant Literal Version

...A season to be born and a season to die; A season to plant and a season to chop down what is planted,  
A season to kill and a season to heal; A season to breach and a season to build;  
A season to weep and a season to sport; A season to wail and a season to dance;



	A season to fling away stones and a season to collect stones; A season to embrace and a season to stay far from embracing;...
English Standard Version	.
Green's Literal Translation	.
Modern English Version	.
Modern Literal Version	.
Modern KJV	.
New American Standard B.	A time to give birth and a time to die; A time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted. A time to kill and a time to heal; A time to tear down and a time to build up. A time to weep and a time to laugh; A time to mourn and a time to dance. A time to throw stones and a time to gather stones; A time to embrace and a time to shun embracing.
New European Version	.
New King James Version	.
Niobi Study Bible	.
Owen's Translation	.
Restored Holy Bible 6.0	.
Updated Bible Version 2.17	.
A Voice in the Wilderness	.
Webster's Bible Translation	.
World English Bible	.
Young's Literal Translation	A time to bring forth, And a time to die. A time to plant, And a time to eradicate the planted. A time to slay, And a time to heal, A time to break down, And a time to build up. A time to weep, And a time to laugh. A time to mourn, And a time to skip. A time to cast away stones, And a time to heap up stones. A time to embrace, And a time to be far from embracing.

**The gist of this passage:** There is a given time for every sort of event that might take place.  
2-5

Gary H. Everett: *Ecclesiastes 3:2-3 reflects upon King Solomon's conclusion regarding the vanity of his pursuit of wisdom (Ecclesiastes 1:12-18), where he realizes that he cannot control life and death, the seasons of this earth, and good and evil. These are events that God alone has determined and can judge.*<sup>107</sup>

Ecclesiastes 3:2a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
‘êth (עַתָּה) [pronounced gayth]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to</i>	directional/relational/ possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
yâlad (יָלַד) [pronounced yaw-LAHd]	<i>to give birth, to bear, to be born, to bear, to bring forth, to beget</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #3205 BDB #408

**Translation:** [There is] a time to be born...

<sup>107</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:2–3.

This song begins with the terminal points of life. We are born, and then our life begins.

### **Ecclesiastes 3:2a A time to give birth; a time to be born (various commentators)**

College Press Bible Study: *The Hebrew word rendered “be born” is passive and would best be translated “give birth.” This idea is more in harmony with the parallel “time to plant” and therefore comes close to the original idea. The purpose is to illustrate the beginning and end of a thing. Everything else happens between these two events. While “birth” represents the animal kingdom and “plant” represents the vegetable kingdom, the intention is not to be comprehensive of all things, but rather representative of beginnings and ends.*<sup>108</sup>

Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Commentary: *How immense is the difference between the circumstances of one human being and another!—and yet this is made by, what seems to us, the mere accident of birth. “This babe to be hail’d and woo’d as a Lord, and that to be shunn’d like a leper!” Thus the Supreme Power determines the “bounds of our habitation” by appointing the time and place where we shall make our entrance upon life.*

The Preacher’s Commentary continues: *Each human soul born into the world is an entirely new product. It never existed before. Matter continues the same through all changes and evolutions, but souls are strictly new. The observation of this common fact prepares the mind to accept the great mystery of creation.*<sup>109</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary seems to give both opinions: *The words rendered, “a time to be born,” might more naturally mean “a time to bear;” καιρὸς τοῦ τεκεῖν, Septuagint; as the verb is in the infinitive active, which, in this particular verb, is not elsewhere found in the passive sense, though other verbs are so used sometimes, as in Jer. 25:34.*<sup>110</sup>

For the believer with doctrine, this is the best time to be alive and to take in the Word of God.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

### **Ecclesiastes 3:2a There is a time to be born (various commentators)**

Dr. J. Hamilton: *There is “a time to be born,” and however much a man may dislike the era on which his existence is cast, he cannot help himself: that time is his, and he must make the most of it. Milton need not complain that his lot is fallen on evil days; for these are his days, and he can have no other. Roger Bacon and Galileo need not grudge their precocious being, that they have been prematurely launched into the age of inquisitors and knowledge-quenching monks—for this age was made to make them. And so with the time to die. Voltaire need not offer half his fortune to buy six weeks’ reprieve; for if the appointed moment has arrived it cannot pass into eternity without taking the sceptic with it. And even good Hezekiah—his tears and prayers would not have turned the shadow backward, had that moment of threatened death been the moment of God’s intention.*<sup>111</sup>

<sup>108</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>109</sup> *The Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (from the suggestive comments).

<sup>110</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:2.

<sup>111</sup> *The Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (from the suggestive comments).

## Ecclesiastes 3:2a There is a time to be born (various commentators)

D. Thomas: *There is nothing so interesting to man as human life. The material creation engages the attention and absorbs the inquiring activities of the student of physical science; but unless it is regarded as the expression of the Divine ideas, the vehicle of thought and purpose, its interest is limited and cold. But what men are and think and do is a matter of concern to every observant and reflecting mind. The ordinary observer contemplates human life with curiosity; the politician, with interested motives; the historian, hoping to find the key to the actions of nations and kings and statesmen; the poet, with the aim of finding material and inspiration for his verse; and the religious thinker, that he may trace the operation of God's providence, of Divine wisdom and love. He who looks below the surface will not fail to find, in the events and incidents of human existence, the tokens of the appointments and dispositions of an all-wise Ruler of the world.*<sup>112</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

There was a very specific time for Jesus to be born. Gal. 4:4–5 **But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.** (ESV; capitalized)<sup>113</sup>

For me, the concept of being born into particular set of environs is a fascinating one to me. A child has nothing to compare his life to. For his or her first few years, they know nothing about poverty, about privilege, about upper class and about working class; they just are; and they are hungry. Any parent, in any environment, can give a child love (God's plan is for there to be a man and a woman providing for the child, just as it required a man and a woman to produce the child in the first place). Furthermore, much of how a child perceives the outside world is very much based upon the teaching of his or her parents. Children can be taught that it is wrong to desire things which do not belong to them; and that material things are very transitory in life. At the same time, a bitter and jealous parent (or parents) can guide the child into angry materialism.

When you have a child, bear in mind, that child knows nothing of the world that it is born into. And its perception of the world as he or she grows is very much based upon the sorts of values that you teach your child.

Certainly, any one of us might make a judgment call and say, "This child is better off in this home for these reasons; and this child is worse off in this other home for those reasons." However, we have had many presidents and successful people rise up from very impoverished environs.

One of the most important things a child can learn is, the person most able to limit his (or her) potential is the person himself (or herself). If you believe yourself to be a failure in life, the person most responsible for that is probably you.

## Ecclesiastes 3:2b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ, or וּ) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
‘êth (עַתָּה) [pronounced gâyth]	time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773

<sup>112</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by D. Thomas; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>113</sup> Gary H. Everett made several excellent suggestions for relevant New Testament Scripture, which I have included throughout the study of this chapter. Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

Ecclesiastes 3:2b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]	to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to	directional/relational/ possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
mûwth (מוֹת) [pronounced mooth]	to die; to perish, to be destroyed; to be put to death; to die prematurely [by neglect of wise moral conduct]	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #4191 BDB #559

**Translation:** ...and a time to die;...

We die, and then our temporal life is over.

### Ecclesiastes 3:2b There is a time to die (various commentators)

Luther: *Believers and Christians know that no tyrant's sword can kill or destroy them, and that before their hour comes no creature whatever can harm them. Hence they do not trouble and worry themselves much about death, but when it comes they die unto the will of God as He pleases, like lambs and young children.*<sup>114</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *There is no question of untimely birth or suicide; in the common order of events birth and death have each their appointed season, which comes to pass without man's interference, being directed by a higher law. "It is appointed unto men once to die" (Heb. 9:27).*<sup>115</sup>

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

### Ecclesiastes 3:2a-b A time to live and a time to die (various commentators)

Clarke: *[I]n all this list there are but two things which may be said to be done generally by the disposal of God, and in which men can have but little influence: the time of birth, and the time of death. But all the others are left to the option of man, though God continues to overrule them by his providence.*<sup>116</sup>

Expositor's Bible Commentary: *The time of birth, for instance, and the time of death, are ordained by a Power over which men have no control; they begin to be, and they cease to be, at hours whose stroke they can neither hasten nor retard.*<sup>117</sup>

<sup>114</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (from the suggestive comments).

<sup>115</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:2.

<sup>116</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1.

<sup>117</sup> *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–15.



## Ecclesiastes 3:2a-b A time to live and a time to die (various commentators)

Matthew Henry: *There is a time to be born and a time to die. These are determined by the divine counsel; and, as we were born, so we must die, at the time appointed, Acts 17:26.*<sup>118</sup>

A. H. Moment: *[The earth's] generations that are born, that live and die—its joys and sorrows—its shifting seasons and rolling years.*<sup>119</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *In the first case the catalogue commences with the beginning of life; in the second, with the season of full maturity: "Those who at one time give life to others, at another have themselves to yield to the law of death" (Wright). The contrast points to the passive rendering.*<sup>120</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *Between the cradle and the grave, instances present themselves in which more things happen than are here recorded, and more designs are attempted and fulfilled than are here contemplated.*<sup>121</sup>

Ray C. Stedman: *None of us asked to be born; it was something done to us, apart from us. None of us ask to die; it is something done to us by God. So this is the way we should view this list of opposites, as a list of what God thinks we ought to have. It begins by pairing birth and death as the boundaries of life, "under the sun."*<sup>122</sup>

D. Thomas: *The believer in God cannot doubt that the Divine Omniscience observes, as the Divine Omnipotence virtually effects, the introduction into this world, and the removal from it, of every human being, Men are born, to show that God will use his own instruments for carrying on the manifold work of the world; they die, to show that he is limited by no human agencies. They are born just when they are wanted, and they die just when it is well that their places should be taken by their successors. "Man is immortal till his work is done."*<sup>123</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

There was a very specific time for Jesus to die: Luke 9:51 When the days drew near for Him to be taken up, He set his face to go to Jerusalem. Heb. 9:26b–28 But as it is, He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him. (ESV; capitalized)

In between birth and death, there are a great many things that we do, which are described in the verses which follow:

Matthew Henry lists this opinion of some: *Some observe that here is a time to be born and a time to die, but no time to live; that is so short that it is not worth mentioning; as soon as we are born we begin to die.*<sup>124</sup> This is quite the ridiculous assertion to make, as everything else which is described is all about people living and what they do in life.

<sup>118</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.

<sup>119</sup> *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>120</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:2.

<sup>121</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, homiletics; Ecclesiastes 3:1–9.

<sup>122</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

<sup>123</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by D. Thomas; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>124</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.

## Ecclesiastes 3:2c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
‘êth (עֵת) [pronounced <i>gayth</i> ]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>le</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to</i>	directional/relational/ possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
nâṭa‘ (נָטַע) [pronounced <i>naw-TAHÇ</i> ]	<i>to set upright; to plant; to place; to fix, to fasten [with a nail]; to pitch [a tent], to set up; figuratively to establish</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #5193 BDB #642

**Translation:** ...a time to plant...

In the agrarian society that Solomon lived in, most people survived through farming. So they had to plant. Very likely, almost everyone had a relationship to a farm or ranch of some sort.

The Pulpit Commentary: *After speaking of human life it is natural to turn to vegetable life, which runs in parallel lines with man's existence. Thus Job, having intimated the shortness of life and the certainty of death, proceeds to speak of the tree, contrasting its revivifying powers with the hopelessness of man's decay (Job 14:5, etc.).*<sup>125</sup>

## Ecclesiastes 3:2d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
wê (or vê) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
‘êth (עֵת) [pronounced <i>gayth</i> ]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>le</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to</i>	directional/relational/ possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
‘âqar (אָקַר) [pronounced <i>gaw-KAHR</i> ]	<i>to pull up, to pluck up [a plant], to root up, to uproot</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #6131 (#5193?) BDB #785
nâṭa‘ (נָטַע) [pronounced <i>naw-TAHÇ</i> ]	<i>something set upright; what is planted; what is placed; what is fix or fasten [with a nail]; the pitching of [a tent], being set up; figuratively being establish</i>	Qal passive participle	Strong's #5193 BDB #642

**Translation:** ...and a time to uproot what was planted;...

One might go through a field and plow under the plants, after they have given up their yield.

<sup>125</sup> The Pulpit Commentary; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:2.

### Ecclesiastes 3:2d A time to uproot that which was planted (various commentators)

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *God has often plucked up the heathen and planted His own people. The Church is a cleared enclosure in the midst of the wilderness of the world. The Heavenly Husbandman will pluck up every plant that is unfit for His garden.*

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary continues: *The growths of sin and error can only flourish for a time. No advantage of situation can give them a title to continuance. The season for plucking up will come, for God must remove them out of His sight.*<sup>126</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *And to pluck up that which is planted.* This last operation may refer to the transplanting of trees and shrubs, or to the gathering of the fruits of the earth in order to make room for new agricultural works. But having regard to the opposition in all the members of the series, we should rather consider the "plucking up" as equivalent to destroying, if we plant trees, a time comes when we cut them down, and this is their final cause. Some commentators see in this clause an allusion to the settling and uprooting of kingdoms and nations, as Jer. 1:10; Jer. 18:9. etc. but this could not have been the idea in Koheleth's mind.<sup>127</sup>

#### Chapter Outline

#### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Interestingly enough, v. 2c and 2d don't say, *a time to work, and a time to play*; they both deal with different aspects of work. In one case, you are working by planting; and in the second case, you are working by pulling up your plants (for whatever reason; to give the more healthy plants more room to grow, perhaps).

There is a right time to plant and to harvest, as Gal. 6:9–10 tells us: *And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

This is implied in Gen. 8:22 (God is speaking) *"While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."* (ESV; capitalized)

### Ecclesiastes 3:2c-d A time to plant and a time to uproot (various commentators)

Expositor's Bible Commentary: *The season for sowing and the season for reaping are fixed with any reference to their wish; they must plant and gather in when the unchangeable laws of nature will permit (Ecclesiastes 3:2).*<sup>128</sup>

Matthew Henry: *[There is a] time for God to plant a nation, as that of Israel in Canaan, and, in order to that, to pluck up the seven nations that were planted there, to make room for them; and at length there was a time when God spoke concerning Israel too, to pluck up and to destroy, when the measure of their iniquity was full, Jer. 18:7, 9.*

<sup>126</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (from the suggestive comments).

<sup>127</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:2.

<sup>128</sup> *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–15.

### Ecclesiastes 3:2c-d A time to plant and a time to uproot (various commentators)

Henry then adds: *There is a time for men to plant, a time of the year, a time of their lives; but, when that which was planted has grown fruitless and useless, it is time to pluck it up.*<sup>129</sup>

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *Used in O. T. as a metaphor to describe the founding and destruction of cities.*<sup>130</sup>

Although certainly this can be taken metaphorically, there is no reason to understand it in that way.

Ray C. Stedman: *The next pair deals with the supply of food: "A time to plant and a time to harvest." Everything must come in its appropriate time. If you get it out of synch you are in trouble. Try to plant a crop in the middle of winter when snow is on the ground and it will not grow. Half of the problem of life is that we are constantly trying to run this schedule ourselves. But God has already planned the schedule. There is an appropriate time for everything.*<sup>131</sup>

Stedman sees the uprooting as harvesting.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 3:2 [There is] a time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot what was planted;...

### Ecclesiastes 3:2 Being born, dying, planting, uprooting (various commentators)

Gary H. Everett: *In Ecclesiastes 3:2 the king deals with the issues of life and death, and with the seasons of planting and harvesting, which often determined life and death in these ancient world.*<sup>132</sup>

Gary H. Everett: *Even with modern science and technology, man still cannot understand how life begins, nor can he conquer death; neither can he control the seasons and weather under creation. He cannot determine the days of the year to plant, nor the days to harvest. This timing is left up to the seasons that only God controls (Gen. 8:22).*<sup>133</sup>

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Dr. Peter Pett: *[T]he next five [pairs] contrast what is the dark side with what is the light side. Killing, breaking down, weeping, mourning and casting stones on to a field to render it useless, are contrasted with healing, building up, laughing, dancing and clearing the field of stones to make it fruitful. He sees both sides of life, the dark and the light. That is what life is like as it goes on its way, a life of contrasting and repetitive experiences, each in its time. Sometimes negative, sometimes positive. But all transient.*<sup>134</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.

<sup>130</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>131</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

<sup>132</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:2–3.

<sup>133</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:2.

<sup>134</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.



## Ecclesiastes 3:3a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]	and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
êth (תַּעַת) [pronounced gayth]	time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
lâmed (ל) [pronounced le]	to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to	directional/relational/possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
hârag (גָּרַה) [pronounced haw-RAHG]	to kill, to slay, to execute; to destroy, to ruin	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #2026 BDB #246

**Translation:** ...a time to kill...

The average person does not necessarily ever kill anyone in this era; but during a time of war—and many people in the previous generation were involved in war in some way or another—killing was necessary in order to preserve the freedom of nation Israel.

Perhaps this refers to a time when animals would be killed, both for food and for sacrifices.

There is a time when man should kill man. Gen. 9:6 (God is speaking) **"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image."**

Gen. 8:20 **Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.** (ESV; capitalized)

*The Pulpit Commentary: The time to kill might refer to war, only that occurs in Ecclesiastes 3:8. Some endeavor to limit the notion to severe surgical operations performed with a view of saving life; but the verb harag does not admit of the meaning "rebound" or "cut." It most probably refers to the execution of criminals, or to the defense of the oppressed; such emergencies and necessities occur providentially without man's prescience.<sup>135</sup>*

## Ecclesiastes 3:3b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
êth (תַּעַת) [pronounced gayth]	time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
lâmed (ל) [pronounced le]	to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to	directional/relational/possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510

<sup>135</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:3.

### Ecclesiastes 3:3b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
râphâ' (רָפָא) [pronounced raw-FAW]	to heal, to make healthy, to restore to health; figuratively used of nations undergoing suffering (to restore favor)	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #7495 BDB #950

**Translation:** ...and a time to heal;...

When a war would be over, soldiers would return, and there would a time during which these men would be healed.

Perhaps this should be understood as an animal on a ranch being helped to survive.

#### Ecclesiastes 3:3b A time to heal (various commentators)

*Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: Affliction is sometimes sharp, and seems to be the prelude to death; but it is not in itself an end. God only ordains death as a passage to life. He is the Heavenly Physician who wounds but to heal. The hurt comes before the healing, and affliction before the fruition of blessedness.*

*The miracles of healing performed by Our Lord contain a prophecy of what He will do as the Restorer of Paradise. He will heal all the wounds of His people, and give them life to enjoy in its best condition.*<sup>136</sup>

*The Pulpit Commentary: So sickness is a visitation beyond man's control, while it calls into exercise the art of healing, which is a gift of God (see Ecclesiasticus 10:10; 38:1, etc.).*<sup>137</sup>

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

**Matt. 4:23** And He [Jesus] went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

#### Ecclesiastes 3:3a-b A time to kill, a time to heal (various commentators)

*College Press Bible Study: Both Deut. 32:39 and Hosea 6:1 suggest that it is God's prerogative to tear, wound, smite and kill, even as it is His prerogative to heal, to bind up, and to make alive. Man is also involved in these activities as he exacts judgment and pursues justice. The term "kill" here will not allow cutting but does allow capital punishment. Both the execution of criminals, and killing necessitated by the need to protect the innocent, would be allowed. Killing which results from war would probably be excluded as it is specifically mentioned in verse eight. The verse suggests the necessity of judgment and appropriate punishment if there is to be a time of healing and building up.*<sup>138</sup>

<sup>136</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (from the suggestive comments).

<sup>137</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:3.

<sup>138</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

## Ecclesiastes 3:3a-b A time to kill, a time to heal (various commentators)

Expositor's Bible Commentary: *Even those violent deaths, and those narrow escapes from death, which seem most purely fortuitous, are predetermined; as are also the accidents which befall our abodes (Ecclesiastes 3:3).*<sup>139</sup>

Matthew Henry: *[There is a] time to kill, when the judgments of God are abroad in a land and lay all waste; but, when he returns in ways of mercy, then is a time to heal what he has torn (Hosea 6:1–2), to comfort a people after the time that he has afflicted them, Psalm 90:15.*<sup>140</sup>

Ray C. Stedman: *There is "a time to kill, and a time to heal." That may sound strange to us, but the process of dying goes right along with the process of living. Doctors tell us that every seven years all the cells in our bodies die. But our bodies do not die. What you are now is not what you were seven years ago, yet you are the same. Man's physical body is one of the miracles of human history. As the psalmist says, "We are fearfully and wonderfully made." How can we understand the fact that each cell seems to pass on to the cell which replaces it the memory of the past so that, even though our brain cells have changed, the memory goes back beyond the life of the cell itself? There is "a time to kill, and a time to heal." God brings it to pass.*<sup>141</sup>

Dr. Bob Utley: *Since war is mentioned in Ecclesiastes 3:8 the killing referred to here seems to have another focus. Some have assumed that it refers to capital punishment within the nation of Israel or to the defense of one's home, or person, in the event of an attack.*<sup>142</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

## Ecclesiastes 3:3c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
ʿêth (עֵת) [pronounced <i>gayth</i> ]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>le</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to</i>	directional/relational/ possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
pârats (פָּרַץ) [pronounced <i>paw-RATS</i> ]	<i>to break, to break down, to destroy; to break asunder, to scatter, to disperse, to spread abroad; to break forth upon, to produce by breaking through; to act violently; to break through [negative volition, a bad attitude, a mindset, or whatever]; to spread, to distribute</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #6555 BDB #829

**Translation:** ...a time to destroy...

<sup>139</sup> *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–15.

<sup>140</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.

<sup>141</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

<sup>142</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

There is a time when something must be torn down or destroyed. This may occur during a war; and this may be the only reasonable thing that can be done to a building. Sometimes a flood or a fire makes this necessary. Sometimes, you just have to start from scratch.

The original Tabernacle was designed to be broken down and moved from point A to point B. The Tabernacle traveled with the Hebrew people for 40 years in the desert; and then it was moved periodically when Israel occupied the land.

Jesus went into the Temple to break down the false teaching and corrupt practices of the faith. John 2:13–16 *The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade."* (ESV; capitalized)

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *Human monuments cannot endure for ever. They are broken down, to be replaced by other works of taste and skill. The material progress of man requires such renewal. A like necessity exists in intellectual progress. Each age requires a new embodiment of the truth. Hence the necessity of current literature.*<sup>143</sup>

Ecclesiastes 3:3d			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
‘êth (תֵּת) [pronounced <i>gayth</i> ]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>leh</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to</i>	directional/relational/ possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
bânâh (בָּנָה) [pronounced <i>baw-NAWH</i> ]	<i>to build, to construct; to erect; to rebuild, to restore</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #1129 BDB #124

**Translation:** ...and a time to build;...

In every life, there are times when we will build something. A few generations ago, nearly everyone did this. Nowadays, a person who has never touched a hammer can pay to have his home built.

### Ecclesiastes 3:3c-d A time to build and a time to break down (commentators)

Matthew Henry: *[This explains] why, when we are in prosperity, we should be easy, and yet not secure - not to be secure because we live in a world of changes and therefore have no reason to say, Tomorrow shall be as this day (the lowest valleys join to the highest mountains).*<sup>144</sup>

<sup>143</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (from the suggestive comments).

<sup>144</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.



## Ecclesiastes 3:3c-d A time to build and a time to break down (commentators)

Matthew Henry: *[There is a] time to break down* a family, an estate, a kingdom, when it has ripened itself for destruction; but God will find a time, if they return and repent, to rebuild what he has broken down; there is a time, a set time, for the Lord to build up Zion, Psalm 102:13, 16. There is a time for men to break up house, and break off trade, and so to break down, which those that are busy in building up both must expect and prepare for.<sup>145</sup>

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *The most famous and enduring of works have been destroyed, and the glories of each succeeding age are often built upon the ruins of the past. No worldly fortune so great but God can break it down, as He will for every man at death. All the works of man are doomed. Those structures alone shall abide that are raised upon the everlasting foundations.*<sup>146</sup>

I should add that even the marvelous Temple of Solomon was eventually destroyed, as were the Temples which followed.

The Pulpit Commentary: *A time to break down, and a time to build up.* The removal of decaying or unsuitable buildings is meant, and the substitution of new and improved structures. A recollection of Solomon's own extensive architectural works is here introduced.<sup>147</sup>

Ray C. Stedman: *There is "a time to break down, and a time to build up."* Youth is the time for building up. Muscles grow, abilities increase, coordination gets better. Then, if you hang on long enough as I have and you reach that 65th milestone, there is a time when everything starts to fall apart -- *"a time to break down."* Type gets smaller and smaller, steps get higher and higher, trains go faster and faster, people speak in lower and lower tones -- *"a time to break down."* But that is appropriate. We should not fight it. It is not evil, it is right. God has determined this, and no matter what we may think about it, it is going to continue that way. That is what this is telling us.<sup>148</sup>

W. Walters: *Often the realities of life thicken around men while they are destitute of all preparation. They have failed to exercise forethought-neglected to make provision for the future.*<sup>149</sup>

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

**Application:** Knowing that the house that you live in, perhaps 100 years from now, might be completely destroyed and replaced, what should we do? Live outside in a cardboard box? God allowed Adam and his woman to modify their surroundings, to live in a place which suited them. Although we do not know about every person from Scripture, we know some things about David and Solomon—both of whom had a marvelous palace to live in. At no time did God send a prophet to either man, warning them, “There is way too much opulence here; you need to bring all of this bling down a few notches.” God allows us to have some say in the environment in which we live; and so many times, allows us so much more than what we think we deserve.

**Application:** One of the most peaceful and enjoyable places that we can go to is *home*. We may live alone; we may live with various members of our family; we may have the ideal nuclear family (which is an invention of God's). Even if we jet off on some wonderful excursion, there is nothing that quite compares with the feeling of coming home.

<sup>145</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.

<sup>146</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (from the suggestive comments).

<sup>147</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:3.

<sup>148</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

<sup>149</sup> *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:10.

There would be a time to build in the New Testament. Matt. 16:18–19 (Jesus is speaking to Peter) “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (ESV; capitalized)

Ecclesiastes 3:3 ...a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to destroy and a time to build;...

Killing and healing applies to all things that have life: man, animals and plants; but building and destroying is applied principally to non-living things (for instance, building materials<sup>150</sup>).<sup>151</sup>

Gary H. Everett: *In Ecclesiastes 3:3 King Solomon acknowledges that, despite his vast knowledge and wisdom he obtained, he alone cannot control the forces of good and evil, to stop killing and other destructive forces of mankind; neither can he heal and restore things to good. Although he is a king, he does not have the power to control evil or good. Despite his vast wisdom, the king acknowledges that only God determines life and death, and He also judges good and evil upon this earth. These aspects of one's life are beyond King Solomon's grasp. These outcomes were in the hands of God.*<sup>152</sup>

Ecclesiastes 3:4a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
‘êth (תֵּת) [pronounced <i>gayth</i> ]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>le</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to</i>	directional/relational/ possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
bâkâh (בָּכָה) [pronounced <i>baw-KAW</i> ]	<i>to weep [for] (in grief, humiliation, or joy), to weep [bitterly], to weep upon [i.e., to embrace and weep], to cry [for], to bewail</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #1058 BDB #113

**Translation:** ...a time to weep...

We have all been in difficult circumstances or have lost a loved one, and we on occasion, weep. Men less than women; but both sexes do.

There is clearly a time to weep in Scripture:

John 11:35 **Jesus wept.**

1Sam. 30:4 **Then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept until they had no more strength to weep.** (ESV; capitalized)

<sup>150</sup> Obviously, wood was alive at one time.

<sup>151</sup> Paraphrased from Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:3.

<sup>152</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:2–3.

Ecclesiastes 3:4b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
êth (עֵת) [pronounced gayth]	time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]	to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to	directional/relational/possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
sâchaq (שָׂחַק) [pronounced saw-KHAHK]	to laugh; by extension, it means to sport, to play, to jest; to mock, to hold in derision	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #7832 BDB #965

**Translation:** ...and a time to laugh;...

There is a time to celebrate, to have fun, to laugh.

Even God is said to laugh:

Psalm 2:4 **He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.** (ESV) Bear in mind, God does not actually laugh.

Interestingly enough, even though we have a verse which states, *Jesus wept*; we do not have a corresponding verse, *Jesus laughed*.

### Ecclesiastes 3:4a-b Laughing and Weeping (various commentators)

W. Clarkson: *Everything comes in its turn; if we weep today, we shall laugh to-morrow; if we have to be silent for the present, we shall have the opportunity of speech further on; if we must strive now, the time of peace will return. Human life is neither unshadowed brightness nor unbroken gloom. "Shadow and shine is life ... flower and thorn." Let no man be seriously discouraged, much less hopelessly disheartened: what he is now suffering from will not always remain; it will pass and give place to that which is better. Let us only patiently wait our time, and our turn will come. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning"—at any rate, and at the furthest, In the morning of eternity.*

Clarkson continues: *Only let us wait in patience and in prayerful hope, doing all that we can do in the paths of duty and of service, and the hour of opportunity will arrive... with succeeding turns God tempers all, That man may hope to rise, yet fear to fall.* <sup>153</sup>

College Press Bible Study: *One doesn't live long before he experiences both laughter and weeping. These human emotions are common to all men in every age.* <sup>154</sup>

<sup>153</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by W. Clarkson; Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.

<sup>154</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

## Ecclesiastes 3:4a-b Laughing and Weeping (various commentators)

Dr. J. Hamilton: *No one can fix a date and say, I shall spend that day merrily, or I must spend it mournfully. The day fixed for the wedding may prove the day for the funeral; and the ship which was to bring back the absent brother, may only bring his coffin. On the other hand, the day we had destined for mourning, God may turn to dancing, and may gird it with irresistible gladness.*<sup>155</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

## Ecclesiastes 3:4c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
‘êth (עֵת) [pronounced <i>gayth</i> ]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun, construct state	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
There is no lamed preposition here or in the next portion of v. 4.			
There is no difference here in the spelling of the construct state; it is simply the location of the noun with the infinitive construct below.			
çâphad (צָפַד) [pronounced <i>saw-FAHD</i> ]	<i>to lament, to grieve, to mourn; to wail, to bewail</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #5594 BDB #704

**Translation:** ...a time of mourning...

A time of mourning appears to be a greater degree than a time to weep; perhaps at the loss of a loved one, something which nearly everyone experiences.

There is certainly a proper time to mourn in the Bible:

1Sam. 31:11–13 *But when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, all the valiant men arose and went all night and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Bethshan, and they came to Jabesh and burned them there. And they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh and fasted seven days.* Solomon was a bad king for most of his reign. However, early on in his life, he stepped up and delivered the people of Jabesh-gilead; and they remembered him fondly for decades after.

2Sam. 1:17–19 *And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and Jonathan his son, and he said it should be taught to the people of Judah; behold, it is written in the Book of Jashar. He said: "Your glory, O Israel, is slain on your high places! How the mighty have fallen! (ESV)* David's tribute actually goes on for many more verses.

## Ecclesiastes 3:4d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
wê (or vê) (וְ, or וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

<sup>155</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (from the suggestive comments).



## Ecclesiastes 3:4d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
‘êth (תֵּעַ) [pronounced <i>gayth</i> ]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun, construct state	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
There is no difference here in the spelling of the construct state; it is simply the location of the noun with the infinitive construct below.			
râqad (דָּקַר) [pronounced <i>raw-KAHD</i> ]	<i>to skip about, to leap, to run with leaps and bounds; to dance</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #7540 BDB #955

**Translation:** ...and a time of dancing;...

People also have a time when they cut loose; they move about; they jump up and down in joy.

David greatly celebrated when the Ark of God was brought into Jerusalem:

2Sam. 6:16–17 *As the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, and she despised him in her heart. And they brought in the ark of the LORD and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it. And David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. (ESV)*

### Ecclesiastes 3:4c-d Mourning and Dancing (various commentators)

College Press Bible Study: *Mourning suggests a deeper sorrow than weeping, while dancing may be thought of as the sheer physical display of inner joy. Jesus spoke to both of these activities when he said, “But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places, who call out to the other children, and say, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn’” (Matt. 11:16-17). Dancing in the Bible times should not be confused with the modern-day dance. Biblical dancing was the unrehearsed, spontaneous exuberance resulting from a great physical victory, or some festive occasion.*<sup>156</sup>

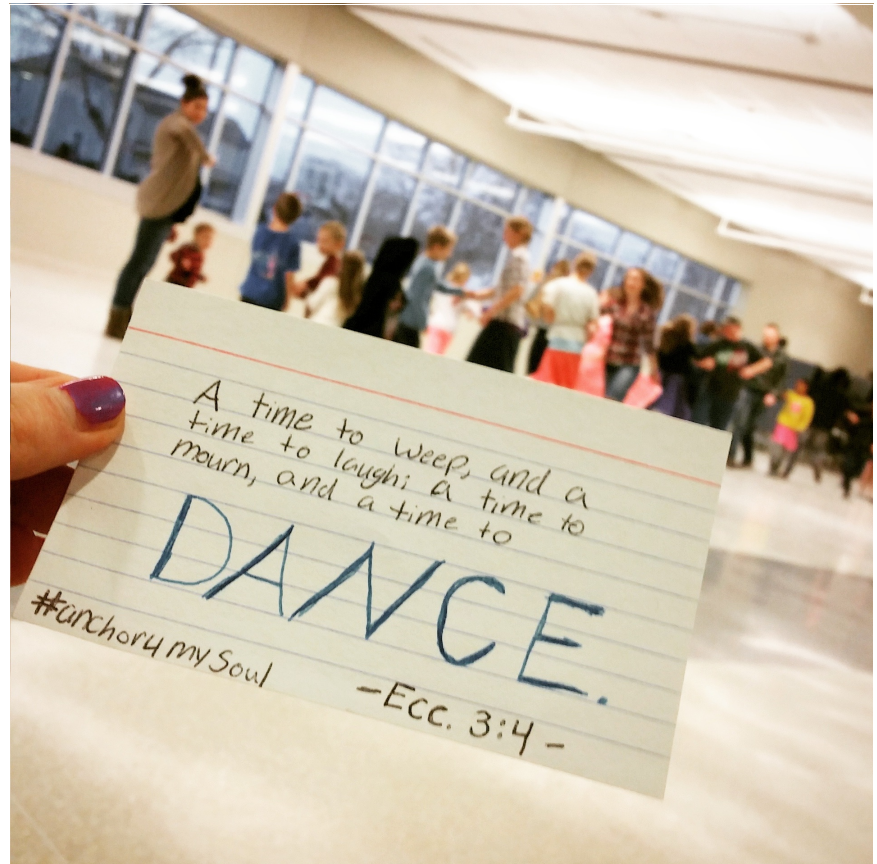
[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

<sup>156</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.*

Ecclesiastes 3:4 ...a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time of mourning and a time of dancing;...

**Ecclesiastes 3:4** (a graphic); from **The Anchor 4 My Soul**; accessed March 23, 2020.



### Ecclesiastes 3:4 Weeping, laughing, mourning, and rejoicing (commentators)

Gary H. Everett: *King Solomon had pursued mirth and pleasure with the greatest of resources that man could obtain; yet, in all of these pursuits he now realizes that he cannot determine the time of a person's weeping and laughter, mourning and dancing. The reason is because even Solomon could not determine the outcome of every person's situation, whether it saddened or rejoiced the heart. These outcomes were in the hands of God.*<sup>157</sup>

Expositor's Bible Commentary: *So, again, if only because determined by these accidents, are the feelings with which we regard them, our weeping and our laughter, our mourning and our rejoicing (Ecclesiastes 3:4).*<sup>158</sup>

Matthew Henry: *[There is a] time when God's providence calls to weep and mourn, and when man's wisdom and grace will comply with the call, and will weep and mourn, as in times of common calamity and danger, and there it is very absurd to laugh, and dance, and make merry (Isa. 22:12–13; Ezek. 21:10); but then, on the other hand, there is a time when God calls to cheerfulness, a time to laugh and dance, and then he expects we should serve him with joyfulness and gladness of heart.*<sup>159</sup>

<sup>157</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:4.

<sup>158</sup> *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–15.

<sup>159</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.

## Ecclesiastes 3:4 Weeping, laughing, mourning, and rejoicing (commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *A time to weep, and a time to laugh*, grouped naturally with *a time to mourn, and a time to dance*. The funeral and the wedding, the hired mourners and the guests at the marriage-feast, are set against one another. The first clause intimates the spontaneous manifestation of the feelings of the heart; the second, their formal expression in the performances at funerals and weddings and on other solemn occasions.

The Pulpit Commentary continues: The contrast is found in the Lord's allusion to the sulky children in the market-place, who would not join their companions' play: "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented" (Matt. 11:17). Dancing sometimes accompanied religious sere-monies, as when David brought up the ark (2Sam. 6:14, 2Sam. 6:16).<sup>160</sup>

Ray C. Stedman: All these things follow closely, and they are all appropriate. No one is going to escape the hurts and sorrows of life, is what he is saying here. God chose them for us. The proof of that is when God's own Son came. He was not handed a beautiful life with everything pleasant and delightful, free from struggle and pain. No, he was, "*a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*," (Isa. 53:3b). In a fallen world it is right that there will be times of hurt, of sorrow and weeping.

Ray C. Stedman: But there will be times too when it is right to laugh, to be happy and carefree. There is a time of grief and tears, "*a time to mourn*," but there is a time to celebrate and to enjoy a festive occasion. Jesus attended the celebration of the wedding at Cana of Galilee. He entered into it and even provided part of the feast.<sup>161</sup>

Dr. Bob Utley: "*A time to weep, and a time to laugh; A time to mourn, and a time to dance*" Some believe these lines refer to both funerals and weddings or to other regular social events.<sup>162</sup>

Even though man would clearly prefer to spend his time laughing and celebrating, that is out of our control. We will weep and we will mourn.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

### Ecclesiastes 3:5a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
‘êth (עֵת) [pronounced <i>gayth</i> ]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>le</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to</i>	directional/relational/ possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
shâlak <sup>e</sup> (שָׁלַךְ) [pronounced <i>shaw-LAHK<sup>e</sup></i> ]	<i>to throw, to cast, to fling, to throw off, to cast away [off]; to shed; to reject; to cast about; to cast down, to overthrow</i>	Hiphil infinitive construct	Strong's #7993 BDB #1020

<sup>160</sup> The Pulpit Commentary; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:4.

<sup>161</sup> Ray Stedman, Stedman's Bible Commentary; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

<sup>162</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1.

**Ecclesiastes 3:5a**

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
'eben (אֶבֶן) [pronounced EH <sup>B</sup> -ven]	<i>stones [large or small] [in its natural state, as a building material]; stone ore; used of tablets, marble, cut stone; used of a tool or weapon; a precious stone, gem; rock; a weight of the balance; vessels of stone [to hold water]</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #68 BDB #6

**Translation:** ...a time to cast away stones...

There is a time when stones might be cast away. You may be planting a garden and there are stones where you want plants to be; so you dig up those stones and place them somewhere else.

**Ecclesiastes 3:5b**

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
'êth (אֵת) [pronounced gayth]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun, construct state	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
kânaç (קָנָח) [pronounced kaw-NAHS]	<i>to gather [together], to collect; to heap up</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #3664 BDB #488
'eben (אֶבֶן) [pronounced EH <sup>B</sup> -ven]	<i>stones [large or small] [in its natural state, as a building material]; stone ore; used of tablets, marble, cut stone; used of a tool or weapon; a precious stone, gem; rock; a weight of the balance; vessels of stone [to hold water]</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #68 BDB #6

**Translation:** ...and a time of gathering stones;...

There is a time when stones might be gathered, to use for the building of a wall or a home.

I believe that the Pulpit Commentary explains what is happening the best.

**Ecclesiastes 3:5a-b Casting stones and gathering stones (various commentators)**

Dr. Thomas Constable: *The casting of stones (Ecclesiastes 3:5) probably refers to the ancient custom of destroying a farmer's field by throwing many stones on it. The gathering of stones describes the clearing of stones from a field.*<sup>163</sup>

<sup>163</sup> Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

## Ecclesiastes 3:5a-b Casting stones and gathering stones (various commentators)

David Guzik: *A time to cast away stones: In the ancient world they commonly scattered stones on an enemies' land to hinder farming.*<sup>164</sup>

Matthew Henry: *[There is a] time to cast away stones, by breaking down and demolishing fortifications, when God gives peace in the borders, and there is no more occasion for them; but there is a time to gather stones together, for the making of strong-holds, Ecclesiastes 3:5. A time for old towers to fall, as that in Siloam (Luke 12:4), and for the temple itself to be so ruined as that not one stone should be left upon another; but also a time for towers and trophies too to be erected, when national affairs prosper.*<sup>165</sup>

In this era, there is never a time when we remove our stone borders (or whatever else provides borders for a nation. The point of this psalm or poem is, these are things which all men engage in, in one form or another. Now, the second illustration given by Henry is apt—tearing down the fortifications of a defeated enemy.

The Pulpit Commentary: *A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together. There is no question about building or demolishing houses, as that has been already mentioned in Ecclesiastes 3:3. Most commentators see an allusion to the practice of marring an enemy's fields by casting stones upon them, as the Israelites did when they invaded Moab (2Kings 3:19, 2Kings 3:25). But this must have been a very abnormal proceeding, and could scarcely be cited as a usual occurrence. Nor is the notion more happy that there is an allusion to the custom of flinging stones or earth into the grave at a burial—a Christian, but not an ancient Jewish practice; this, too, leaves the contrasted "gathering" unexplained. Equally inappropriate is the opinion that the punishment of stoning is meant, or some game played with pebbles.*

The Pulpit Commentary makes some very good points.

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *It seems most simple to see herein intimated the operation of clearing a vineyard of stones, as mentioned in Isa. 5:2; and of collecting materials for making fences, wine-press, tower, etc; and repairing roads.*<sup>166</sup>

Dr. Bob Utley: *"A time to throw stones, and a time to gather stones"* Many have assumed that this is an agricultural metaphor of one removing stones from a field. However, this could be a construction metaphor of using stones for a rock fence or a home.<sup>167</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Dr. Peter Pett: *[From this point forward, the author] deals with the more homely aspects of life - embracing, seeking something lost, keeping things, and accidentally tearing things, in contrast with refraining from embracing, losing something, throwing something away, and repairing something that is torn.*<sup>168</sup>

<sup>164</sup> David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

<sup>165</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.

<sup>166</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:5.

<sup>167</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>168</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.



## Ecclesiastes 3:5c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
‘êth (תֵּת) [pronounced <i>gayth</i> ]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>le</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to</i>	directional/relational/ possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
châbaq (חָבַח) [pronounced <i>khaw-BAHK</i> ]	<i>to clasp, to embrace; to fold one's hands with idleness</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #2263 BDB #287

**Translation:** ...a time to embrace...

There is a time when we embrace, and feel the warmth of a loved one. This can refer to any sort of affection expressed between two people.

## Ecclesiastes 3:5d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
‘êth (תֵּת) [pronounced <i>gayth</i> ]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>le</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to</i>	directional/relational/ possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
râchaq (רָחַק) [pronounced <i>raw-KHAHK</i> ]	<i>to thrust away, to repel; to go away far, to be afar off, to be distant, to be remote</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #7368 BDB #934
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]	<i>from, off, out from, of, out of, away from; some of; on account of, since, than, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
châbaq (חָבַח) [pronounced <i>khaw-BAHK</i> ]	<i>to embrace; to embrace the rock or the dunghill means to lie (or make one's bed) upon them</i>	Piel infinitive construct	Strong's #2263 BDB #287

**Translation:** ...and a time to be distance from embracing.

Although this is often translated, *and a time to refrain from embracing*, I believe the idea is more related to be far away from the person that you would like to embrace.

## Ecclesiastes 3:5c-d Embracing and not embracing (various commentators)

Dr. Thomas Constable: *The fact that there are proper times for expressing love and other times for refraining from love reminds us that there are standards for sex, though this is not the only application.*<sup>169</sup>

Matthew Henry: *[There is a] time to embrace a friend when we find him faithful, but a time to refrain from embracing when we find he is unfair or unfaithful, and that we have cause to suspect him; it is then our prudence to be shy and keep at a distance. It is commonly applied to conjugal embraces, and explained by 1Cor. 7:3-5; Joel 2:16.*<sup>170</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *It is plain that there are times when one may give himself up to the delights of love and friendship, and times when such distractions would be incongruous and unseasonable, as on solemn, penitential occasions (Joe. 2:16; Exodus 19:15; 1Cor. 7:5); but the congruity of the two clauses of the couplet is not obvious, unless the objectionable position of stones and their advantageous employment are compared with the character of illicit (Prov. 5:20) and legitimate love.*<sup>171</sup>

Ray C. Stedman: *There is a time to break things down, and a time to build them up again. This particularly has to do with our social structures, our relationships with others. There is a time when we need to embrace others, to show our support for them. But there is a time when we ought to refuse to embrace them, when our support would be misunderstood and would be tantamount to complicity with something evil. Those times come from the hand of God.*<sup>172</sup>

Wardlaw: *There is a time when the fondness of friendship bestows its caresses, and receives them in return with reciprocal sincerity and delight: and a time when the ardour cools; when professions fail; when the friend of our bosom's love proves false and hollow-hearted, and the sight of him produces only the sigh and tear of bitter recollection. We refrain from embracing because our embrace is not returned.*<sup>173</sup>

We refrain from embracing because (1) you cannot embrace 24 hours a day and (2) crap needs to get done.

Dr. Bob Utley: *It has been the consensus among Jewish commentators that this has sexual connotations (cf. TEV "making love"). This is stated specifically in the Mishrash. The context of Ecclesiastes 3:5 b seems to reinforce this understanding. This would mean that there is time, Levitically speaking, when men could have sexual relations and a time when they could not because of a woman's menstrual cycle or their military commitments.*

Utley continues: *"A time to embrace, and a time to shun embracing" This could refer to (1) sexual love within marriage (cf. Song of Songs. 2:6 2) sexual love outside of marriage (cf. Prov. 5:20 3) a family's caring love for each other or (4) friends kissing one another on the cheek, which was common in the Near East.*<sup>174</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 3:5 ...a time to cast away stones and a time of gathering stones; a time to embrace and a time to be distance from embracing.

<sup>169</sup> Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>170</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.

<sup>171</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:5.

<sup>172</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

<sup>173</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (from the suggestive comments).

<sup>174</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

### Ecclesiastes 3:5 Stones and Embracing (various commentators)

College Press Bible Study: *An attempt to escape or skirt the obvious has led to far-fetched and varied conclusions concerning the first part of this verse. Since the verses are couplets, and each line parallels the other, then the clear statements of “a time to embrace,” and “a time to refrain from embracing,” would suggest that “a time to cast away stones,” and “a time to gather stones together,” is a euphemistic description of sexual love.*

College Press Bible Study continues: *The fidelity of a monogamous union finds proper expression and fulfillment in such acts of love. God has placed natural desires within both men and women which result not only in the propagation of the race, but also in the holy mystery of oneness that exists between husband and wife.*

College Press Bible Study continues: *Such an interpretation as this does not appear to meet with any difficulty. This makes the first part of the couplet harmonious with the second part. It speaks to a vital and major part of life’s experience which is not discussed elsewhere in this section. Finally, the absurdity of most interpretations necessitates a clearly defined and logical explanation of the verse.*

College Press Bible Study concludes: *Some of the more popular but unacceptable interpretations of gathering and casting stones are listed: (1) building or demolishing houses, walls, cisterns and similar works made from stones; (2) marring an enemy’s field by casting stones upon it (2Kings 3:19; 2Kings 3:25 3) stoning as a form of capital punishment; (4) clearing land or vineyards of stones (Isa. 5:2).<sup>175</sup>*

Gary H. Everett: *Ecclesiastes 3:5 reflects upon King Solomon’s conclusion regarding the vanity of his pursuit of strength and conquest (Ecclesiastes 2:4-6). The king had embarked upon some of the greatest building projects of the ancient world, carving and moving great stones; yet he could not determine the timing of when these projects could be completed, or even accomplished. His people had gathered stones and cast them away; his hired servants had grasped hold of these projects, and postponed or even cancelled them. The timing of these great building projects was in the hands of God.<sup>176</sup>*

Expositor’s Bible Commentary: *If we only clear a plot of ground from stones in order that we may cultivate it, or that we may fence it in with a wall; or if an enemy cast stones over our arable land to unfit it for uses of husbandry—a malignant act frequent in the East—and we have painfully to gather them out again: even this, which seems so purely within the scope of human free will, is also within the scope of the Divine decrees—as are the very embraces we bestow on those dear to us, or withhold from them (Ecclesiastes 3:5).<sup>177</sup>*

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 3:2–5 There is a time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot what you have planted; a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to tear something down and a time to build up; a time to weep and a time when you laugh; a time of mourning and a time to dance and celebrate; a time to throw away stones and a time to gather up stones; a time to embrace, but also a time when you are unable to embrace.

<sup>175</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>176</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett’s Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:5.

<sup>177</sup> *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–15.

A time to seek and a time to lose; a time to keep and a time to throw off; a time to tear apart and a time to sew; a time to be silent and a time to speak; a time to love and a time to hate; a time of war and a time of peace.

Ecclesiastes  
3:6–8

[There is] a time to seek and a time to lose; a time to keep and a time to throw away; a time to tear apart and a time to sew [together]; a time to be silent and a time to speak; a time to love and a time to hate; a time of war and a time of peace.

There is a time to seek and a time to lose; a time to keep and protect what one has and a time to cast it aside; a time to tear sometime apart and a time to sew something together; a time to be silent and a time to speak; a time to love and a time to hate; a time of war and a time of peace.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	A time to seek and a time to lose; a time to keep and a time to throw off; a time to tear apart and a time to sew; a time to be silent and a time to speak; a time to love and a time to hate; a time of war and a time of peace.
Dead Sea Scrolls	.
Jerusalem targum	.
Targum (Onkelos)	.
Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan)	.
Aramaic Targum	...an opportune time to wish for riches, and an opportune time to lose riches; an opportune time to keep merchandise, and an opportune time to throw merchandise into the sea, during a great storm; an opportune time to tear the garment for the dead, and an opportune time to sew together the torn pieces; an opportune time to be silent and not to rebuke, and an opportune time to speak words of reproof; an opportune time to love each other, and an opportune time to hate the wicked; an opportune time to make war, and an opportune time to restore peace.
Revised Douay-Rheims	.
Douay-Rheims 1899 (Amer.)	A time to get, and a time to lose. A time to keep, and a time to cast away. A time to rend, and a time to sew. A time to keep silence, and a time to speak. A time of love, and a time of hatred. A time of war, and a time of peace.
Aramaic ESV of Peshitta	.
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	.
Plain English Aramaic Bible	.
Lamsa's Peshitta (Syriac)	A time to lose and a time to seek; a time to tie up and a time to untie; A time to rend and a time to sew; a time to keep silent and a time to speak; A time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	...a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to be silent, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

Significant differences:

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	A time for search and a time for loss; a time to keep and a time to give away; A time for undoing and a time for stitching; a time for keeping quiet and a time for talk; A time for love and a time for hate; a time for war and a time for peace.
Easy English	There is a time to look for something. You look for something that you have lost. And there is a time to stop looking for it.

	There is a time to keep things. And there is a time to throw them away. There is a time to tear something down. And there is a time to mend it. There is a time to be quiet. And there is a time to speak. There is a time to love. And there is a time to hate. There is a time to fight. And there is a time not to fight.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	There is a time to look for something and a time to consider it lost. There is a time to keep things and a time to throw things away. There is a time to tear cloth and a time to sew it. There is a time to be silent and a time to speak. There is a time to love and a time to hate. There is a time for war and a time for peace. <i>God's Word™</i> a time to start looking and a time to stop looking, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear apart and a time to sew together, a time to keep quiet and a time to speak out, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.
Good News Bible (TEV)	.
<i>The Message</i>	A right time to search and another to count your losses, A right time to hold on and another to let go, A right time to rip out and another to mend, A right time to shut up and another to speak up, A right time to love and another to hate, A right time to wage war and another to make peace.
Names of God Bible	.
NIRV	.
New Simplified Bible	.

**Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:**

Casual English Bible	.
College Press paraphrase	Fortunes are sometimes gained because one knows the times for searching, but it is also true that they are often kept because good judgment is exercised in refraining from excess; even our present possessions are retained with discretion, and we find wisdom in discarding or sharing with others that which is no longer of value to oneself. There is a time when clothing should be discarded, and a time when it should be mended and used again; the same kind of judgment is in order with the control of the tongue: silence is often golden. On the other hand, words fitly spoken have great power and should be said. Love encompasses all that is holy and good, and there is a time when it should be demonstrated to your fellow man;



Contemporary English V.	hate is reserved for that which is evil, and yet there is a time when it should also be exercised—there is a time for war, and a time for peace.
The Living Bible	There is a time for finding and losing, keeping and giving, for tearing and sewing, listening and speaking. There is also a time for love and hate, for war and peace. ...A time to find; A time to lose; A time for keeping; A time for throwing away; A time to tear; A time to repair; A time to be quiet; A time to speak up; A time for loving; A time for hating; A time for war; A time for peace.
New Berkeley Version	.
New Life Version	There is a time to try to find, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away. There is a time to tear apart, and a time to sew together; a time to be quiet, and a time to speak. There is a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.
New Living Translation	A time to search and a time to quit searching. A time to keep and a time to throw away. A time to tear and a time to mend. A time to be quiet and a time to speak. A time to love and a time to hate. A time for war and a time for peace.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	There is the right time to search for things, and there is the right time to stop searching for things. There is the right time to keep things, and there is the right time to throw things away. There is the right time to tear our clothes because we are grieving, and there is the right time to mend our clothes. There is the right time to say nothing, and there is the right time for speaking. There is the right time when we should love things that people do, and there is the right time when we should hate things that people do. There is the right time for war, and there is the right time for peace.
Unfolding Bible Simplified	.

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	...There are times to lose and to find; There are times to collect and discard; There are times to plant and times to rip out; There are times to speak or be quiet; There are times to love and times to show hate; There are times for peace and for war...
Beck's American Translation	.
Common English Bible	...a time for searching and a time for losing, a time for keeping and a time for throwing away, a time for tearing and a time for repairing, a time for keeping silent and a time for speaking, a time for loving and a time for hating, a time for war and a time for peace.

New Advent (Knox) Bible	To-day's gain, tomorrow's loss; what once we treasured, soon thrown away; the garment rent, the garment mended; silence kept, and silence ended; love alternating with hatred, war with peace.
Translation for Translators	There is a time to search for things, and there is a time to stop searching for things. There is a time to keep/save things, and there is a time to throw things away. There is a time to tear <i>our old clothes</i> , and there is a time to mend <i>clothes</i> . There is a time to say nothing, and there is a time when we should speak. There is a time when we should love <i>things that people do</i> , and there is a time when we should hate <i>things that people do</i> . There is a time for war, and there is a time for peace.

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Conservapedia Translation	.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	...A time to seek, and a time to lose; A time to hoard, and a time to spend, A time to tear, and a time to mend; A time to be dumb, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; A time for war, and a time for peace!
God's Truth (Tyndale)	...A time to win, and a time to lese (lose, lease): A time to spare, and a time to spend: A time to cut in pieces, and a time to sew together: A time to keep silence, and a time to speak: A time to love, and a time to hate: A time of war, and a time of peace.
HCSB	...a time to search and a time to count as lost; a time to keep and a time to throw away; a time to tear and a time to sew; a time to be silent and a time to speak; a time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace.
International Standard V	...a time to search, and a time to give up searching; [The Heb. lacks searching] a time to keep, and a time to discard; a time to tear, and a time to mend; a time to be silent, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.
Jubilee Bible 2000	.
H. C. Leupold	.
Lexham English Bible	...a time to seek and a time to lose; a time to keep and a time to throw away; a time to tear and a time to sew; a time to be silent and a time to speak; a time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace..
NIV, ©2011	.
Peter Pett's translation	.
Unfolding Bible Literal Text	.
Unlocked Literal Bible	There is a time to look for things and a time to stop looking, a time to keep things and a time to throw away things, a time to tear clothing and a time to repair clothing, a time to keep silent and a time to speak. There is a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.
Urim-Thummim Version	A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silent, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

Wikipedia Bible Project      A time to seek, and a time to lose, a time to keep and a time to discard.  
 A time to rip, and a time to sew, a time to mute and time to talk,  
 a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

### Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988) .  
 The Heritage Bible      A time to search out, and a time to lose; a time to hedge about, and a time to throw out;  
                                  A time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
                                  A time to love, and a time to hate; a time to war, and a time to make peace.

New American Bible (2002) .  
 New American Bible (2011) .  
 New English Bible—1970 .  
 New Jerusalem Bible      A time for searching, a time for losing; a time for keeping, a time for discarding.  
                                  A time for tearing, a time for sewing; a time for keeping silent, a time for speaking.  
                                  A time for loving, a time for hating; a time for war, a time for peace.

New RSV .  
 Revised English Bible—1989 ...a time to seek and a time to lose; a time to keep and a time to discard;  
                                  a time to tear and a time to mend; a time for silence and a time for speech;  
                                  a time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace.

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible      ...a time to search and a time to give up,  
                                  a time to keep and a time to discard,  
                                  a time to tear and a time to sew,  
                                  a time to keep silent and a time to speak,  
                                  a time to love and a time to hate,  
                                  a time for war and a time for peace.

exeGesés companion Bible      ...a time to seek  
                                  and a time to destroy;  
                                  a time to guard  
                                  and a time to cast;  
                                  a time to rip  
                                  and a time to sew;  
                                  a time to hush  
                                  and a time to word;  
                                  a time to love  
                                  and a time to hate;  
                                  a time of war  
                                  and a time of shalom.

Hebraic Roots Bible      ...a time to seek, and a time to let wander away; a time to keep, and a time to throw away;  
                                  a time to tear, and a time to sew together; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
                                  a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

Israeli Authorized Version      ...a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away;  
                                  a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to be silent, and a time to speak;  
                                  a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for battle, and a time for peace.

The Israel Bible .  
 Kaplan Translation .  
 The Scriptures 1998      A time for seeking and a time for losing, A time for keeping and a time for discarding;

Tree of Life Version      A time for ripping and a time for sewing, A time for silence and a time for speaking;  
 A time for loving and a time for hating; A time for war and a time for peace.  
 ...a time to seek and a time to lose,  
 a time to keep and a time to discard;  
 a time to tear apart and a time to mend,  
 a time to be silent and a time to speak;  
 a time to love and a time to hate,  
 a time for war and a time for peace.

### Weird English, Old English, Anachronistic English Translations:

Alpha & Omega Bible      .  
 Awful Scroll Bible      ...a time to secure, a time to be he who loses away; a time to reserve, a time to be  
 made to throw away;  
 a time to rend, a time to sew; a time to be silent, a time to be he who speaks;  
 a time to love, a time to hate; a time of war, a time of peace.  
 Charles Thompson OT      .  
 Concordant Literal Version      ...A season to seek and a season to lose; A season to keep and a season to fling  
 away;  
 A season to tear and a season to sew; A season to hush and a season to speak;  
 A season to love and a season to hate; A season of war and a season of peace.  
 Darby Translation      .  
 exeGeses companion Bible      .  
 Orthodox Jewish Bible      An et (season) to look for, and an et (season) to lose; an et (season) to keep, and  
 an et (season) to throw away;  
 An et (season) to tear, and an et (season) to mend; an et (season) to keep silent,  
 and an et (season) to speak;  
 An et (season) to love, and an et (season) to hate; an et (season) of milchamah,  
 and an et (season) of shalom.  
 Rotherham's *Emphasized B.*      .  
 Third Millennium Bible      .

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

*The Amplified Bible*      .  
 The Expanded Bible      There is a time to ·look for something [seek]  
 and a time to ·stop looking for it [<sup>l</sup> give up as lost; or lose].  
 There is a time to keep things  
 and a time to throw things away.  
 There is a time to tear apart  
 and a time to sew together.  
 There is a time to be silent  
 and a time to speak.  
 There is a time to love  
 and a time to hate.  
 There is a time for war  
 and a time for peace.  
 Kretzmann's Commentary      ...a time to get, to obtain possession of, and a time to lose, deliberately to dispose  
 of some object for some special reason, or cheerfully to give it up as the will of God  
 indicates; a time to keep, and a time to cast away, without any care for the future;  
 a time to rend, as when garments were torn under the influence of great grief, and  
 a time to sew; a time to keep silence, not only in the silence of mourning, but on  
 general principles, and a time to speak, for its omission may amount to a denial of  
 the truth;

Syndein/Thieme  
The Voice

a time to love, this being the summary of the Law, and a time to hate; a time of war, when men think it necessary to shed blood in such a manner, and a time of peace. All these activities are carried out by men in the course of their lives, they occupy a certain period of time; not as though the Lord looked upon them all with approbation, but that He knows of them and uses all events for the furtherance of His will. It is not blind chance which rules the world, but "there's a Divinity that shapes our ends," and we Christians gladly submit to His guidance.

.  
A time to search, a time to give up as lost;  
a time to keep, a time to throw out;  
A time to tear apart, a time to bind together;  
a time to be quiet, a time to speak up;  
A time to love, a time to hate;  
a time to go to war, a time to make peace.

### Bible Translations with Many Footnotes:

College Press Bible Study  
The Complete Tanach

.  
A time to seek and a time to lose; a time to keep and a time to cast away.

**A time to seek:** As it is stated (Ezek. 34:16): "I will seek the lost," concerning those of Israel gone astray.

**and a time to lose:** and a time when He lost them in exile, as it is said (Lev. 26: 38): "And you will become lost among the nations."

**a time to keep:** (Num. 6:24): "May the Lord bless you and keep you," when you do His will.

**and a time to cast away:** (Deut. 29:27): "and cast them into another land."

A time to rend and a time to sew; a time to be silent and a time to speak.

**A time to rend:** the kingdom of the House of David, as it is said (I Kings 14:8): "And I tore the kingdom, etc."

**and a time to sew:** (Ezek. 37:17): "and they shall be one in your hand" ; (ibid. verse 22): "neither shall they any longer be divided into two kingdoms."

**a time to be silent:** Sometimes a person is silent and receives a reward, as it is said (Lev. 10:3): "and Aaron was silent," and he merited that the Divine speech be especially addressed to him, as it is said (ibid. verse 8): "And the Lord spoke to Aaron: Drink neither wine nor strong drink."

**and a time to speak:** (Exod. 15:1): "Then Moses... sang" ; (Jud. 5: 1): "Now Deborah... sang" ; (Hos. 14:3): "Take words with you."

A time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace.

**A time to love:** (Deut. 7:13): "and He will love you."

**and a time to hate:** (Hos. 9:15): "All their evil is in Gilgal; therefore (sic) I hated them."

The Geneva Bible  
Kaplan Translation  
NET Bible®

.  
A time to search, and a time to give something up as lost;<sup>8</sup>  
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;  
A time to rip, and a time to sew;  
a time to keep silent, and a time to speak.  
A time to love, and a time to hate;  
a time for war, and a time for peace.



<sup>8tn</sup> The term אָבַד (lŷ'abbed, Piel infinitive construct from אָבַד, 'avad, "to destroy") means "to lose" (e.g., Jer 23:1) as the contrast with שָׁקַב (baqash, "to seek to find") indicates (HALOT 3 s.v. אָבַד; BDB 2 s.v. אָבַד 3). This is the declarative or delocutive-estimative sense of the Piel: "to view something as lost" (R. J. Williams, Hebrew Syntax, 28, §145; IBHS 403 §24.2g).

New American Bible (2011) .

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Brenner's Mechanical Trans. ....

Charles Thompson OT .

C. Thompson (updated) OT .

Context Group Version ...a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;  
a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silent, and a time to speak;  
a time to give allegiance, and a time to spurn; a time for war, and a time for peace.

English Standard Version .

Green's Literal Translation .

Modern English Version .

Modern Literal Version .

Modern KJV .

New American Standard B. A time to search and a time to give up as lost;  
A time to keep and a time to throw away.  
A time to tear apart and a time to sew together;  
A time to be silent and a time to speak.  
A time to love and a time to hate;  
A time for war and a time for peace.

New European Version .

New King James Version .

Niobi Study Bible .

Owen's Translation .

Restored Holy Bible 6.0 .

Updated Bible Version 2.17 .

A Voice in the Wilderness .

Webster's Bible Translation .

World English Bible .

Young's Literal Translation A time to seek, And a time to destroy.  
A time to keep, And a time to cast away.  
A time to rend, And a time to sew.  
A time to be silent, And a time to speak.  
A time to love, And a time to hate.  
A time of war, And a time of peace.

### The gist of this passage:

6-8

Ecclesiastes 3:6a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
ʿêth (עֵת) [pronounced <i>gayth</i> ]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>le</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to</i>	directional/relational/ possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510

## Ecclesiastes 3:6a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
bâqash (שָׁקַח) [pronounced <i>baw-KAHSH</i> ]	<i>to seek, to search, to desire, to strive after, to attempt to get, to require, to demand, to ask, to seek with desire and diligence</i>	Piel infinitive construct	Strong's #1245 BDB #134

**Translation:** [There is] a time to seek...

We continue with the parallelism here, of things which man does which appears to be the opposite. There is a time to look for something or for someone.

There is not just the right time to seek, but the right thing to seek. Matt. 6:33–34 (Jesus is speaking) “**But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.**” (ESV; capitalized)

## Ecclesiastes 3:6b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
wê (or vê) (וְ, or וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
êth (עֵת) [pronounced <i>gayth</i> ]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>lê</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to</i>	directional/relational/ possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
’âbad (אָבַד) [pronounced <i>aw<sup>b</sup>-VAHD</i> ]	<i>to lose, to determine as lost, to give up as lost; to cause wander, to disperse; to cause to perish, to destroy; to lay waste</i>	Piel infinitive construct	Strong's #6 BDB #1

**Translation:** ...and a time to lose;...

There is a time when something (or someone) is lost and it is clear that they cannot be found.

You will note that there is not necessarily virtuous in one strophe and sinful in the other. They are just things which are done in life.

There is a right time to lose in the spiritual life: Matt. 16:25–26 (Jesus is speaking) “**For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?**” (ESV; capitalized)

The Pulpit Commentary: *The verb abad, in piel, is used in the sense of "to destroy" (Ecclesiastes 7:7), and it is only in late Hebrew that it signifies, as here, "to lose." The reference is doubtless to property, and has no connection with the last clause of the preceding verse, as Delitzsch would opine. There is a proper and lawful pursuit of wealth, and there is a wise and prudent submission to its inevitable loss.*

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *The loss here is occasioned by events over which the owner has no control, differing from that in the next clause, which is voluntary. The wise man knows when to exert his energy in improving his fortune, and when to hold his hand and take failure without useless struggle. Loss, too, is sometimes gain, as when Christ's departure in the flesh was the prelude and the occasion of the sending of the Comforter (John 16:7); and there are many things of which we know not the real value till they are beyond our grasp.*<sup>178</sup>

### Ecclesiastes 3:6a-b A time to seek and a time to lose (various commentators)

Dr. J. Hamilton: *There is a time when every enterprise succeeds; when, as if he were a Midas, whatsoever the prosperous merchant touches is instantly gold. Then comes a time when all is adverse—when flotillas sink, when ports are closed, and each fine opening only proves another and a tantalising failure.*<sup>179</sup>

Matthew Henry: *[There is a] time to get, get money, get preferment, get good bargains and a good interest, when opportunity smiles, a time when a wise man will seek (so the word is); when he is setting out in the world and has a growing family, when he is in his prime, when he prospers and has a run of business, then it is time for him to be busy and make hay when the sun shines. There is a time to get wisdom, and knowledge, and grace, when a man has a price put into his hand; but then let him expect there will come a time to spend, when all he has will be little enough to serve his turn. Nay, there will come a time to lose, when what has been soon got will be soon scattered and cannot be held fast.*<sup>180</sup>

Ray C. Stedman: *There is "a time to seek [work, marriage, new friends], and a time to lose," (Ecclesiastes 3:6a RSV). There comes a time in life when we should curtail certain friendships, or change our jobs, for instance, and lose what we had in the past. It is proper and appropriate that these times should come.*<sup>181</sup>

Dr. Bob Utley: *"A time to search, and a time to give up as lost" The first term "search" (BDB 134, KB 152, Piel infinitive construct) means to seek after something. However, there comes a time in life where it becomes obvious that that something or someone cannot be obtained! One must get on with life!*<sup>182</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

### Ecclesiastes 3:6c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
ʿêth (תַּעַת) [pronounced gayth]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
lâmed (ל) [pronounced le]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to</i>	directional/relational/ possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
shâmar (שָׁמַר) [pronounced shaw-MAR]	<i>to keep, to guard, to protect, to watch, to preserve</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #8104 BDB #1036

<sup>178</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:6.

<sup>179</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (from the suggestive comments).

<sup>180</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.

<sup>181</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

<sup>182</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

**Translation:** ...a time to keep...

There is a time to keep some things. The word here can mean *to guard* and *to protect*.

There is a time to keep in the spiritual life. Moses bargains with God to continue guarding and protecting the Hebrew people. Exodus 32:11–14 But Moses implored the LORD his God and said, "O LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people, whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent did He bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your burning anger and relent from this disaster against Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.'" And the LORD relented from the disaster that He had spoken of bringing on His people. " (Gen. 15:5 22:17 26:4) (ESV; capitalized)

Ecclesiastes 3:6d			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿêth (עֵת) [pronounced gayth]	time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
lâmed (ל) [pronounced le]	to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to	directional/relational/ possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
shâlak <sup>e</sup> (שָׁלַךְ) [pronounced shaw-LAHK <sup>e</sup> ]	to throw, to cast, to fling, to throw off, to cast away [off]; to shed; to reject; to cast about; to cast down, to overthrow	Hiphil infinitive construct	Strong's #7993 BDB #1020

This is the first time a verb is repeated in this section of Ecclesiastes.

**Translation:** ...and a time to throw away;...

There is also a time to throw some things away.

Jer. 33:25–26 Thus says the LORD: If I have not established My covenant with day and night and the fixed order of heaven and earth, then I will reject the offspring of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his offspring to rule over the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them." (ESV; capitalized)

The Pulpit Commentary: [T]here are occasions when it is wiser to deprive one's self of some things in order to secure more important ends, as when sailors throw a cargo, etc; overboard in order to save their ship (comp. Jonah 1:5; Acts 27:18, Acts 27:19, Acts 27:38). And in higher matters, such as almsgiving, this maxim holds good: "There is that scatters, and yet increases .... The liberal soul will be made fat, and he that waters will be watered also himself" (Prov. 11:24–25).

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *Plumptre refers to Christ's so-called paradox, "Whoever would (ὁ ὅς αὖν θέλη.) save his life shall lose it, and whoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 16:25).*<sup>183</sup>

### **Ecclesiastes 3:6c-d A time to keep and a time to throw away (commentators)**

Dr. J. Hamilton: *And so there is "a time to keep and a time to cast away." There is a time when in the cutting blast the traveller is fain to wrap his cloak more closely around him; a time when in the torrid beam he is thankful to be rid of it. There is a time when we cannot keep too carefully the scrip or satchel which contains the provision for our journey; a time when, to outrun the pursuing assassin, or to bribe the red-armed robber, we fling it down without a scruple. It was a time to keep when the sea was smooth, and Rome's ready market was waiting for the corn of Egypt; but it was a time to cast the wheat into the sea when the angry ocean clamoured for the lives of thrice a hundred passengers.*<sup>184</sup>

Matthew Henry: *[There is a] time to keep, when we have use for what we have got, and can keep it without running the hazard of a good conscience; but there may come a time to cast away, when love to God may oblige us to cast away what we have, because we must deny Christ and wrong our consciences if we keep it (Matt. 10:37–38), and rather to make shipwreck of all than of the faith; nay, when love to ourselves may oblige us to cast it away, when it is for the saving of our lives, as it was when Jonah's mariners heaved their cargo into the sea.*<sup>185</sup>

Ray C. Stedman: *There is "a time to keep and a time to cast away," (Ecclesiastes 3:6b RSV). There are values and standards which must never be surrendered, while there are other times when we need to throw away things -- clean out the attic, the garage, throw away the old clothes, etc. This is true of habits and attitudes at times. Resentments need to be thrown away. Grudges and long-standing hurts need to be forgiven and forgotten.*<sup>186</sup>

#### **Chapter Outline**

#### **Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines**

Ecclesiastes 3:6 *[There is] a time to seek and a time to lose; a time to keep and a time to throw away;...*

The difference here when it comes to loss is, in the first parallel, there is no volition involved for the person suffering the loss; but in the second pair of parallelisms, the person is *choosing* to throw something away.

<sup>183</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:6.

<sup>184</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (from the suggestive comments).

<sup>185</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.

<sup>186</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.



## Ecclesiastes 3:6 Seeking, Losing, Keeping, Casting Off (various commentators)

College Press Bible Study: *Easy come, easy go,*” is an idiom which may speak to part of the lesson of this verse. The first section appears to refer to that which man acquires either through his own ingenuity or by his good fortune. In like manner he may find his possessions slipping away from him in a manner beyond his control. The latter part of the couplet suggests that man sometimes decides what he keeps and what he chooses to discard. Earthly wisdom enables one to take advantage of both situations. He will take advantage of the opportunities offered through God’s providence, and he will also exercise discretion in the wise use of that which he has gathered or collected.

College Press Bible Study continues: *Benevolent acts could be under consideration. They are part of the Preacher’s message (Ecclesiastes 11:1-6), and Solomon had written, “There is one who scatters, yet increases all the more, and there is one who withholds what is justly due, but it results only in want. The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered” (Prov. 11:24-25). This principle is also taught in many of the New Testament books. An example is found in 2Cor. 9:6-15.*<sup>187</sup>

Gary H. Everett: *Ecclesiastes 3:6 reflects upon King Solomon’s conclusion regarding the vanity of his pursuit of riches (Ecclesiastes 2:7-11). The king had gathered the greatest accumulation of wealth that had ever been collected upon earth, yet this wealth could not be kept entirely safe and secure. There were times he must give it away, and there were times thieves broke in and stole this wealth. He determined that riches were in the hands of an Almighty God as to whom He would give it to and whom He would take it away.*<sup>188</sup>

Everett continues: *As we reflect upon Israel’s redemptive history, we now can see that there is a predetermined time for them to prosper; and there will be a time when God will utter waste them in divine judgment. There is a time in their history for gathering stones and building the glorious Temple, and there will be a time of tearing it down in judgment. All of this was beyond Solomon’s judgment as a mortal king over Israel.*<sup>189</sup>

Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Commentary: *We have here—*

1. *A recognition of the duty of industry. There is “a time to get.” Providence calls men to active diligence in the sober pursuit of this world’s good.*
2. *The vicissitudes of fortune. No human power can contrive that our fortunes shall be constant and unbroken. They may be undermined by the merest accident; or we may be deprived of the power to enjoy them.*
3. *The prudence proper in extremity. It is right carefully to preserve the results of our labour, but there are emergencies when, to serve some higher purpose, we must part with our most cherished earthly good.*

The Preacher’s Commentary continues: *That which is subject to such violent changes, and which we must be prepared to lose, cannot be our chief good. It is no part of our real selves, no lasting inheritance of the soul. Even our life, the dearest treasure we possess, must be rendered up at the high demands of duty.*

The Preacher’s Commentary concludes: *The treasures of the mind and soul are alone exempt from this inexorable law. Capricious fortune cannot force us to resign immortal wealth. We must not attach our hearts to that which we may lose so soon.*<sup>190</sup>

<sup>187</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>188</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett’s Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:6.

<sup>189</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett’s Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:6.

<sup>190</sup> *The Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (from the suggestive comments).

## Ecclesiastes 3:6 Seeking, Losing, Keeping, Casting Off (various commentators)

D. Thomas: *This passage tells of accumulation and consequent prosperity, of loss and consequent adversity. The mutability of human affairs, the disparities of the human lot, were as remarkable and as perplexing in the days of the Hebrew sage as in our own. And they were regarded by him, as by rational and religious observers in our own time, as instances of the working of physical and social laws imposed by the Author of nature himself. In the exercise of divinely entrusted powers, men gather together possessions and disperse them abroad. The rich and the poor exist side by side; and the wealthy are every day impoverished, whilst the indigent are raised to opulence. These are the lights and shades upon the landscape of life, the shifting scenes in life's unfolding drama. Variety and change are evidently parts of the Divine intention, and are never absent from the world of our humanity.*<sup>191</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

### Ecclesiastes 3:7a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
ʿêth (עֵת) [pronounced <i>gayth</i> ]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>le</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to</i>	directional/relational/ possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
qâra' (עָרָק) [pronounced <i>kaw-RAHG</i> ]	<i>to bend, to tear apart; to tear out, to tear away; to cut in pieces [with a knife]; to cut out; to tear with words [i.e. to curse]</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #7167 BDB #902

**Translation:** ...a time to tear apart...

There is a time to tear something apart. I brought a long piece of shelving to a rental property, to replace some missing shelving, and I had to saw that board into pieces to make it fit. You might say I was tearing it apart. The specific context appears to be to cloth.

Illustrations of a time to rend or tear apart:

Samuel tells Saul that the kingdom will be taken from him. 1Sam. 15:27–28 *As Samuel turned to go away, Saul seized the skirt of his robe, and it tore. And Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you."*

When Jesus had died for our sins, the massive curtain which separated man from the Ark of God was torn asunder, meaning that man now had direct access to God. Mark 15:37–39 *And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed His last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this Man was the Son of God!"*

Barnabas and Paul tore their clothing before the people of Lystra to stop them from trying to worship them. Acts 14:12–18 *Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and*

<sup>191</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by D. Thomas; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

rushed out into the crowd, crying out, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them. (ESV; capitalized)

The Pulpit Commentary: *This is usually understood of the rending of garments in token of grief (Gen. 37:29, Gen. 37:34, etc.), and the repairing of the rent then made when the season of mourning was ended. The Talmudists laid down careful rules concerning the extent of the ritual tear, and how long it was to remain unended, both being regulated by the nearness of the relationship of the deceased person. In this interpretation there are these two difficulties: first, it makes the clause a virtual repetition of Ecclesiastes 3:4; and secondly, it is not known for certain that the closing of the rent was a ceremonial custom in the times of Koheleth.*

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *Hence Plumptre inclines to take the expression metaphorically of the division of a kingdom by schism, and the restoration of unity, comparing the Prophet Ahijah's communication to Jeroboam (I Kings 11:30, 31). But surely this would be a most unlikely allusion to put into Solomon's mouth; nor can we properly look for such a symbolical representation amid the other realistic examples given in the series.*<sup>192</sup>

### Ecclesiastes 3:7b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
‘êth (עֵת) [pronounced éyath]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
lâmed (ל) [pronounced le]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to</i>	directional/relational/ possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
tâphar (תָּפַח) [pronounced taw-FAHR]	<i>to sew [together]</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #8609 BDB #1074

This word only occurs 4x in the Scriptures, one time each in Genesis, Job, Ecclesiastes, and Ezekiel.

**Translation:** ...and a time to sew [together];...

There is a time to sew together. I lived during an era when it was common for the wife to sew patches onto the elbows of some shirts or on the knees of some pants. Darning socks was common. I have also lived in an era that perfectly good blue jeans were torn apart for a look to be achieved.

Something which most people born since 1970 will never see. My mother would have patterns in the store and then she would buy a large piece of cloth. The cloth would be matched to the pattern and cut out; then those pieces were be sewed together (to make a shirt or a dress).

There is a proper time to sew. Gen. 37:3 **Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors.** (ESV)

<sup>192</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:7.

### Ecclesiastes 3:7a-b Tearing and Mending (various commentators)

College Press Bible Study: *Since the tearing of garments was commonly associated with mourning among the Jews, it is easy to see such an application of this verse. Also, the tear was to be mended after an appropriate period of mourning depending upon the nearness of the relationship of the deceased person. However, mourning and weeping have previously been included in the listing of events, and it isn't likely that such would be the intention in this verse.*<sup>193</sup>

Dr. J. Hamilton: *There is a time when calamity threatens or grief has come, and we feel constrained to rend our apparel and betoken our inward woe; a time when the peril has withdrawn, or the fast is succeeded by a festival, when it is equally congruous to remove the symbols of sorrow.*<sup>194</sup>

Matthew Henry: *[There is a] time to rend the garments, as upon occasion of some great grief, and a time to sew, them again, in token that the grief is over. A time to undo what we have done and a time to do again what we have undone. Jerome applies this to the rending of the Jewish church and the sewing and making up of the gospel church thereupon.*<sup>195</sup>

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *The rending of garments on hearing sad tidings, and sewing them when the season of grief is past.*<sup>196</sup>

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *Providence has ordained that great and violent griefs shall not be perpetual. The rents of sorrow are healed by time; wherefore time has been called "the comforter."*<sup>197</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *What Koheleth says is this—There are times when it is natural to tear clothes to pieces, whether from grief, or anger, or any other cause, e.g. as being old and worthless, or infected; and there are times when it is equally natural to mend them, and to make them serviceable by timely repairs.*<sup>198</sup>

Dr. Bob Utley: *"A time to tear apart, and a time to sew together"* This may refer to one of the mourning practices of the Jews. They would rip the front of their robe at the neckline about five inches (e.g. 1Sam. 4:12; 2Sam. 1:2; 2Sam. 13:31; 2Sam. 15:32; 2Kings 18:3; 2 Kings 7; Jer. 41:5); when the mourning was over they would sew it up again.<sup>199</sup>

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

<sup>193</sup> The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>194</sup> The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (from the suggestive comments).

<sup>195</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.

<sup>196</sup> The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>197</sup> The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (from the suggestive comments).

<sup>198</sup> The Pulpit Commentary; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:7.

<sup>199</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.



**Ecclesiastes 3:7a-b A time to tear and a time to mend** (Bible journaling); from [YouTube](#); accessed March 22, 2020.

You can tell an older person did this, because they drew buttons and a sewing machine. How many people under 30 have seen these?

This was one of the few graphics of Bible journaling which dealt with a specific verse.



### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Dr. Peter Pett: *And finally we have three [paired] examples which relate to men's relationships with each other, keeping silence compared with speaking, loving compared with hating, and war compared with peace. The time-line continues on as these experiences occur again and again at different points in time, but all passing.*<sup>200</sup>

### Ecclesiastes 3:7c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
ʿêth (עַתָּה) [pronounced <i>gayth</i> ]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>le</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to</i>	directional/relational/ possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
châshâh (חָשָׁה) [pronounced <i>chaw-SHAW</i> ]	<i>to be silent, to be inactive, to be still</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #2814 BDB #364

<sup>200</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.



Ecclesiastes 3:7c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
This appears to be a later word, occurring only in Kings and books written during and after that era. It is found once in the book of Judges.			

**Translation:** ...a time to be silent...

There is a time not to say anything. So many people—including myself—could learn from this. One does not always have to speak; one does not always need to share one’s opinion.

Many a man has shown this or that verse to his wife so that she knows what to do. This may be one of those verses.

Ecclesiastes 3:7c There is a time for silence (various commentators)
Dr. J. Hamilton: <i>There is “a time to keep silence”—a time when we see that our neighbour’s grief is great, and we will not sing songs to a heavy heart; a time when, in the abatement of anguish, a word of sympathy may prove a word in season; a time when to remonstrate with the transgressor would be to reprove a madman, or, like the pouring of vinegar on nitre, would be to excite a fiery explosion; but a time will come when, in the dawn of repentance, or the sobering down of passion, he will feel that faithful are the wounds of a friend.</i> <sup>201</sup>
Nisbet: <i>There are some seasons wherein the Lord’s people are to refrain from speaking even that which is in itself good, and might prove so to others. As</i> <i>1. When we are called to learn from others (Job 32:7);</i> <i>2. When men turn brutish, and declare themselves incapable of profiting, and the more they are spoken to are the more enraged in their wickedness (Matt. 7:6), and so incorrigible that others can neither have access to deal with them, nor with God for them (Amos 5:13); and,</i> <i>3. When the truth has been often before sufficiently asserted and cleared even to their conviction (Matt. 27:14).</i> <sup>202</sup>
Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Commentary: <i>Silence is the proper attitude of the soul.—</i> <i>1. Before a great sorrow. The small griefs of men are noisy and demonstrative, but the greatest griefs are silent. They choke the utterance.</i> <i>2. Before a great mystery. When words fail to give to the vast and infinite shape and outline, we can only stand and wonder and adore. In the inner shrine of religious thought we must cover our faces.</i> <sup>203</sup>

Chapter Outline	Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines
-----------------	----------------------------------

There are so many good times to remain silent in life. Prov. 10:19 **When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.**

<sup>201</sup> *The Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (from the suggestive comments).

<sup>202</sup> *The Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (from the suggestive comments) (slightly edited).

<sup>203</sup> *The Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (from the suggestive comments).

Prov. 15:28 The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.

Prov. 17:27–28 Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent.

Prov. 18:13 If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame. (ESV)

See also Prov. 20:3 21:23 29:20 Isa. 53:7 Matt. 26:62–63 27:12 Acts 8:32 James 1:19 Peter 2:23.

Ecclesiastes 3:7d			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו, or ו) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wāw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
‘êth (עֵת) [pronounced éyath]	time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
lâmed (ל) [pronounced le]	to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to	directional/relational/possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
dâbar (דָּבַר) [pronounced daw <sup>b</sup> -VAHR]	to speak, to talk [and back with action], to give an opinion, to expound, to make a formal speech, to speak out, to promise, to propose, to speak kindly of, to declare, to proclaim, to announce	Piel infinitive construct	Strong's #1696 BDB #180

**Translation:** ...and a time to speak;...

There is also a time to speak out; there is a time to speak the truth (Bible doctrine), and there is a time to refrain from speaking. Even though we are believers in Jesus Christ and we are to share our faith, this does not mean that we give out some aspect of the gospel every 30 seconds (nor do we need to punctuate our conversation with *hallelujah* or with *praise the Lord*).

There is even a right time to speak. Prov. 25:11 The right word at the right time is like precious gold set in silver. (CEV)

Matt. 26:55–56a At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture Me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me. But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled."

Prov. 31:8–9 Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy. (ESV; capitalized)

### Ecclesiastes 3:7c-d Knowing when to be quiet and when to speak (commentators)

W. Clarkson: *The words of the text may suggest to us, though the thought may not have been in the writer's mind, that some things are good or otherwise according to their timeliness. There is a time to speak in the way of rebuking, or of jesting, or of contending, and, when well-timed, such words may be right and wise in a very high degree; but, if ill-timed, they would be wrong and foolish, and much to be condemned. The same thought is applicable to the demonstration of friendliness, or of any strong emotion (Ecclesiastes 3:5, 7); to the exercise of severity or of leniency (Ecclesiastes 3:3); to the manifestation of sorrow or of joy (Ecclesiastes 3:4); to the action of economy or of generosity (Ecclesiastes 3:6).*

Clarkson continues: *Hard-and-fast rules will not cover the infinite particulars of human life. Whether we shall act or be passive, whether we shall speak or be silent, what shall be our demeanor and what the tone we shall take,—this must depend upon particular circumstances and a number of new combinations; and every man must judge for himself, and must remember that there is great virtue in opportuneness.*<sup>204</sup>

College Press Bible Study: *[W]isdom is manifested in the ability to know when to keep silent and when to speak. There were occasions when Jesus chose to remain silent (Mark 14:60-61; Mark 15:4-5). There were other times when His words were like "apples of gold in settings of silver" (Prov. 25:11). How penetrating is James' sermon on the control of the tongue (James 3). (Cf. Prov. 17:28; Prov. 15:23).*<sup>205</sup>

Matthew Henry: *[There is a] time when it becomes us, and is our wisdom and duty, to keep silence, when it is an evil time (Amos 5:13), when our speaking would be the casting of pearl before swine, or when we are in danger of speaking amiss (Psalm 39:2); but there is also a time to speak for the glory of God and the edification of others, when silence would be the betraying of a righteous cause, and when with the mouth confession is to be made to salvation; and it is a great part of Christian prudence to know when to speak and when to hold our peace.*<sup>206</sup>

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary continues: *There are seasons when man must pay his tribute to nature, and assume the proper circumstances of woe. Again the season arrives when it is seemly to remove the ensigns of sorrow. Silence should go before speech, for only in the silence of meditation can speech be wisely framed.*<sup>207</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *A time to keep silence, and a time to speak. The silence of deep sorrow may be intimated, as when Job's friends sat by him in sympathizing silence (Job 2:13), and the psalmist cried, "I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred" (Psalm 39:2); and Elisha could not bear to hear his master's departure mentioned (2Kings 2:3, 2Kings 2:5). There are also occasions when the sorrow of the heart should find utterance, as in David's lament over Saul and Jonathan (2Sam. 1:17, etc.) and over Abner (2Sam. 3:33, etc.).*

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *But the gnome is of more general application. The young should hold their peace in the presence of their elders (Job 32:4, etc.); silence is often golden: "Even a fool, when he holds his peace, is counted wise: when he shuts his lips, he is esteemed as prudent" (Prov. 17:28). On the other hand, wise counsel is of infinite value, and must not be withheld at the right moment, and "a word in due season, how good is it!" (Prov. 15:23; Prov. 25:11). "If thou hast understanding, answer thy neighbor; if not, lay thy hand upon thy mouth" (Ecclesiasticus 5:12; see more, Ecclesiasticus 20:5, etc.).*<sup>208</sup>

<sup>204</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by W. Clarkson; Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.

<sup>205</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>206</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.

<sup>207</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (from the suggestive comments).

<sup>208</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:7 (slightly edited).

## Ecclesiastes 3:7c-d Knowing when to be quiet and when to speak (commentators)

Ray C. Stedman: *There is "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak," (Ecclesiastes 3:7b RSV). There are times when we know something, a piece of gossip, and we should not say it; we ought not to speak. There are times when we ought to speak, when something we are keeping secret would deliver someone or bring truth into a situation; a time to speak up.*<sup>209</sup>

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 3:7 ...a time to tear apart and a time to sew [together]; a time to be silent and a time to speak;...

## Ecclesiastes 3:7 Tearing, sewing, being silent and speaking (commentators)

Gary H. Everett: *King Solomon had decreed some of the wisest judgment among men, yet these judgments could not fix everyone's problems in the kingdom. In this respect he found himself in the hands of an Almighty God in knowing when to keep silent and let God work things out, and when to intervene and speak his royal judgment.*<sup>210</sup>

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

## Ecclesiastes 3:8a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
‘êth (תֵּן) [pronounced <i>gayth</i> ]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>le</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to</i>	directional/relational/ possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
’âhêb (אָהֵב) [pronounced <i>aw-HAYV<sup>B</sup></i> ]	<i>to desire, to breathe after; to love; to delight in; human love [for another] [familial, sexual]; human love [desire, appetite] for [food, drink, sleep, wisdom]; human love [for, to God]; God's love [toward men, people of Israel, righteousness]; to like</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #157 BDB #12

**Translation:** ...a time to love...

<sup>209</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

<sup>210</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:7.

There is a time to love, something which most people have experienced in some form or another.

Throughout this ancient poem/song, most people can read it and relate to it; even if their frame of reference is much different than Solomon's.

John 3:16 certainly illustrates a right time to love. (Jesus is speaking) **"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."** (ESV; capitalized)

Ecclesiastes 3:8b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
êth (עַתָּה) [pronounced gayth]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to</i>	directional/relational/ possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
sânê' (שָׂנֵא) [pronounced saw-NAY]	<i>to hate, loath; to be hateful, to be filled with animosity</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #8130 BDB #971

**Translation:** ...and a time to hate;...

There is also a time to hate. This one is fascinating, because this appears to be a mental attitude sins; and, so far, we are not dealing with sins as versus non-sins throughout. Let me suggest there may be a time for hatred, against one's enemy in war. However, this does not necessarily refer to the emotion which eats a person up inside.

There is a right time to hate. Psalm 97:10 **O you who love the LORD, hate evil! He preserves the lives of His saints; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked.**

Psalm 139:21–22 **Do I not hate those who hate You, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies.** (ESV; capitalized)

### Ecclesiastes 3:8a-b Hate and Love (various commentators)

Gary H. Everett: *There are a number of biblical examples where the Lord called for war and failure to execute a war would have been sin. God told Joshua to go destroy the inhabitants of Canaan so that the children of Israel could possess the land and have rest (Heb. 4:1-9). The Lord also told Saul to destroy the Amalekites so that His people would have rest from their wars.*<sup>211</sup>

Dr. J. Hamilton: *We have no complete command over our love and hatred, for they depend upon causes beyond ourselves. They are the opposite poles of human emotion, and, like the magnetic needle, they obey the forces of attraction and repulsion.*

<sup>211</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:8.



## Ecclesiastes 3:8a-b Hate and Love (various commentators)

Hamilton continues: *There is a period when, from identity of pursuit, or from the spell of some peculiar attraction, a friend is our all in all, and our idolatrous spirits live and move and have their being in him; but with riper years or changing character, the spell dissolves, and we marvel at ourselves that we could ever find zest in insipidity, or fascination in vulgarity. And just as individuals cannot control their hatred and their love, so nations cannot regulate their pacifications and their conflicts. But just at the moment when they are pledging a perpetual alliance, an apple of discord is thrown in, and to avenge an insulted flag, or settle a disputed boundary, or maintain the tottering balance of power, wager of battle is forthwith joined.*<sup>212</sup>

For some people, they have no control over their love and hate; but believers have this control.

Matthew Henry: *[There is a] time to love, and to show ourselves friendly, to be free and cheerful, and it is a pleasant time; but there may come a time to hate, when we shall see cause to break off all familiarity with some that we have been fond of, and to be upon the reserve, as having found reason for a suspicion, which love is loth to admit.*<sup>213</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *A time to love, and a time to hate. This reminds one of the gloss to which our Lord refers (Matt. 5:43), "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy," the first member being found in the old Law (Le 19:18), the second being a misconception of the spirit which made Israel God's executioner upon the condemned nations.*

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *It was the maxim of Bias, quoted by Aristotle, 'Rhet.,' Ecclesiastes 2:13, that we should love as if about some day to hate, and hate as if about to love. And Philo imparts a still more selfish tone to the gnome, when he pronounces, "It was well said by them of old, that we ought to deal out friendship without absolutely renouncing enmity, and practice enmity as possibly to turn to friendship"*<sup>214</sup>

Ray C. Stedman: *There is "a time to love, and a time to hate," (Ecclesiastes 3:8a RSV). When is it time to hate? Think of young Abraham Lincoln the first time he saw human beings sold on the slave blocks in New Orleans. He felt hatred rising in his heart. He resolved that if he ever got a chance to smash slavery he would do so. Lincoln's hatred of slavery was perfectly appropriate. There is "a time to love," when it is right that we should extend our love to somebody who is hurting, someone who is feeling dejected or rejected, lonely or weak.*<sup>215</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

## Ecclesiastes 3:8c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
‘êth (עֵת) [pronounced <i>gayth</i> ]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun, construct state	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
mil <sup>c</sup> châmâh (מִלְחָמָה) [pronounced <i>mil-khaw-MAW</i> ]	<i>battle, war, fight, fighting; victory; fortune of war</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #4421 BDB #536

This is the first time that we have a noun rather than the construct of a verb.

<sup>212</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (from the suggestive comments).

<sup>213</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.

<sup>214</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:8.

<sup>215</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

**Translation:** ...a time of war...

There is a time to be at war. Even though I come from the generation which sang, *just give peace a chance*; it is clear that there are times when war is called for. There are also times when war is unavoidable.

So many people take it for granted that the United States will never be invaded. We have lived a very blessed existence; however, as a **client nation** to God, we have no idea when the **pivot** will shrink to the point where God will exercise discipline against the entire country. This discipline, if we are far gone, can include a military invasion. If you are a person who never wants that to happen, there is a way to prevent it—get on a daily program of Bible doctrine. Learn it, understand it, believe it and apply it. This will protect our nation.

There is a proper time for war. There is a time to be armed and ready for war (or to protect one's family). Luke 11:21–22 (Jesus is speaking) **"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil."**

Samuel spoke to Saul to encourage him. 1Sam. 15:17–18 **And Samuel said, "Though you are little in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel. And the LORD sent you on a mission and said, 'Go, devote to destruction the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.' "** (ESV)

*Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: The system of Divine Providence is made up of antagonistic elements, of which each one in turn will have its brief season. If we accept the facts of human nature as they are, we cannot expect otherwise than that wars and commotions will arise. History is but the development of the possibilities latent in man.*<sup>216</sup>

Ecclesiastes 3:8d			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
‘êth (עֵת) [pronounced <i>gayth</i> ]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun, construct state	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
shâlôwm (שְׁלֹמִי) or shâlôm (שְׁלָמִי) [pronounced <i>shaw-LOHM</i> ]	<i>completeness, soundness, health and welfare, well, in good health; peace, prosperity, safe, secure, tranquil, undisturbed, unagitated</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #7965 BDB #1022

**Translation:** ...and a time of peace.

There is also a time for peace.

**Application:** Despite people thinking that the United States is a war-mongering nation, there are very few people in the United States who are directly involved with war. This is far different from other nations where war is going on outside their front door every day for years and years on end (such as, in Afghanistan or in Syria—I write this in 2020).

<sup>216</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (from the suggestive comments).

### **Ecclesiastes 3:8c-d A time of war, a time of peace (various commentators)**

Gary H. Everett: *Before there is peace, there must be a war. For example, the nation of Israel enjoyed peace during the reign of King Solomon because David was a man of war. He had subdued all nations surrounding him in order to have peace. Also, in order for a believer to walk in victory and peace in his life, he must first learn to kick the devil out of his life by spiritual warfare. The Lord once spoke to me and said, "There is peace in a home when there is dominion in that home" ... There can only be peace in a home when a man is armed for war. Unless the United States had gone to war during the First and Second World War, this world would not have enjoyed peace.*<sup>217</sup>

Matthew Henry: *[There is a] time of war, when God draws the sword for judgment and gives it commission to devour, when men draw the sword for justice and the maintaining of their rights, when there is in the nations a disposition to war; but we may hope for a time of peace, when the sword of the Lord shall be sheathed and he shall make wars to cease (Psalm 46:9), when the end of the war is obtained, and when there is on all sides a disposition to peace. War shall not last always, nor is there any peace to be called lasting on this side the everlasting peace. Thus in all these changes God has set the one over-against the other, that we may rejoice as though we rejoiced not and weep as though we wept not.*<sup>218</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *A time of war, and a time of peace. In the previous couplets the infinitive mood of the verb has been used; in this last hemistich substantives are introduced, as being more concise and better fitted to emphasize the close of the catalogue. The first clause referred specially to the private feelings which one is constrained to entertain towards individuals. The second clause has to do with national concerns, and touches on the statesmanship which discovers the necessity or the opportuneness of war and peace, and acts accordingly. In this and in all the other examples adduced, the lesson intended is this—that man is not independent; that under all circumstances and relations he is in the hand of a power mightier than himself, which frames time and seasons according to its own good pleasure.*

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *God holds the threads of human life; in some mysterious way directs and controls events; success and failure are dependent upon his will. There are certain laws which, regulate the issues of actions and events, and man cannot alter these; his free-will can put them in motion, but they become irresistible when in operation. This is not fatalism; it is the mere statement of a fact in experience. Koheleth never denies man's liberty, though he is very earnest in asserting God's sovereignty. The reconciliation of the two is a problem unsolved by him.*<sup>219</sup>

Ray C. Stedman: *There is "a time for war, and a time for peace," (Ecclesiastes 3:8b RSV). We ought to remember this as we consider some of the issues before us today. When tyranny rides roughshod over the rights of men there is a time when a nation properly makes war. But there is a time when war is absolutely the wrong thing, when no provocation should be allowed to start one because war can explode into violence far beyond anything demanded by a particular situation. How much is permitted in that regard is a perfectly moot subject, one that is being widely debated today.*<sup>220</sup>

Dr. Bob Utley: *"A time for war, and a time for peace" Most Jewish commentators understand Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 as referring to national Israel (cf. "appointed time" in Psalm 75:2; Psalm 102:13). However, it seems that Ecclesiastes 3:9-11 define these verses in light of a personal, rather than corporate, emphasis.*<sup>221</sup>

<sup>217</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:8.

<sup>218</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.

<sup>219</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:8.

<sup>220</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

<sup>221</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 3:8 ...a time to love and a time to hate; a time of war and a time of peace.

### Ecclesiastes 3:8 A time for peace, war, love and hate (various commentators)

College Press Bible Study: *In times of peace, all of man's activities should be expressions of love, as he moves about in his relationship with his family and his fellow man. However, when war is necessary, there should be foundational issues which require the hatred of just men. The seriousness of war speaks to the issue of life and man's ability to distinguish between that which is to be loved and thus defended, and that which should be destroyed because it is the recipient of man's justifiable hatred.*<sup>222</sup>

Gary H. Everett: *Although King Solomon was the greatest king upon earth during his period of reign, with the divine wisdom to maintain peace over his kingdom, yet he was not able to control love and hate, war and peace upon the earth. These were things too great for him, things he had to look to God for their outcome. In all of his judgments he could not resolve all conflicts. It was beyond his mortal ability to do so; thus, judgment ultimately rested in God's hands.*

Everett continues: *As we reflect upon Israel's redemptive history, we now can see that there is a predetermined time for them to be at peace, and there is a time God brought the nations into their land to judge them by waging war upon His people.*<sup>223</sup>

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Gary H. Everett: *Ecclesiastes 3:7-8 reflects upon King Solomon's conclusion regarding the vanity and limitations of his rule over Israel and the nations. The king had decreed some of the wisest judgment among men, yet these judgments could not fix everyone's problems in the kingdom (Ecclesiastes 3:7). In this respect he found himself in the hands of an Almighty God in knowing when to keep silent and let God work things out, and when to intervene and speak his royal judgment. Although King Solomon was the greatest king upon earth during his period of reign, with the divine wisdom to maintain peace over his kingdom, yet he was not able to control love and hate, war and peace upon the earth (Ecclesiastes 3:8). These were things too great for him, things he had to look to God for their outcome. In all of his judgments, he could not resolve all conflicts. It was beyond his mortal ability to do so; thus, judgment ultimately rested in God's hands.*<sup>224</sup>

Ecclesiastes 3:6–8 There is a time to seek and a time to lose; a time to keep and protect what one has and a time to cast it aside; a time to tear something apart and a time to sew something together; a time to be silent and a time to speak; a time to love and a time to hate; a time of war and a time of peace.

A. H. Moment on fatalism: *Destiny has a "Clock"—"a huge timepiece" which measures off the events in this fixed order of things. On its dial-plate is inscribed this world-wide truth: "To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven." By what "Hand" is this "Clock of Destiny" wound up and managed in all its complicated machinery? In other words: What is the superintending*

<sup>222</sup> The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>223</sup> Gary H. Everett Gary Everett's Bible Commentary; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:8.

<sup>224</sup> Gary H. Everett Gary Everett's Bible Commentary; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:7–8.



power of this fixed order of things? One answer says: “Fatalism makes the pendulum oscillate, fitting cog to cog and wheel to wheel, controlling all the movements of the dial-gnomon.” God is here given the go-by, while absolute necessity and fixed, cold, unconscious law are delegated with all power. Fatalism annihilates intelligence and free-will in the world’s government. It declares that “Everything from a star to a thought; from the growth of a tree to a spasm of sorrow; from the coronation of a king to the falling of a sparrow is connected with and under the positive control of molecular force.” In short, destiny’s timepiece is wound up and kept in running order by a “hand” tuner divine! The third chapter of Ecclesiastes was written in the interest of the Divine Hand managing the “Clock of Destiny”—in other words, to teach the glorious doctrine of special providence.<sup>225</sup>

Expositor’s Bible Commentary: *The varying and unstable desires which prompt us to seek this object or that as earnestly as we afterwards carelessly cast it away, and the passions which impel us to rend our garments over our losses, and by and by to sew up the rents not without some little wonder that we should ever have been so deeply moved by that which now sits so lightly on us; these passions and desires, which at one time strike us dumb with grief and so soon after make us voluble with joy, with all our fleeting and easily-moved hates and loves, strifes and reconciliations, move within the circle of law, although they wear so lawless a look, and are obsequious to the fixed canons of Heaven (Ecclesiastes 3:6-8).*<sup>226</sup>

One fascinating aspect of Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 is, even though these are all activities which man participates in, many of them man’s control is limited. Man’s volition is certainly involved in all of these things, but some things shake out a certain way, no matter what we want to do. For instance, America avoided entering into WWII as long as possible, but that we had to be a part of that was outside the control of the politicians and people of the United States.

### Concluding Remarks for Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (various commentators)

College Press Bible Study: *The arrangement of man’s activities as he lives out his life is now under consideration (cf. introductory remarks for this section). This verse is not intended to suggest that all things are predetermined or that man has no choice in arranging certain times or events. If this were true, the distinction between the “good man” and the “sinner” would be inappropriate. In addition, there would be little meaning given to admonition and rebuke found throughout the book. (Ecclesiastes 5:1 ff; Ecclesiastes 11:1 ff; Ecclesiastes 12:1 ff are but examples.)*

College Press Bible Study continues: *We have refrained from giving the couplets an unwarranted spiritual or Christian interpretation, as this would be out of character with the purpose of the book. We have also withstood the temptation, to which many others have yielded, to see God’s activities with Israel or the church in each of the events. The greater context of the passage assures that God’s laws are in effect in God’s world. He is very much in control.*

College Press Bible Study concludes: *However, the emphasis is undoubtedly on the activities of men. Solomon is giving us an overview of the total life of one generation. He stated it clearly in the beginning that there is a time for everything and every event under heaven (Ecclesiastes 3:1). His objective, at this point in his book, is to bring man to see that there is nothing better than to resign himself to the work and pleasures of the day, recognizing that this is a gift to man from the hand of God. It is not the activity of God but of man that is foremost in his mind. His very next question substantiates this contention: “What profit is there to the worker from that in which he toils?”*<sup>227</sup>

<sup>225</sup> *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>226</sup> *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–15.

<sup>227</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.



### Concluding Remarks for Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (various commentators)

Gary H. Everett: King Solomon acknowledges that, despite his vast knowledge and wisdom he obtained (Ecclesiastes 1:12-18), he alone cannot stop killing and other destructive forces of mankind. Neither can he heal and restore things to good. Even as a king he does not have the power to control evil or good. In Ecclesiastes 3:2 the king acknowledges that only God determines life and death, and He also judges good and evil upon this earth. Both are beyond King Solomon's grasp.<sup>228</sup>

Everett later writes: Each verse in this passage of Ecclesiastes 3:2-8 contains two couplets. Each of these sets of couplets is similar to one another. For example, in verse two birth is contrasted with death. In Ecclesiastes 3:3 killing and healing are similar to breaking down and building up. In Ecclesiastes 3:4 weeping and laughter are similar to mourning and dancing.

Everett continues: These couplets appear to represent individual seasons of our earthly lives. Within each season in this life there are both good things and evil things to deal with. This is because mankind has been subjected to vanity because of the Fall. Evil is now a part of this life that must be dealt with during every season of life. Thus, we see the struggle between good and evil, between God's ways and the ways of the devil as we walk through our journey in life.

Everett concludes: For example, the joy of the birth of a child will always be overshadowed by the knowledge that he will one day have to die (Ecclesiastes 3:2 a). We see this in the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ. His birth was accompanied with exciting prophecies and visits from wise men from the East. In the Temple Simeon spoke not only of His office as a Saviour but balanced his prophecy with words of sorrow and grief for Mary. Regarding Prov. 3:2 b, the travail of planting in the field and waiting patiently for the fruit will one day be forgotten by the joy of taking in a great harvest (Ecclesiastes 3:2 b). In our times of sorrow we must not forget how God brings us a ray of sunshine during our darkest hours (Ecclesiastes 3:4 a). We know that one day sadness will be overcome by joy; for this is how Jesus, because of the joy set before Him, endured the Cross and suffered the shame (Ecclesiastes 3:4 b). There is a season in our lives when we hold our children tightly and protect them in our embrace, while knowing that one day we must release them and send them out to pursue their own destinies (5b). We understand that as horrible wars can be, they always produce peace for a nation if fought in righteousness (Ecclesiastes 3:8). Thus, every season and event in our lives is mixed with sadness as well as joy if we will look for God's handiwork in it.<sup>229</sup>

Arno Gaebelein: Ecclesiastes 3:1-11. There is a time for everything. Twenty-eight "times" are mentioned, beginning with the time of birth and ending with the time for peace. Everything has a fixed time: Life-death; seeding-harvesting; killing-healing; breaking-down building-up; weeping-laughing; mourning-dancing, etc. These are the times of the entire race; that is what human life is. All moves and changes; all appears unto him profitless. *"What profit has he that works in that wherein he labors? What is the gain of it, to be born and to die, to plant and to pull up, to weep and to laugh, to mourn and to dance, to get and to lose, to love and to hate?"*

Gaebelein continues: But he advanced a step. He recognizes that all this travail must be of God, who has produced these never ceasing changes, so that men's hearts might be exercised thereby. *"I have seen the travail which God has given to the sons of men to be exercised in it."* Yeah, there is something which is in man. *"God has set the world in their heart,"* the correct rendering is, *"God has set eternity in their heart"* (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Man has the sense of the infinite in his heart.

Gaebelein concludes: All that time offers, all these changes cannot satisfy, nor can man with eternity in his heart find out the truth about it by himself. He may feel but cannot understand.<sup>230</sup>

Matthew Henry: *Every thing under heaven is thus changeable, but in heaven there is an unchangeable state.*<sup>231</sup>

<sup>228</sup> Gary H. Everett Gary Everett's Bible Commentary; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:3.

<sup>229</sup> Gary H. Everett Gary Everett's Bible Commentary; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–15.

<sup>230</sup> Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–22 (slightly edited).

<sup>231</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.

### Concluding Remarks for Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (various commentators)

Longman: *Qohelet now raises a subject characteristic of ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature—the proper time. After all, it is the wise person who knows the right time to say or to do the right thing (Prov. 15:23). . . . In the final analysis Qohelet powerfully expresses that everything is frustratingly out of the control of human beings.*<sup>232</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *As can be seen this magnificent overall view, covering many aspects of life, is expressed in contrasts. The point is being made that everything has its time, in a long string of times, and the opposite also has its time. There is a time when one thing happens, there is a time when the opposite happens. There is a time when the good happens, and a time when the not so good happens. Something may be right at one time, when at another time it might be wrong. Each thing has its time. So goes on the continual process of life, constantly repeating itself over time, which is his main point.*

Pett continues: *It is not necessary however to see here a predetermination of these activities. The time in question is the right time, or the wrong time, in each case, not the predetermined time. It is fixed because it is right for that time. Indeed a man can die before his time (Ecclesiastes 7:17, compare also Ecclesiastes 9:11 where time is related to chance) which is contrary to predetermination. What does come out is that we need to ensure that we do things at the right time, and be careful that we do not do them at the wrong time.*<sup>233</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *Antithetic in their relations. Human life, like man himself, may almost be characterized as a mass of contradictions. The incidents and interests, purposes and plans, events and enterprises, that compose it, are not only manifold and various, but also, it would seem, diametric in their opposition. Being born is in due course succeeded by dying; planting by plucking up; and killing—it may be in war, or by administration of justice, or through some perfectly defensible cause—if not by actual raising from death, which lies confessedly beyond the power of man (1Sam. 2:6; 2Kings 5:7), at least by healing every malady short of death. Breaking down, whether of material structures (2Chron. 23:17) or of intellectual systems, whether of national (Jer. 1:10) or religious (Gal. 2:18) institutions, is after an interval followed by the building up of those very things which were destroyed. Weeping endureth only for a night, while joy cometh in the morning (Psalm 30:5). Dancing, on the other hand, gives place to mourning.*

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *In short, whatever experience man at any time has, before he terminates his pilgrimage he may almost confidently count on having the opposite; and whatever action he may at any season perform, another season will almost certainly arrive when he will do the reverse. Of every one of the antinomies cited by the Preacher, man's experience on the earth furnishes examples.*

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *Though appearing to come about without any order or arrangement, the events and purposes of mundane existence are by no means left to the guidance, or rather no-guidance, of chance; but rather have their places in the vast world-plan determined, and the times of their appearing fixed. As the hour of each man's entrance into life is decreed; so is that of, his departure from the same (Heb. 9:27; 2Tim. 4:6). The date at which he shall step forth upon the active business of life, represented in the Preacher's catalogue by "planting and plucking up," "breaking down and building up," "casting away stones and gathering stones together," "getting and losing;" the period at which he shall marry (Ecclesiastes 3:4), with the times at which weddings and funerals (Ecclesiastes 3:4) shall occur in his family circle; the moment when he shall be called upon to stand up valiantly for truth and right amongst his contemporaries (Prov. 15:23), or to preserve a discreet and prudent silence when talk would be folly (Prov. 10:8), or even hurtful to the cause he serves; the times when he shall either suffer his affections to flow forth in an uninterrupted stream towards the good, or withhold them from unworthy objects; or, if be a statesman, the occasions what, he shall go to war and return from it, are all predetermined by infinite wisdom.*

<sup>232</sup> Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>233</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

### Concluding Remarks for Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary concludes: *How long each individual life shall continue (Psalm 31:15; Acts 17:26), how long each experience shall last, and how long each action shall take to perform, is equally a fixed and ascertained quantity, if not to man's knowledge, certainly to that of the supreme Disposer of events.*<sup>234</sup>

Let me see if I can summarize: our birth and death is known in eternity past. Our birth has nothing to do with our own volition; and our death may be tied directly to our own volition (for instance, in the case of the **sin unto death**). Since God knows everything about us, God knows when our death will occur, and He knew this in eternity past.

Similarly, we have events which occur in our lives. Some of these events we cause and some of them just happen. God oversees all of this and gives us the potential wherewithal to deal with them.

Ray C. Stedman: *I point out that all of this is God's wonderful plan for your life. The problem, of course, is that it is not our plan for our life. If we were given that right we would have no unpleasantness at all in life. But that would ruin us. God knows that people who are protected from everything almost invariably end up being impossible to live with; they are selfish, cruel, vicious, shallow, unprincipled. God sends these things in order that we might be taught. There is a time for everything, the Searcher says.*<sup>235</sup>

D. Thomas: *The Preacher of Jerusalem refers to joy and sorrow, when he speaks of "a time to laugh, and a time to weep;" to love and hate, for both of which he declares there is occasion in our human existence. There has been no change in these human experiences with the lapse of time; they are permanent factors in our life.*

Thomas continues: *Life is not a kaleidoscope, but a picture; not the promiscuous sounds heard when the instrumentalists are "tuning up," but an oratorio; not a chronicle, but a history. There is a unity and an aim in life; but this is not merely artistic, it is moral. We do not work and rest, enjoy and suffer, hope and fear, with no purpose to be achieved by the experiences through which we pass. He who has appointed "a season, and a time for every purpose under the heaven," designs that we should, by toil and endurance, by fellowship and solitude, by gain and loss, make progress in the course of moral and spiritual discipline, should grow in the favor and in the likeness of God himself.*<sup>236</sup>

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

**Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 A time for every matter** (Bible journaling); from [Pinterest](#); accessed March 22, 2020.

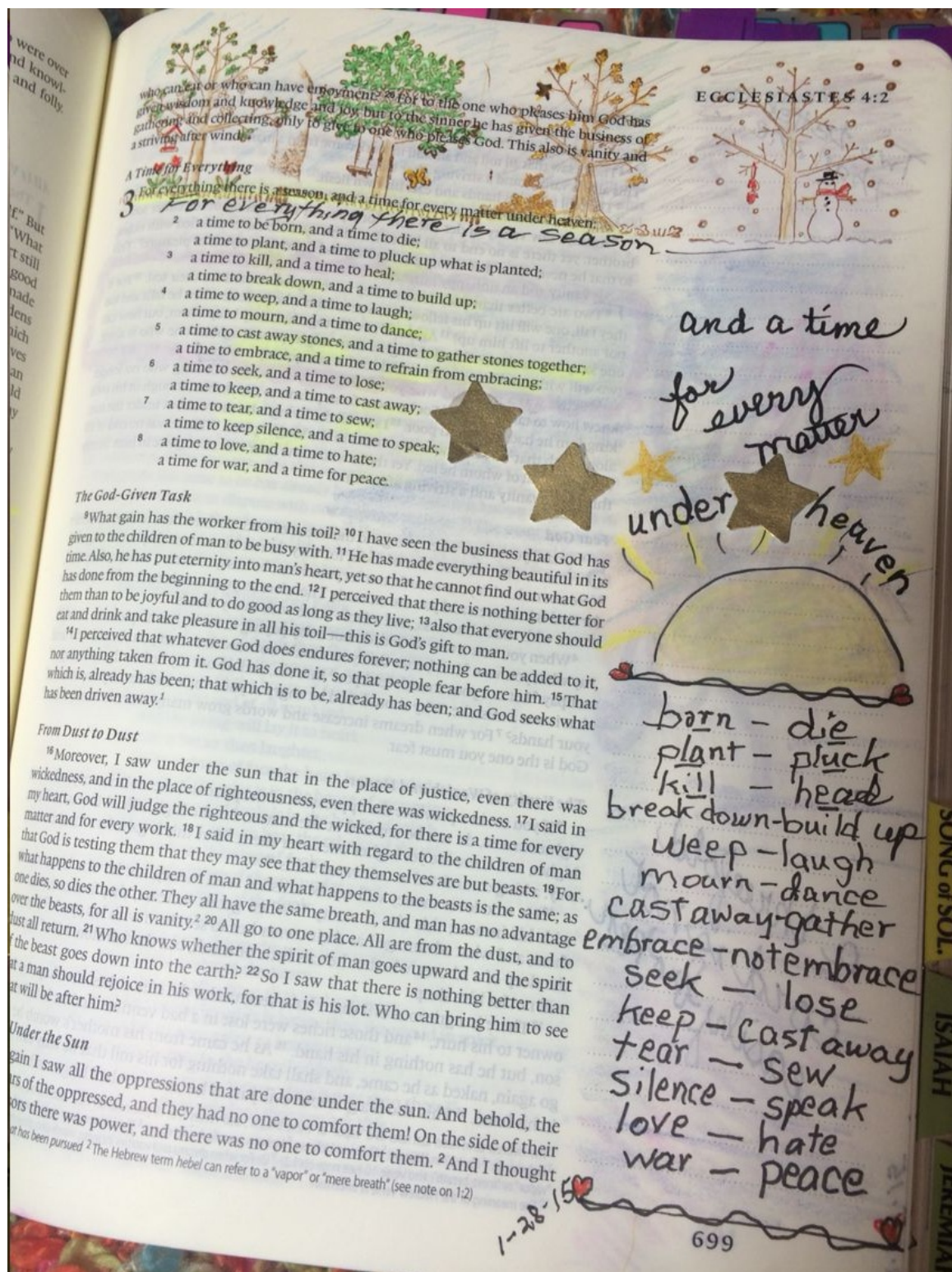
The seasons aspect is represented by the same tree at different times of the year. The sun rising, apparently, along with the stars, represents heaven. Then we have a list of things which are in contrast with one another to follow.

<sup>234</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, homiletics; Ecclesiastes 3:1–9.

<sup>235</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

<sup>236</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by D. Thomas; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.





These commentators help us to transition from Solomon's poem/song to some philosophical statements which he will make.

## Introducing Ecclesiastes 3:9–11 (various commentators)

David Guzik: *[There is a] glimmer of hope in seeing God as the master of time.*<sup>237</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *There is a plan and system in all the circumstances of man's life; he feels this instinctively, but he cannot comprehend it. His duty is to make the best of the present, and to recognize the immutability of the law that governs all things.*<sup>238</sup>

Ray C. Stedman: *But more than that, if God has a time for everything he also has a purpose in everything, as this next passage declares.*<sup>239</sup>

J. Willcock: *The thought of there being a fixed order in the events of life, of laws governing the world which man cannot fully understand or control, brings with it no comfort to the mind of this Jewish philosopher. It rather, in his view, increases the difficulty of playing one's part successfully. Who can be sure that he has hit upon the right course to follow, the opportune time at which to act? Do not "the fixed phenomena" and "iron laws of life" render human effort fruitless and disappointing?*<sup>240</sup>

Over and over again, I think the Pulpit Commentary has been exactly right on many points that it makes.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

**What gain the worker as which he [is] toiling? I have seen the work which has given Elohim to sons of the man to be humbled with him [or, it].** Ecclesiastes 3:9–10

**What gain [has] the worker in which he toils? I have seen the labor which Elohim has give to the sons of man, to be humbled by it.**

**What real profit is there for the worker in all that the does? I have observed the hard labor that God has given to mankind, which work eventually humbles those men, wearing them down.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	What gain the worker as which he [is] toiling? I have seen the work which has given Elohim to sons of the man to be humbled with him [or, it].
Dead Sea Scrolls	.
Jerusalem targum	.
Targum (Onkelos)	.
Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan)	.
Aramaic Targum	What advantage has the toiling man, who labours to make treasures, and to gather mammon, unless he is helped by Providence from above? I saw the painful business and punishment which the Lord gave to the children of men who are wicked, to afflict them therewith.
Revised Douay-Rheims	.
Douay-Rheims 1899 (Amer.)	What hath man more of his labour? I have seen the trouble, which God hath given the sons of men to be exercised in it.
Aramaic ESV of Peshitta	.

<sup>237</sup> David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

<sup>238</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:10–15.

<sup>239</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

<sup>240</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by J. Willcock; Ecclesiastes 3:9–11.



V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	.
Plain English Aramaic Bible	.
Lamsa's Peshitta (Syriac)	What profit has the worker in his labor? I have seen the toil which the LORD has given to the sons of men to be engaged therewith.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	What advantage has he that works in those things in which he labors? I have seen all the trouble, which God has given to the sons of men to be burdened with.

Significant differences:

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	What profit has the worker in the work which he does? I saw the work which God has put on the sons of man.
Easy English	People get nothing for all the work that they do. 10 Their work is very difficult. And God has caused it to be like that.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	<b>God Controls His World</b> Do people really gain anything from their hard work? I saw all the hard work God gave us to do.
<i>God's Word</i> ™	<b>God Gives Mortals a Sense of Eternity</b> What do working people gain from their hard labor? I have seen mortals weighed down with a burden that Elohim has placed on them.
Good News Bible (TEV)	What do we gain from all our work? I know the heavy burdens that God has laid on us.
<i>The Message</i>	But in the end, does it really make a difference what anyone does? I've had a good look at what God has given us to do—busywork, mostly.
Names of God Bible	.
NIRV	What do workers get for their hard work? I've seen the heavy load God has put on human beings.
New Simplified Bible	.

### Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

Casual English Bible	.
College Press paraphrase	When man shares in all the events of life, and toils throughout the short time he has to live here under the sun, what profit does he have to hold in his hand? I have been around. I have seen the work that God has assigned to the sons of men to occupy them as they toil and labor during their lifetimes.
Contemporary English V.	What do we gain by all of our hard work? I have seen what difficult things God demands of us.
The Living Bible	What does one really get from hard work? I have thought about this in connection with all the various kinds of work God has given to mankind.
New Berkeley Version	.
New Life Version	<b>The God-Given Work</b> What does the worker get for his work? I have seen the work which God has given the sons of men to do.
New Living Translation	What do people really get for all their hard work? I have seen the burden God has placed on us all.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	What do people gain from all the work that they do? I have seen the work that God has given people to do.
Unfolding Bible Simplified	.

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	So, what can your efforts accomplish? I've seen the amusements God's given To the sons of men to distract them...
Beck's American Translation	.
Common English Bible	<b>Hard work</b> What do workers gain from all their hard work? I have observed the task that God has given human beings.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	For all this toiling of his, how is man the richer?[1] Pitiable indeed I found it, this task God has given to mankind; and he, meanwhile, has made the world, in all its seasonable beauty, and given us the contemplation[2] of it, yet of his own dealings with us, first and last, never should man gain comprehension. V. 11 is included for context. [1] vv. 1-9: These verses are ordinarily understood as implying that man's varied activities have to be carried on at a time of God's, not of his own, choosing. But, if so, the instances are strangely chosen, nor is it even clear why a series of contrasts should have been instituted at all. The context suggests (cf. especially verse 9) that we are meant to think of life as a monotonous alternation of opposite activities; in that case, the passage has the same note of frustration as 1.4-7 above. [2] Literally, 'the discussion'. The Hebrew text gives a more mysterious phrase: 'He has set eternity (or perhaps, the world) in their hearts'.
Translation for Translators	◀What do people gain from all the work that they do?/It seems that people gain very little from all the work that they do [RHQ]▶. I have seen the work that God has given people to do.

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Conservapedia Translation	What profit does man make from his labor? I have seen the ordeals that God has given to the sons of men to make them stronger.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	Yet what remains as the product, for which they are done? I have examined the endeavors that God has appointed for the children of Adam by which to develop themselves.—
God's Truth (Tyndale)	What has a man else (that does anything) but weariness and labor? For as touching the travail and carefulness which God has given unto men, I see that he has given it them, to be exercised in it.
HCSB	.
International Standard V	<b>The Purpose of Life</b> What benefit does the worker gain from what he undertakes? I have observed the burdens placed by God on human beings in order to perfect them.
Jubilee Bible 2000	.
H. C. Leupold	.
Lexham English Bible	What does the worker gain in his toil? I have seen the busyness God gives to humans to preoccupy them.
NIV, ©2011	.
Peter Pett's translation	What profit has the workman in that in which he labours? I have seen the hard exertions which God has given to the sons of men to be exercised with.
Unfolding Bible Literal Text	.
Unlocked Literal Bible	What profit does the worker gain in his labor? I have seen the work that God has given to human beings to complete.
Urim-Thummim Version	What profit has he that works in what he labors? I have seen the travail, that Elohim has given to the sons of men to be exercised in it..
Wikipedia Bible Project	What benefit for the doer in that he has labored? I saw the business which God has given man, to agonize over.

**Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):**

Christian Community (1988)	What profit is there for a man from all his toils? 10.Finally I considered the task God gave to the sons of men.
The Heritage Bible	What profit <i>is there</i> to the doer in what he toils? I have seen the employment which God has given to the sons of men in which to humble <i>them</i> .
New American Bible (2002)	What advantage has the worker from his toil? I have considered the task which God has appointed for men to be busied about.
New American Bible (2011)	What profit have workers from their toil? [Eccl 1:3.] I have seen the business that God has given to mortals to be busied about.
New English Bible—1970	What profit does one who works get from all his labour? I have seen the business that God has given men to keep them busy.
New Jerusalem Bible	What do people gain from the efforts they make? I contemplate the task that God gives humanity to labour at.
New RSV	.
Revised English Bible—1989	What profit has the worker from his labour? I have seen the task that God has given to mortals to keep them occupied.

**Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:**

Complete Jewish Bible	.
exeGeses companion Bible	What advantage has he who works in that wherein he toils? I saw the drudgery Elohim gave to the sons of humanity to be humbled therein.
Hebraic Roots Bible	What advantage has he who works in that which he did as a laborer? I have seen the task which Elohim has given to the sons of men, to be humbled by it.
The Israel Bible	What value, then, can the man of affairs get from what he earns? I have observed the business that <i>Hashem</i> gave man to be concerned with:...
Israeli Authorized Version	.
Kaplan Translation	.
<i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	What does the worker gain from his toil? I have seen the task Elohim has given to the sons of men to be humbled by it.
Tree of Life Version	.

**Weird English, 𐤀𐤁𐤅𐤄 English, Anachronistic English Translations:**

Alpha & Omega Bible	WHAT ADVANTAGE HAS HE THAT WORKS IN THOSE THINGS WHEREIN HE LABORS? I HAVE SEEN ALL THE TROUBLE, WHICH THEOS ( <i>The Alpha &amp; Omega</i> ) HAS GIVEN TO THE SONS OF MEN TO BE TROUBLED WITH.
Awful Scroll Bible	Is there to be excelling, preparing by that toiled? - I am to have perceived the undertakings, that He of mighty ones is to have granted to the sons of mankind, to be humbled by them.
Charles Thompson OT	.
Concordant Literal Version	What advantage does the worker have in what he is toiling? I see the experience that Elohim gives To the sons of humanity to humble them by it.
Darby Translation	.
exeGeses companion Bible	.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	What profit hath the worker from his amal (labor)?

I have seen the occupation, which Elohim hath given to the bnei HaAdam to keep them occupied.

Rotherham's *Emphasized B.* .  
Third Millennium Bible .

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

*The Amplified Bible* .

The Expanded Bible

God Controls His World

·Do [<sup>L</sup>What do] people really ·gain anything [profit] from their ·work [toil; 1:3]? I saw the ·hard work [task] God has given people to ·do [keep them occupied; 1:13]. God has ·given them a desire to know the future [<sup>L</sup> placed eternity/an awareness of time/or ignorance in their hearts].

Kretzmann's Commentary

What profit hath he that worketh, being engaged in the one or the other of the activities enumerated above, in that wherein he laboreth? There is no lasting happiness and satisfaction to be found on this earth.

I have seen the travail which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it, the misery which is the lot of all human beings.

Syndein/Thieme

What profit to the one in the field of monotonous and wearisome labor? I have researched the occupation of time, which the God has given to the sons of men to be occupied in it.

The Voice

What good comes to anyone who works so hard, all to gain a few possessions? I have seen the kinds of tasks God has given each of us to do to keep one busy,.

### Bible Translations with Many Footnotes:

College Press Bible Study .  
The Complete Tanach

What profit has the one who works in that which he toils?.

**What profit has the one who works:** What is the profit of the one who does evil in all that he toils? He too-his time will come, and all will be lost.

I have seen the occupation that God gave to the sons of men with which to occupy themselves.

**the occupation:** Heb. הַשְׂעָה, the behavior.

**to occupy themselves:** Heb. תִּשְׂעַל, to behave.

The Geneva Bible  
Kaplan Translation  
NET Bible®

*Man is Ignorant of God's Timing*

What benefit can a worker<sup>9</sup> gain from his toil?<sup>10</sup>

I have observed the burden

that God has given to people<sup>11</sup> to keep them occupied.

<sup>9tn</sup> The term הַשְׂעָה (ha'oseh, article + Qal active participle ms from עָשָׂה, 'asah, "to do") functions substantively ("the worker"); see BDB 794 s.v. עָשָׂה II.1. This is a figurative description of man (metonymy of association), and plays on the repetition of עָשָׂה (verb: "to do," noun: "work") throughout the passage. In the light of God's orchestration of human affairs, man's efforts cannot change anything. It refers to man in general with the article functioning in a generic sense (see IBHS 244-45 §13.5.1f; Joüon 2:511 §137.m).

<sup>10sn</sup> This rhetorical question is an example of negative affirmation, expecting a negative answer: "Man gains nothing from his toil!" (see E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 949-51). Any advantage that man might gain from his toil is nullified by his ignorance of divine providence.

<sup>11tn</sup> Heb "the sons of man."

New American Bible (2011) .

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

Brenner's Mechanical Trans. ....	
Charles Thompson OT	.
C. Thompson (updated) OT	What is the lasting advantage of the agent from the things in which he labours? I have taken a collective view of all the business which God has assigned to the sons of men to be exercised therewith.
Context Group Version	.
English Standard Version	.
Green's Literal Translation	.
Modern English Version	<b>The God-Given Task</b> What benefit does the worker have in his toil? I have seen the task that God has given to sons of men to be concerned with.
Modern Literal Version	.
Modern KJV	.
New American Standard B.	What profit is there to the worker from that in which he toils? I have seen the task which God has given the sons of men with which to occupy themselves.
New European Version	<b>The Hand of God in the Midst of Human Frustrations.</b> What profit has he who works in that in which he labours? I have seen the burden which God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with.
New King James Version	.
Niobi Study Bible	.
Owen's Translation	.
Restored Holy Bible 6.0	.
Updated Bible Version 2.17	.
A Voice in the Wilderness	.
Webster's Bible Translation	.
World English Bible	.
Young's Literal Translation	.
Young's Updated LT	What advantage has the doer in that which he is labouring at? I have seen the travail that God has given to the sons of man to be humbled by it.

**The gist of this passage:**

9-10

Ecclesiastes 3:9			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
mâh (מַה) [pronounced <i>maw</i> ]	<i>what, how, why</i>	interrogative; exclamatory particle	Strong's #4100 BDB #552
yithrôn (יִתְרוֹן) [pronounced <i>yihth-ROWN</i> ]	<i>advantage, profit; preeminence, gain</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3504 BDB #452
This word is found 10 times in the Bible; and only in the book of Ecclesiastes.			
ʾâsâh (אָשָׁה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i> ]	<i>a doer, a maker, worker, creator, one who constructs [fashions, preparers]</i>	masculine singular, Qal active participle; with the definite article	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
kaph or k <sup>e</sup> (כ) [pronounced <i>k<sup>e</sup></i> ]	<i>like, as, according to; about, approximately</i>	preposition of comparison, resemblance or approximation	No Strong's # BDB #453



## Ecclesiastes 3:9

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
'āsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced ash-ER]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
Together, ka'āsher (כְּאֲשֶׁר) [pronounced kah-uh-SHER] means <i>as which, as one who, as, like as, as just, according as; because; according to what manner, in a manner as, when, about when</i> . Back in 1Sam. 12:8, I rendered this <i>for example</i> . In Gen. 44:1, I have translated this, <i>as much as</i> .			
hûw' (אוּה) [pronounced hoo]	<i>he, it; him, himself as a demonstrative pronoun: that, this (one); same</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> , is implied	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
'āmêl (אִמֵּל) [pronounced gaw-MALE]	<i>toiling, working, doing, working until complete misery and exhaustion set in, worn out, tired out, burnt out</i>	masculine singular verbal adjective (also used as a noun)	Strong's #6001 BDB #766

**Translation:** [What gain \[has\] the worker in which he toils?](#)

Solomon has a rather unique position in the land, as the king. He has great riches and he can choose when to work and when not to. He can choose, apart from kingly duties, what sort of work to be involved in. He can spend his time in observation, he can make great plans, and he can get his hands dirty when he wants to. If there is an odious task before him, he can assign that to someone else.

It is clear that, at various points in his life, Solomon did work. He built the Temple. He had the vision—partially his own and partially his father's—and he guided others to manifest that vision. Now, he may not have realized it, but his contribution to that vision was essential, even if all he did was stand around and say, "You do this" or to a foreman, "You have your men do this next."

I had an addition added to my house, and the builder was there every day, but he never raised a hammer. He examined the work that was being done, spoke privately to his 3 workers, and then went off, presumably to another job site. His expertise and vision were necessary. He could miss a day or two, but he could not be gone for a week or so. He couldn't simply set his men to work, and tell them, "Give me a call when this is done."

I say this because Solomon observed men working extremely hard; and he, as the builder, did very little by way of physical labor. What he was doing, quite frankly, was fun. It was creative and, because of that, Solomon enjoyed what he was doing.

In Solomon's life, he has observed his laborers and the hard work which they do day in and day out. He asks here, *what is their true gain? What is their profit?* Solomon understands his own circumstances and situation. He knows why he does what he does; and he can see the end of his many labors. But it is different for the common man, who does not necessarily have the same sort of outcome in his own life.

Most men—particularly in Solomon's day—did extremely hard work day after day. This is what Solomon was making observations about.

Bear in mind that Solomon is writing this during a very prosperous time in Israel. Men had their own homes and farms and their own vineyards. It was a good time to be alive in Israel.

As an aside, Solomon is not necessarily writing any of this while building the Temple. But that work was a very significant part of his life, and he therefore makes observations based upon what he had observed them (he may be looking back 30 or 40 years when writing this down).

**Application:** One of the amazing aspects of life—and particularly a blessing to the United States—is that people can pursue a great variety of vocations. We take this for granted, but this is a marvelous blessing from God. I know the back-breaking work that my father did, and I know that, for the majority of his life, he hated his job (he was a roofer). I have worked on a roof a few times and it is hard, hot work. I was able to teach, and I taught during a time when I was able to find a school with an excellent approach to discipline. As a result, I greatly enjoyed my job; and I think many of my students appreciated me as their teacher.

Ecclesiastes 3:9 [What gain \[has\] the worker in which he toils?](#)

### Ecclesiastes 3:9 What gain is there to the worker in his work? (commentators)

Perhaps what is being implied with v. 9 is, we really have no assurance of what will happen, even if we do toil. Matthew Henry: *What can a man promise himself from planting and building, when that which he thinks is brought to perfection may so soon, and will so surely, be plucked up and broken down? All our pains and care will not alter either the mutable nature of the things themselves or the immutable counsel of God concerning them.*<sup>241</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *If thus man, in all his actions and under all circumstances, depends upon time and seasons which are beyond his control, we return to the same desponding question already asked in Ecclesiastes 1:3. [What profit has he that works in that wherein he labors?](#) The preceding enumeration leads up to this question, to which the answer is "None." Since time and tide wait for no man, since man cannot know for certain his opportunity, he cannot reckon on reaping any advantage from his labor.*<sup>242</sup>

Ray C. Stedman: *What is "left over" to provide a permanent sense of satisfaction after the momentary pleasure is extracted from some pleasurable experience? That is the question with which the Searcher examines everything. He has already asked it three times in this book. The answer follows [in v 10].*<sup>243</sup>

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

### Ecclesiastes 3:10

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
râ'âh (רָאָה) [pronounced raw-AWH]	<i>to see, to look, to look at, to view, to gaze; to behold; to observe; to perceive, to understand, to learn, to know</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #7200 BDB #906
'êth (אֵת) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated; possibly be translated <i>to, toward (s)</i>	mark of a direct object; indicates next word is the object of the verb	Strong's #853 BDB #84

<sup>241</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.

<sup>242</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:9.

<sup>243</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

### Ecclesiastes 3:10

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
ʿinʿyân (עֵינָן) [pronounced <i>ghn-YAWN</i> ]	<i>employment, business, occupation, task, job; travail</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #6045 BDB #775
This is another word exclusively found in the book of Ecclesiastes.			
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i> ]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
nāthan (נָתַן) [pronounced <i>naw-THAHN</i> ]	<i>to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set; to make</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5414 BDB #678
ʾĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i> ]	<i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>le</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to</i>	directional/relational/possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
bânîym (בָּנִים) [pronounced <i>baw-NEEM</i> ]	<i>sons, descendants; children; people; sometimes rendered men; young men, youths</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
ʾādām (אָדָם) [pronounced <i>aw-DAWM</i> ]	<i>a man, a human being, mankind; transliterated Adam</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #120 & #121 BDB #9
The word <i>the Adam</i> can mean <i>man, mankind, humankind, men, human beings</i> .			
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>le</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to</i>	directional/relational/possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʾânâh (אָנָה) [pronounced <i>gaw-NAWH</i> ]	<i>to humble, to be grace oriented, to be humbled, to be afflicted</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #6031 BDB #776
This word is a homonym, the other use also being very common; it means <i>to answer</i> . Strong's #6030 BDB #772.			
b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #88

**Translation:** I have seen the labor which Elohim has give to the sons of man, to be humbled by it.

Although Solomon worked for a great deal of his life, he could stop working and chase women if he wanted to; and for a long period of time, he chased pleasure. What Solomon did not really appreciate was the divine institution of work. Man worked before the fall and man works after the fall.

Over the years, Solomon has observed men working, and working hard. And these men grow old and sometimes their work seems to beat them down. Solomon understands that this labor is given to these men by God, but Solomon is still considering it.

**Application:** One of the reasons that the President is so popular throughout the United States (despite the constant attacks by media)<sup>244</sup> is that his policies favor work, working and workers. Work is the key to good mental health, good physical health and good emotional health. For those who know the **Revealed God**, it is helpful to one's spiritual life as well.

Ecclesiastes 3:10 I have seen the labor which Elohim has give to the sons of man, to be humbled by it.

These tasks given by God to man have just been described in vv. 2–8, in the Season for Everything poem.

### **Ecclesiastes 3:10 Is there any true profit to great labor? (various commentators)**

Dr. Thomas Constable: *Solomon expressed his conviction that in view of God's incomprehensible workings, all human toil is without permanent profit.*<sup>245</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *I have seen the travail which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it; i.e. to busy themselves therewith (Ecclesiastes 1:13). This travail, exercise, or business is the work that has to be done under the conditions prescribed of time and season in face of the difficulty of man's free action and God's ordering.*

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *We take infinite pains, we entertain ample desires, and strive restlessly to carry them out, but our efforts are controlled by a higher law, and results occur in the way and at the time arranged by Providence. Human labor, though it is appointed by God and is part of man's heritage imposed upon him by the Fall (Gen. 3:17, etc.), cannot bring contentment or satisfy the spirit's cravings.*<sup>246</sup>

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 3:9–10 What real profit is there for the worker in all that he does? I have observed the hard labor that God has given to mankind, which work eventually humbles those men, wearing them down.

### **Ecclesiastes 3:9–10 Conclusions drawn (various commentators)**

Gary H. Everett: *The preacher then asks himself the value of labouring and travelling during the seasons of life (Ecclesiastes 3:9). For God subjected mankind to travail at the time of the Fall in the Garden in order to keep us humble (Ecclesiastes 3:10). For it is in humility that we will turn back to God.*<sup>247</sup>

Ray C. Stedman: *Life itself is going to hide the secret. The purpose of these things is found by careful, thoughtful examination, as he has been making all along.*<sup>248</sup>

<sup>244</sup> I write this in 2020.

<sup>245</sup> Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–4:3.

<sup>246</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:10.

<sup>247</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–15.

<sup>248</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

## Ecclesiastes 3:9–10 Conclusions drawn (various commentators)

J. Willcock: *Another conclusion is drawn from the same facts by a higher Teacher. We cannot by taking thought alter the conditions of our lives, and should, therefore, Christ has taught us, place our trust in our heavenly Father, who governs all things, and whose love for the creatures he has made is seen in his feeding the birds and clothing with beauty the flowers of the field (Matt. 6:25-34). The anxiety which the thought of human weakness in the presence of the immutable laws of nature excites is charmed away by the consolatory teaching of Jesus. But no solution is given of the difficulties that occasioned it.*<sup>249</sup>

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

W. Clarkson: *How shall we solve all those great problems which continually confront us, which baffle and bewilder us, which sometimes drive us to the very verge of distraction or even of unbelief? The solution is partly found in—...*<sup>250</sup>

**The all He made beautiful in his time. Also, the eternal he has given in their heart. From a want of that [which] cannot attain the man the work which has done the Elohim from a head and as far as an end.**

Ecclesiastes  
3:11

**He made everything beautiful in its time. Furthermore, He has placed the eternal [or, the hidden things] into their hearts. From a [position] of lacking, man cannot [fully] discover [all] the work which the Elohim has done, from beginning to end.**

**God made everything beautiful in its time. Furthermore, God placed eternity and other hidden treasures into the heart of man. Yet, from a position of want, man cannot fully appreciate all the work which God has done, from beginning to end.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	The all He made beautiful in his time. Also, the eternal he has given in their heart. From a want of that [which] cannot attain the man the work which has done the Elohim from a head and as far as an end.
Dead Sea Scrolls	.
Jerusalem targum	.
Targum (Onkelos)	.
Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan)	.
Aramaic Targum	King Solomon said by the spirit of prophecy, God made everything beautiful in its time; for it was opportune that there should be the strife which was in the days of Jeroboam, son of Neboth; it was to have been in the days of Sheba, son of Bichri, and it was delayed, and came to pass in the days of Jeroboam, son of Nebat; for if it had been in the days of Sheba, son of Bichri, the temple would not have been built, because of the golden calves which the wicked Jeroboam made, and placed

<sup>249</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by J. Willcock; Ecclesiastes 3:9–11.

<sup>250</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by W. Clarkson; Ecclesiastes 3:11.



Revised Douay-Rheims	one in Beth-el and one in Dan, and put watches on the road, and they stopped the pilgrims to the feasts; and therefore it was delayed up to the time when the temple was built, in order not to hinder Israel to build it. He concealed from them also the great Name written and expressed on the foundation-stone, the evil inclinations in their hearts being known to Him; for if it had been delivered into the hands of men, they would have used it, and found by it what will come to pass in the latter days, world without end; and He also hid from them the day of death, in order that it should not be known to man from the beginning what will come to pass at the end. He has made all things good in their time, and has delivered the world to their consideration, so that man cannot find out the work which God has made from the beginning to the end.
Douay-Rheims 1899 (Amer.)	.
Aramaic ESV of Peshitta	.
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	.
Plain English Aramaic Bible	.
Lamsa's Peshitta (Syriac)	He has made everything beautiful in its time; also he has made the world dear to man's heart, so that no man can find out the works which the LORD has done from the beginning to the end.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	All the things which He has made are beautiful in His time. He has also set the whole world in their heart, that man might not find out the work which God has done from the beginning, even to the end.

Significant differences:

#### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	He has made everything right in its time; but he has made their hearts without knowledge, so that man is unable to see the works of God, from the first to the last.
Easy English	But he also causes all things to happen at the right time. He puts questions in our minds. We want to know what happens after our death. We cannot understand all the things that God has done.
Easy-to-Read Version—2001	.
Easy-to-Read Version—2006	God gave us the ability to think about his world [Or “a desire to know the future.”], but we can never completely understand everything he does. And yet, he does everything at just the right time.
God's Word™	.
Good News Bible (TEV)	He has given us a desire to know the future, but never gives us the satisfaction of fully understanding what he does.
The Message	True, God made everything beautiful in itself and in its time—but he's left us in the dark, so we can never know what God is up to, whether he's coming or going.
Names of God Bible	<b>God Gives Mortals a Sense of Eternity</b> What do working people gain from their hard labor? I have seen mortals weighed down with a burden that <b>Elohim</b> has placed on them. It is beautiful how <b>Elohim</b> has done everything at the right time. He has put a sense of eternity in people's minds. Yet, mortals still can't grasp what <b>Elohim</b> is doing from the beginning to the end of time. Vv. 9–10 are included for context.
NIRV	He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also given people a sense of who he is. But they can't completely understand what God has done from beginning to end.
New Simplified Bible	He made everything appropriate (beautiful) (good) in its time. God placed eternity in the heart of man. For man is unable to see the works of God from the first to the last.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

Casual English Bible College Press paraphrase	. Also, I clearly understand that God makes every thing right for an appropriate time. There is indeed a specific time and season for every affair under heaven. God has placed in the minds of men the desire to know and the ability to wonder concerning all the events, but men are unable to discover or find out the work of God from the beginning even to the end.
Contemporary English V.	God makes everything happen at the right time. Yet none of us can ever fully understand all he has done, and he puts questions in our minds about the past and the future.
The Living Bible	Everything is appropriate in its own time. But though God has planted eternity in the hearts of men, even so, many cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.
New Berkeley Version New Life Version	. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has put thoughts of the forever in man's mind, yet man cannot understand the work God has done from the beginning to the end.
New Living Translation	Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	God has fixed a time that is right for everything to happen. He has also caused people to realize that there are things that will last forever. But in spite of that, no one can completely understand everything that God has done, from the time that he starts doing things until he finishes them.
Unfolding Bible Simplified	.

#### **Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:**

American English Bible	Yes, all that God's made is good in its time. And though He's put the ages into our hearts, No man can know all that's been done From the most ancient times to the present.
Beck's American Translation	.
Common English Bible	God has made everything fitting in its time, but has also placed eternity in their hearts, without enabling them to discover what God has done from beginning to end.
New Advent (Knox) Bible Translation for Translators	. God has appointed a time that is right/correct for everything to happen. He has <i>a/so</i> caused people to realize that there are things that will endure forever. But in spite of that, no one can completely understand everything that God has done, from the time that he starts doing things until he finishes them.

#### **Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

Conservapedia Translation	He has made everything beautiful in His time: He has also placed an appreciation for the world in their hearts, so that men would not simply regard God's works dispassionately. Not sure about his one, but it seems to capture the meaning
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	He has made everything beautiful in its season. He has also placed Eternity in their minds, with the intention that man should never discover, from beginning to end, the complete Creation which God has made.—
God's Truth (Tyndale)	All this has he ordered marvelous goodly, to every thing his due time. He has planted ignorance in the hearts of men, that they should not find out the ground of his works, which he does from beginning to the end.
HCSB	What does the worker gain from his struggles? I have seen the task that God has given people to keep them occupied. He has made everything appropriate [Or

*beautiful*] in its time. He has also put eternity in their hearts, [Or has put a sense of past and future into their minds, or has placed ignorance in their hearts] but man cannot discover the work God has done from beginning to end. Vv. 9–10 are included for context.

International Standard V

He made everything appropriate in its time. He also placed eternity within them—yet, no person can fully comprehend what God is doing from beginning to end.

Jubilee Bible 2000

.

H. C. Leupold

.

Lexham English Bible

.

NIV, ©2011

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet [Or also placed ignorance in the human heart, so that] no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

Peter Pett's translation

.

Unfolding Bible Literal Text

.

Unlocked Literal Bible

God has made everything suitable for its own time. He has also placed eternity in their hearts. But mankind cannot understand the deeds that God has done, from their beginning all the way to their end.

Urim-Thummim Version

.

Wikipedia Bible Project

Everything that he has made, is beautiful in its time. Also the world, he gave in their hearts--- without which why a man will not find any deed done by God, from the first to the last.

### Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)

He made everything fitting in its time, but he also set eternity in their hearts, although man is not able to embrace the work of God from the beginning to the end. He has made everything beautiful in its time; also he has given eternity in their heart, without which no man can find out the work that God does from the head until the end.

New American Bible (2002)

.

New American Bible (2011)

God has made everything appropriate to its time, but has put the timeless\* into their hearts so they cannot find out, from beginning to end, the work which God has done. Eccl 8:17; 11:5.

\* [3:11] **The timeless:** others translate “eternity,” “the world,” or “darkness.” The author credits God with keeping human beings ignorant about God’s “work”—present and future.

New English Bible—1970

.

New Jerusalem Bible

All that he does is apt for its time; but although he has given us an awareness of the passage of time, we can grasp neither the beginning nor the end of what God does. He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover, he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

New RSV

Revised English Bible—1989

He has made everything to suit its time; moreover he has given mankind a sense of past and future, but no comprehension of God's work from beginning to end.

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible

He has made everything suited to its time; also, he has given human beings an awareness of eternity; but in such a way that they can't fully comprehend, from beginning to end, the things God does.

exeGesés companion Bible

He worked all beautiful in his time; also he gave eternally in their heart, so that no human can find out

Hebraic Roots Bible	the work Elohim works from the top to the end. He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, He has set eternity in their heart, without which man cannot find out the work that The Elohim makes from the beginning even to the end.
Israeli Authorized Version The Israel Bible	. He brings everything to pass precisely at its time; He also puts eternity in their mind, but without man ever guessing, from first to last, all the things that Hashem brings to pass.
Kaplan Translation <i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	. He has made it all, pretty in its time. Even the ages He has put in their hearts, except that no one finds out the work that Elohim does from beginning to end.
Tree of Life Version	<b>Yet Eternity In Their Heart</b> He has made everything beautiful in its time. Moreover, He has set eternity in their heart—yet without the possibility that humankind can ever discover the work that God has done from the beginning to the end.

### Weird English, Old English, Anachronistic English Translations:

Alpha & Omega Bible	ALL THE THINGS WHICH HE HAS MADE ARE BEAUTIFUL IN HIS TIME: HE HAS ALSO SET THE WHOLE WORLD IN THEIR HEART, THAT MAN MIGHT NOT FIND OUT THE WORK WHICH THEOS ( <i>The Alpha &amp; Omega</i> ) HAS WORKED FROM THE BEGINNING EVEN TO THE END. †(1Co_2:10)
Awful Scroll Bible	He is to have produced that beautiful in its season; He is to have affix continuity as to wear out mankind - maintains there he to find out the work of He of mighty ones? - He is to have made them from their beginning to their end.
Charles Thompson OT Concordant Literal Version	. He has made everything fitting in its season; However, He has put obscurity in their heart So that the man may not find out His work, That which the One, Elohim, does from the beginning to the terminus."
Darby Translation exeGeser's companion Bible Orthodox Jewish Bible	. Hashem hath made every thing yafeh in its et (season); also He hath set HaOlam in their lev, yet so that no adam can find out the ma'aseh that HaElohim hath done from the beginning to the end.
Rotherham's <i>Emphasized B.</i>	Everything, hath he made beautiful in its own time,—also, intelligence, hath he put in their heart, without which men could not find out the work which God hath wrought, from the beginning even unto the end.
Third Millennium Bible	.

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	<b>God Set Eternity in the Heart of Man</b> He has made everything beautiful and appropriate in its time. He has also planted eternity [a sense of divine purpose] in the human heart [a mysterious longing which nothing under the sun can satisfy, except God]—yet man cannot find out (comprehend, grasp) what God has done (His overall plan) from the beginning to the end.
The Expanded Bible	He ·does everything just right and on time [·makes everything appropriate/beautiful in its time], but people can never ·completely understand what he is doing [·discover/find the work that God does from beginning to end; ·humans cannot discern the “right time”].
Kretzmann's Commentary	He hath made everything beautiful In his time, for the enjoyment of men during the short period of their lives, in the proper season; also He hath set the world In their

heart, so that they might understand it as reflecting the wisdom and goodness of God, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end, this being the restriction which is placed upon man's knowledge, the inability to gain a correct and adequate insight into the divine plan of the world and the unsearchable essence of God.

Syndein/Thieme

He has manufactured out of doctrine every thing good in its own time. Also He has given the eternal doctrine in their right lobes, without which doctrine, mankind cannot perceive that which the God has made from the beginning even to the end of history.

The Voice

What good comes to anyone who works so hard, all to gain a few possessions? I have seen the kinds of tasks God has given each of us to do to keep one busy, and I know God has made everything beautiful for its time. God has also placed in our minds a sense of eternity; we look back on the past and ponder over the future, yet we cannot understand the doings of God. Vv. 9–10 are included for context.

### Bible Translations with Many Footnotes:

College Press Bible Study  
The Complete Tanach

He has made everything beautiful in its time; also the [wisdom of] the world He put into their hearts, save that man should not find the deed which God did, from beginning to end.

**everything beautiful in its time:** At the time of good, it is beautiful that the reward be given for good deeds, and at the time of evil, it is fitting for the recompense for evil deeds.

**also the world He put in their hearts, etc.:** Also the wisdom of the world that He put into the hearts of the creatures-He did not put it all into the heart of everyone, but [He gave] a little to this one and a little to that one, in order that man should not comprehend the entire deed of the Holy One, blessed be He, to know it; and he will not know the day of his visitation [i.e., the day of his death] and on what he will stumble, in order that he put his heart to repent, so that he will be concerned and say, "Today or tomorrow I will die." Therefore, קלע is written here defectively, an expression of concealment (הַמְלֵעָה), for if man would know that the day of his death was near, he would neither build a house nor plant a vineyard. Therefore, he says that He made everything beautiful in its time. The fact that there is a time for death is a beautiful thing, for a person relies and says, "Perhaps the time of my death is far off," and he builds a house and plants a vineyard, and it is [therefore] beautiful that it is concealed from people.

The Geneva Bible  
Kaplan Translation  
NET Bible®

God has made everything fit beautifully<sup>12</sup> in its appropriate time, but<sup>13</sup> he has also placed ignorance<sup>14</sup> in the human heart<sup>15</sup> so that<sup>16</sup> people<sup>17</sup> cannot discover what God has ordained,<sup>18</sup> from the beginning to the end<sup>19</sup> of their lives.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>12sn</sup> The Hebrew adjective translated beautifully functions as a metonymy of effect (i.e., to appear beautiful) for cause (i.e., to make it fit): "to fit beautifully." It is used in parallelism with Qoheleth's term for evaluation: טוב (tov, "good") in 5:17.

<sup>13tn</sup> The word "but" does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

<sup>14tn</sup> Heb "darkness"; perhaps "eternity" or "the future." The meaning of the noun קלע ('olam) is debated. It may mean: (1) "ignorance"; (2) time reference: (a) "eternity" or (b) "the future"; or (3) "knowledge" (less likely). The arguments for these options may be summarized: (1) Most suggest that קלע is the defectively written form of קלוע "duration; eternity" (e.g., Eccl 1:4; 2:16; 3:14; 9:6; 12:5); see BDB 762 s.v. III קלוע 2.k. Within this school of interpretation, there are several varieties: (a) BDB 762 s.v. III קלוע 2.k suggests that here it denotes "age [i.e., duration] of the world," which is attested in postbiblical Hebrew. The term III קלע "eternity" = "world" (Jastrow 1084 s.v. קלע III) is used in this sense in postbiblical Hebrew, mostly in



reference to the Messianic age, or the world to come (e.g., Tg. Genesis 9:16; Tg. Onq. Exodus 21:6; Tg. Psalms 61:7). For example, “the world (עֲלָם) shall last six thousand years, and after one thousand years it shall be laid waste” (b. Rosh HaShanah 31a) and “the world (עֲלָם) to come” (b. Sotah 10b). The LXX and the Vulgate took the term in this sense. This approach was also adopted by several English translations: “the world” (KJV, Douay, ASV margin). (b) HALOT 799 s.v. עֲלָם 5 and THAT 2:242 suggest that the term refers to an indefinite, unending future: “eternity future” or “enduring state referring to past and future” (see also BDB 762 s.v. III עֲלָם 2.i). In this sense, the noun עֲלָם functions as a metonymy of association: “a sense of eternity,” but not in a philosophical sense (see J. Barr, *Biblical Words for Time* [SBT], 117, n. 4). This approach is supported by three factors: (i) the recurrence of עֲלָם (“eternity”) in 3:14, (ii) the temporal qualification of the statement in the parallel clause (“from beginning to end”), and (iii) by the ordinary meaning of the noun as “eternity” (HALOT 798–799 s.v. עֲלָם). The point would be that God has endowed man with an awareness of the extra-temporal significance of himself and his accomplishments (D. R. Glenn, “Ecclesiastes,” BKCOT, 984). This is the most frequent approach among English versions: “the timeless” (NAB), “eternity” (RSV, MLB, ASV, NASB, NIV, NJPS), “a sense of time past and time future” (NEB), and “a sense of past and future” (NRSV). (3) Other scholars suggest that עֲלָם simply refers to the indefinite future: “the future,” that is, things to come (e.g., HALOT 799 s.v. עֲלָם 2; BDB 762 s.v. III עֲלָם 2.a; THAT 2:241). The plural עֲלָמִים (‘olamim, “things to come”) was used in this sense in Eccl 1:10 (e.g., 1 Kgs 8:13 = 2 Chr 6:2; Pss 61:5; 77:8; 145:13; Dan 9:24; cf. HALOT 799 s.v. עֲלָם 2). The point would simply be that God has not only ordained all the events that will take place in man’s life (3:1-8), but also preoccupies man with the desire to discover what will happen in the future in terms of the orchestration or timing of these events in his life (3:9-11). This fits well with the description of God’s orchestration of human events in their most appropriate time (3:1-10) and the ignorance of man concerning his future (3:11b). Elsewhere, Qoheleth emphasizes that man cannot learn what the future holds in store for him (e.g., 8:7, 17). This approach is only rarely adopted: “the future” (NJPS margin). (2) The second view is that עֲלָם is not defectively written עֲלָם (“eternity”) but the segholate noun לַעֲלָם (‘elem) that means “dark” (literal) or “ignorance; obscurity; secrecy” (figurative). The related noun הַמְלָחָה (ta’alumah) means “hidden thing; secret,” and the related verb לָעַל (‘alam) means “to hide; to conceal” (BDB 761 s.v. I לָעַל; HALOT 834–35 s.v. מָלַע). This is related to the Ugaritic noun “dark” and the Akkadian verb “to be black; to be dark” (see HALOT 834–35 s.v. מָלַע). In postbiblical Hebrew the root לָעַל means (i) “secret” and (ii) “forgetfulness” (Jastrow 1084 s.v. לָעַל I). Thus the verse would mean that God has “obscured” man’s knowledge so that he cannot discover certain features of God’s program. This approach is adopted by Moffatt which uses the word “mystery.” Similarly, the term may mean “forgetfulness,” that is, God has plagued man with “forgetfulness” so that he cannot understand what God has done from the beginning to the end (e.g., Eccl 1:11). (3) The third view (Delitzsch) is to relate עֲלָם to a cognate Arabic root meaning “knowledge.” The point would be that God has endowed man with “knowledge,” but not enough for man to discover God’s eternal plan. This approach is only rarely adopted: “knowledge” (YLT).

<sup>15tn</sup> Heb “in their heart.” The Hebrew term translated heart functions as a metonymy of association for man’s intellect, emotions, and will (BDB 524–25 s.v. לֵב 3–6, 9). Here, it probably refers to man’s intellectual capacities, as v. 11 suggests.

<sup>16tn</sup> The compound preposition מִבְּלִי (mibb’li, preposition מִן [min] + negative particle בְּלִי [b’li]) is used as a conjunction here. Elsewhere, it can express cause: “because there is no [or is not]” (e.g., Deut 9:28; 28:55; Isa 5:13; Ezek 34:5; Lam 1:4; Hos 4:6), consequence: “so that there is no [or is not]” (e.g., Ezek 14:5; Jer 2:15; 9:9-11; Zeph 3:6), or simple negation: “without” (e.g., Job 4:11, 20; 6:6; 24:7-8; 31:19). BDB 115 s.v. בְּלִי 3.c.β suggests the negative consequence: “so that not,” while HALOT 133 s.v. בְּלִי 5 suggests the simple negation: “without the possibility of.”

<sup>17tn</sup> Heb “man.”

<sup>18tn</sup> Heb “the work that God has done.” The phrase הַשְׁעָרָה שֶׁעָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים (‘et-hamma’aseh ‘asher-’asah, “the work which he [i.e., God] has done”) is an internal cognate accusative (direct object and verb are from the same root), used for emphasis (see IBHS 167 §10.2.1g). The repetition of the verb הָשַׁעַר (“to do”) in 3:11 and 3:14 suggests that this phrase refers to God’s foreordination of all the events and timing of human affairs: God has “made” (= “foreordained”; הָשַׁעַר) everything appropriate in his sovereign timing (3:11a), and all that God has “done” (= “foreordained”; הָשַׁעַר) will come to pass (3:14). Thus, the verb הָשַׁעַר functions as a metonymy of effect (i.e., God’s actions) for cause (i.e., God’s sovereign foreordination). The temporal clause “from beginning to end” (3:11) supports this nuance.

<sup>19th</sup> Traditionally, “what God has done from the beginning to the end.” The temporal clause מֵרֵאשִׁית וְעַד סוֹף (mero’sh v’yad-sof, “from the beginning to the end”) is traditionally taken in reference to “eternity” (the traditional understanding of קִלְעָה [ha’olam] earlier in the verse; see the note on “ignorance”), e.g., KJV, NEB, NAB, ASV, NASB, NIV, RSV, NRSV. However, if קִלְעָה simply denotes “the future” (e.g., HALOT 799 s.v. קָלוּעַ 2; BDB 762 s.v. III קָלוּעַ 2.a; THAT 2:241), this temporal clause would refer to the events God has ordained to transpire in an individual’s life, from beginning to end. This approach is adopted by one English version: “but without man ever guessing, from first to last, all the things that God brings to pass” (NJPS). This would fit well in the context begun in 3:1 with the fourteen merisms encompassing man’s life, starting with “a time to be born” (i.e., from the beginning in 3:11) and concluding with “a time to die” (i.e., to the end in 3:11). This approach is also supported by the admonition of 3:12-13, namely, since no one knows what will happen to him in the future days of his life, Qoheleth recommends that man enjoy each day as a gift from God.

<sup>20th</sup> The phrase “of their lives” does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

New American Bible (2011) .

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Brenner’s Mechanical Trans. ....

Charles Thompson OT .

C. Thompson (updated) OT All the things which he made, considered as a whole, are good in his time. But with regard to all things considered as one whole, to them he has assigned the whole age; so that no man can find out the work which God has done from beginning to end.

Context Group Version .

English Standard Version .

Green’s Literal Translation .

Modern English Version He has made everything beautiful in its appropriate time. He has also put obscurity in their hearts [Or *timelessness*, or *perpetuity*] so that no one comes to know the work that God has done from the beginning to the end.

Modern Literal Version .

Modern KJV .

New American Standard B. God Set Eternity in the Heart of Man

He has made everything appropriate [Lit *beautiful*] in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man [Or *without which man*] will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.

New European Version .

New King James Version .

Niobi Study Bible .

Owen’s Translation .

Restored Holy Bible 6.0 .

Updated Bible Version 2.17 .

A Voice in the Wilderness .

Webster’s Bible Translation .

World English Bible .

Young’s Literal Translation .

Young’s Updated LT

The whole He has made beautiful in its season; also, that knowledge He has put in their heart without which man finds not out the work that God has done from the beginning even unto the end.

### The gist of this passage:

Ecclesiastes 3:11a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
'êth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	generally untranslated; possibly be translated <i>to, toward (s)</i>	mark of a direct object; indicates next word is the object of the verb	Strong's #853 BDB #84
kôl (כָּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i> ]; also kol (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kol</i> ]	<i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
'âsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i> ]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to produce, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
yâpneh (יָפֵה) [pronounced <i>yaw-FEH</i> ]	<i>fair, beautiful, attractive; handsome</i>	masculine singular adjective	Strong's #3303 BDB #421
b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
'êth (עֵת) [pronounced <i>gayth</i> ]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun, with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #6256 BDB #773

**Translation:** He made everything beautiful in its time.

The descriptor here is translated in many ways, but BDB and Strong only allow for the limited meanings (*fair, beautiful, attractive; handsome*) listed above.

**Ecclesiastes 3:11a** He has made everything beautiful in its time (a graphic); from [Bible.com](https://www.bible.com); accessed March 23, 2020.

Everything in life has an exquisite beauty, including things which can be very destructive, like storms and lightning and snow and earthquakes. In itself, apart from whatever destruction something may cause, there is a certain beauty in that thing.

The Pulpit Commentary confines this to the concept of labor and the fruits of our labor, as well as to our reward for our labor. I would agree with this, even though this statement certainly has a much wider application than we find here.

**Application:** One of the amazing blessings of life in the United States is the variety of professions which one might pursue. There are a significant number of people who very much appreciate their work and their



professions. I write this during a time of a pandemic in early 2020 (the COVID19 virus scare), where many people are being encouraged (or even forced) to remain at home rather than to go to work. One of the things which a number of people have noticed is, they enjoy a great fulfillment with their work (as do I).

Work is given by God to man in the garden and outside of the garden. That is, work is fundamental to man, even in innocence. Perhaps we mirror God's own creativity in this. Another pastor-teacher added *work/vocation/labor* to the list of divine institutions; and I have followed suit. I believe that this is as fundamental to human existence as volition is (as well is a full function of the human soul). A person who collects welfare and does not participate in the workforce is missing a true blessing in life.

### **Ecclesiastes 3:11a God has made everything beautiful in its time (commentators)**

W. Clarkson: *If we look long and far, we shall see that, though many things have an ugly aspect at first sight, God "has made everything beautiful in its time." The light and warmth of summer are good to see and feel; but is not the cold of winter invigorating? and what is more beautiful to the sight than the untrodden snow? The returning life of spring is welcome to all hearts; but are not the brilliant hues of autumn fascinating to every eye? Youth is full of ardor, and manhood of strength; but declining years possess much richness of gathered wisdom, and there is a dignity, a calm, a reverence, in age which is all its own.*

Clarkson continues: *There is a joy in battle as well as a pleasantness in peace. Wealth has its treasures; but poverty has little to lose, and therefore little cause for anxiety and trouble. Luxury brings many comforts, but hardness gives health and strength. Each climate upon the earth, every condition in life, the various dispositions and temperaments of the human soul,—these have their own particular advantage and compensation. Look on the other side, and you will see something that will please, if it does not satisfy.*<sup>251</sup>

Gary H. Everett: *Now the answer comes when God reveals to him that there is a beauty to be found within each of these seasons in our lives; because each one will teach us a new lesson that we cannot learn from an earlier season of life.*<sup>252</sup>

David Guzik: *Solomon thought of the good and bad as they were described, and understood that God has made everything beautiful in its time.*<sup>253</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *"Everything:" (eth hacol) does not refer so much to the original creation which God made very good (Gen. 1:31), as to the travail and business mentioned in Ecclesiastes 3:10. All parts of this have, in God's design, a beauty and a harmony, their own season for appearance and development, their work to do in carrying on the majestic march of Providence.*<sup>254</sup>

Ray C. Stedman says that this even applies to enemies: *Enemies are personal, not positional. Therefore, as a personal matter we are commanded to love them. This command is like a spiritual thermometer stuck into the depths of our feverish little souls. It is so interesting that the Jewish historian and sociologist Hart puts this command as the greatest difference between Christianity and all other world religions.*<sup>255</sup>

**Chapter Outline**

**Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines**

<sup>251</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by W. Clarkson; Ecclesiastes 3:11.

<sup>252</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–15.

<sup>253</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

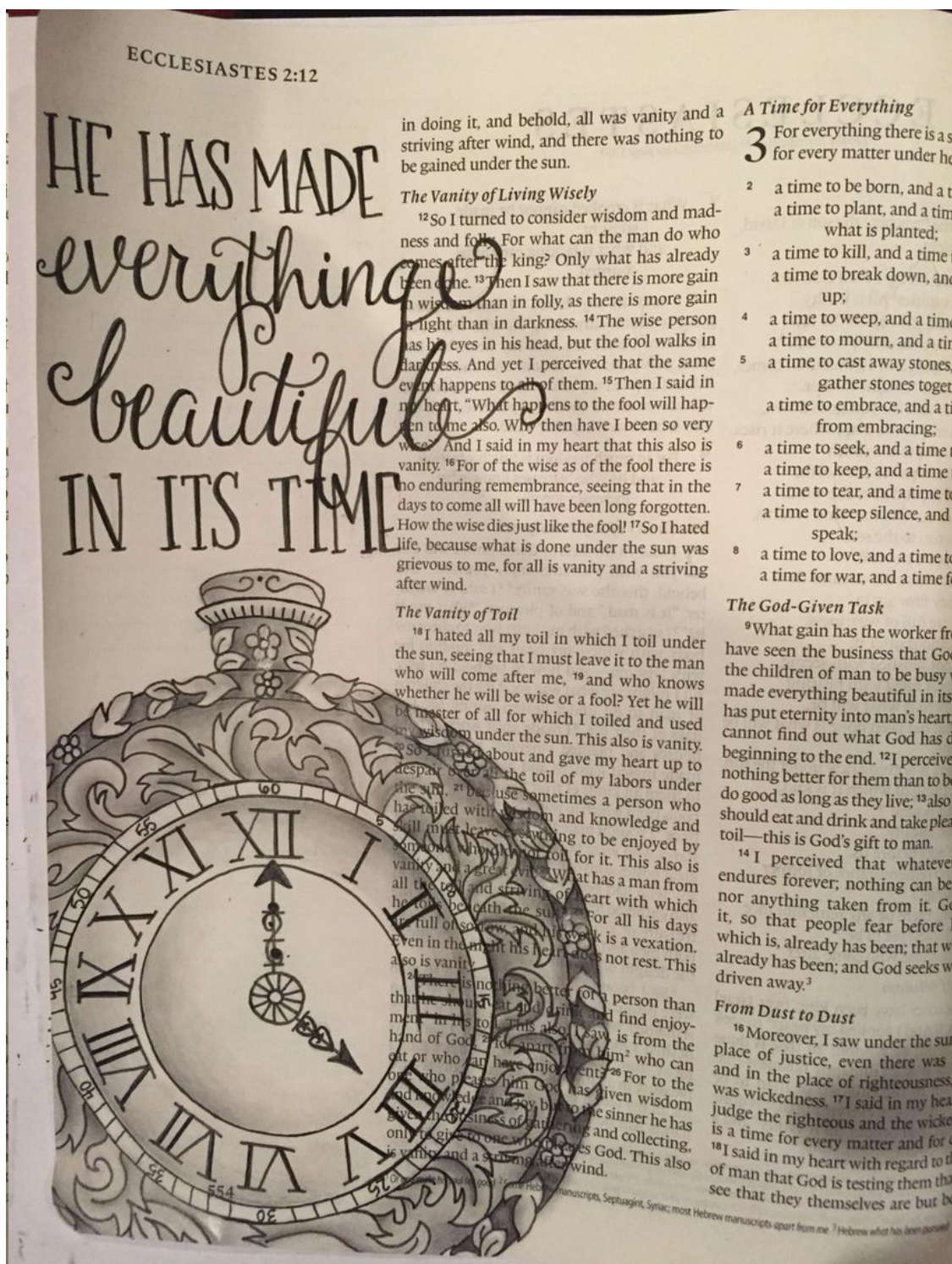
<sup>254</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:11.

<sup>255</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3 (actually written by an associate of his).



**Ecclesiastes 3:11a** God has made everything beautiful in its time (Bible Journaling); from [Pinterest](#); accessed March 22, 2020.

This chapter of Ecclesiastes deals very much with the concept of time and proper time for something to occur. Many of those who do this sort of artwork featured a timepiece of some sort.





## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

## Ecclesiastes 3:11b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
gam (גַּם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i> ]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, as well; even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168
'êth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	generally untranslated; possibly be translated <i>to, toward (s)</i>	mark of a direct object; indicates next word is the object of the verb	Strong's #853 BDB #84
'ôwlâm (עוֹלָם) [pronounced <i>ô-LAWM</i> ]	<i>properly what is hidden [time]; of [in] times past, from ancient time, old, antiquity, long duration, everlasting, eternal, forever, perpetuity; for future time, futurity; of the world, worldly</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #5769 BDB #761
nâthan (נָתַן) [pronounced <i>naw-THAHN</i> ]	<i>to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set; to make</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5414 BDB #678
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
lêb (לֵב) [pronounced <i>lay<sup>b</sup></i> ]	<i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking; midst</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #3820 BDB #524

**Translation:** Furthermore, He has placed the eternal [or, the hidden things] into their hearts.

Man has far more than just what he sees and hears in his thinking. We are not merely confined to the world which we find all around us, but there are hidden things which God has placed in us.

We, as humans, have a special appreciation for time, something which appears to be sorely lacking in animals (despite the fact that some groups/collections of animals act in unison to achieve something—like ants building an anthill).

We are aware that we will die (although few men think much about that), and that life will go on without us; and that life may go on for a very long time without us. Nevertheless, men contemplate eternity; and many of us do not believe that our lives end when we take our last breath.

The word found here, 'ôwlâm (עוֹלָם) [pronounced *ô-LAWM*], can mean a number of things: properly *what is hidden [time]; of [in] times past, from ancient time, old, antiquity, long duration, everlasting, eternal, forever, perpetuity; for future time, futurity; of the world, worldly*. Strong's #5769 BDB #761. So, we may understand this word to refer to things which are hidden. Man certainly contemplates things which he does not see, cannot see, or may have no way of gaining knowledge of.

**Illustration:** I have had several friends with naturally adept minds when it comes to mechanical structures. I remember one describing to me something that was in my vehicle, on the other side of the metal, because it was necessary to know that in order to proceed. Now, I have no flipping clue, for the most part, when looking at

something mechanical, just exactly how it is put together and what the things are that I cannot actually see. But quite a number of people have this gift. Now, it is not that they can see through metal to the other side, but they understand the mechanics of what is at play, and so they can often make reasonable assumptions about things which they cannot see.

**Illustration:** I have this to a very limited degree, when it is something which I have seen before. For instance, I know what is behind a wall (more properly, *the drywall*) in a house. So, there was a time when I was trying to determine why did I have electricity at a particular light, but then, the next thing in the electrical circuit was a plug, and there was no electricity at that plug. I knew something had to be wrong and that it had to be behind the wall. So, when I cut a large hole in the sheetrock, there were two electrical wire that had, for whatever reason, burned apart.

Solomon, of course, is speaking far more philosophically than the illustrations which I gave above. I used those illustrations of things which we can hold, touch, and see; to parallel the things which Solomon is writing about—things which we cannot hold or see.

### **Ecclesiastes 3:11b God has placed eternity in our hearts (various commentators)**

W. Clarkson: *We are made to look far beyond the boundary of the visible and the present. The idea of "the eternal" may help us in two ways.*

1. *That we are created for the unseen and the eternal accounts for the fact that nothing which is earthly and sensible will satisfy our souls. Nothing of that order ought to do so; and it would put the seal upon our degradation if it did so. Our unsatisfiable spirit is the signature of our manhood and the prophecy of our immortality.*

2. *The inclusion of the future in our reasoning makes all the difference to our thought. Admit only the passing time, this brief and uncertain life, and much that happens is inexplicable and distressing indeed; but include the future, add "eternity" to the account, and the "crooked is made straight," the perplexity is gone.<sup>256</sup>*

Gary H. Everett: *God created our life as a series of seasons so that we would better understand that eternity is made up of ages and periods in which God takes mankind from one dispensation into another. This is why Ecclesiastes 3:11 b says that God has placed eternity in our hearts. He did this by subjecting us to the pattern of seasons the He has subjected eternity to.<sup>257</sup>*

David Guzik: *The Preacher understood that man has an awareness and a longing for the eternal, and that God has put this in their hearts. We can say that eternity is in our hearts because we are made in the image of an eternal God.<sup>258</sup>*

David Guzik: *The well-known missionary and author Don Richardson used the phrase eternity in their hearts to describe the phenomenon of redemptive analogies in most all aboriginal cultures. Almost every culture has traditions, customs, or ways of thinking that reflect basic Biblical truth, and these can be used by missionaries to explain the gospel.<sup>259</sup>*

Meyer: *God made man in his own image; and nothing more surely attests to the greatness of our origin that those faculties of the soul which are capable of yearning for, conceiving, and enjoying the Infinite, the Immortal, and the Divine. . . . Every appetite in nature and grace has its appropriate satisfaction.<sup>260</sup>*

<sup>256</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by W. Clarkson; Ecclesiastes 3:11.

<sup>257</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1-15.

<sup>258</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1-22.

<sup>259</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1-22.

<sup>260</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1-22.

### **Ecclesiastes 3:11b God has placed eternity in our hearts (various commentators)**

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *Human history is inserted between the two eternities. In the infinite solitudes of the past, before the birth of time, the mind has not whereon to rest, nor can the eye pierce beyond the present order of things into the immense future. Between these there is a range of time, forming the platform upon which human history is erected. Here the mind can rest, and survey the rule of the Supreme.*<sup>261</sup>

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *In all the afflictions of the good, it is an element of consolation that the severe season will have an end, and in the great future a brighter one will arise. It is the highest prudence to await in patience God's time.*

The Preacher's Commentary continues: *The fact that there is a Divine plan to be observed amidst all the seeming disorder of human things, is the charter of our liberty, the very foundation of our hope. Under the dominion of a wild and reckless chance, we could not walk sure-footedly in this life, nor cherish a deathless hope of better things awaiting us in the life to come.*

The Preacher's Commentary continues: *There are atmospheres that support, and others that extinguish flame. There are beliefs that have a like effect upon the soul. Without the recognition of a superior power controlling all things, the torch of hope cannot burn.*

The Preacher's Commentary continues: *The plan of God must be distinguished from fate and destiny. Some ancient philosophers taught that God Himself was subjected to an iron necessity, that the resistless walls of fate constrained even the Highest. We know that God is above His plan; that it is framed by Infinite Wisdom, maintained by Infinite Power, and pervaded by the Spirit of Infinite Love.*

The Preacher's Commentary continues: *The plan of God results not from mere will, supported by a terrible and uncertain power. His will is not wilfulness, or caprice. We know what we are to expect from one who is wise and good.*

The Preacher's Commentary continues: *The view of the machinery of the Divine Government, constructed with such infinite skill, and moved on by a terrible power, would of itself oppress and overwhelm our soul. Human nature must languish even under the contemplation of the highest regularity and order. But there is an infinite tenderness above all, and within the awful circles of wisdom and power there is a Divine bosom on which weary souls can repose, and where they are safe from fear.*

The Preacher's Commentary concludes: *Even Christ Himself became subject to the plan of God. He waited for His "baptism" and His "hour." His greatest enemies could not prevail against Him till the appointed season had come.*<sup>262</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *"The world;" eth-haolam, placed (as hacol above) before the verb, with eth, to emphasize the relation. There is some uncertainty in the translation of this word. The LXX. has, Σύνπαντα τὸν αἰῶνα; Vulgate, Mundum tradidit disputationi eorum. The original meaning is "the hidden," and it is used generally in the Old Testament of the remote past, and sometimes of the future, as Daniel 3:33, so that the idea conveyed is of unknown duration, whether the glance looks backward or forward, which is equivalent to our word "eternity." It is only in later Hebrew that the word obtained the signification of "age" (αἰῶν), or "world" in its relation to time. Commentators who have adopted the latter sense here explain the expression as if it meant that man in himself is a microcosm, a little world, or that the love of the world, the love of life, is naturally implanted in him. But taking the term in the signification found throughout the Bible, we are justified in translating it "eternity."*

<sup>261</sup> The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

<sup>262</sup> The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (from the suggestive comments).

### Ecclesiastes 3:11b God has placed eternity in our hearts (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *The pronoun in "their heart" refers to "the sons of men" in the previous verse. God has put into men's minds a notion of infinity of duration; the beginning and the end of things are alike beyond his grasp; the time to be born and the time to die are equally unknown and uncontrollable. Koheleth is not thinking of that hope of immortality which his words unfold to us with our better knowledge; he is speculating on the innate faculty of looking backward and forward which man possesses, but which is insufficient to solve the problems which present themselves every day. This conception of eternity may be the foundation of great hopes and expectations, but as an explanation of the ways of Providence it fails.*<sup>263</sup>

Chuck Smith: *He has set the world in their heart...* Now the word translated world there in the Hebrew is eternity or the ages. God has actually set the ages in every man's heart. There is a consciousness within every man of the eternal. Now some men seek to sublimate that consciousness. Some men seek to deny that consciousness. They seek to deny God. But there is within every man, God has placed it in the heart, eternal, the eternity in the heart of every man that is seeking out after that which is more than just a part of this monotonous routine of life. I'm grasping and reaching for that which is eternal. God has placed the awareness of the eternal in the heart of every man. And that's that deep, spiritual drive that every man has that can only be filled by coming to Jesus Christ and drinking of the water that He gives.<sup>264</sup>

Ray C. Stedman: *There is a quality about life, about humanity, that can never be explained by the rationale of evolution. No animal is restless and dissatisfied when its physical needs have been met. Observe a well fed dog sleeping before the fire on a cold day. He is with his family, enjoying himself, not worried about anything. Put a man in that position and pretty soon he will feel a sense of restlessness. There is something beyond, something more he is crying out for.*

Ray C. Stedman: *This endless search for an answer beyond what we can feel or sense in our physical and emotional needs is what is called here "eternity in man's heart." St. Augustine said, "Thou has made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they learn to rest in Thee." Man is the only worshipping animal. What makes him different cannot be explained by evolutionary procedure. He is different because he longs for the face of God. C.S. Lewis said, "Our Heavenly Father has provided many delightful inns for us along our journey, but he takes great care to see that we do not mistake any of them for home." There is a longing for home, there is a call deep in the human spirit for more than life can provide. This itch which we cannot scratch is part of God's plan.*<sup>265</sup>

J. Willcock: *These [immutable laws] will always exist as they spring from the limitations of our nature. We are finite creatures, and God is infinite. We endure but for a few years; he is from everlasting to everlasting. Our apprehension of these facts, of infinitude and eternity, prevents our being satisfied with that which is finite and temporal. "God has set eternity in our hearts." Though we are limited by time, we are related to eternity.*

Willcock continues: *We cannot rest satisfied with fragmentary knowledge, but strive to pass on from it to the great worlds of truth yet undiscovered and unknown; we would see the whole of God's work from beginning to end (Ecclesiastes 3:1), and find ourselves precluded from accomplishing our desire.*

Willcock concludes: *we should contradict our better knowledge, and ungratefully neglect the Divine aids to faith which have been given us in the fuller revelation of the New Testament, if we were to cherish the same opinion. Dissatisfaction with the finite and the temporal is not a morbid feeling in those who believe that they have an immortal nature, and that they are yet to come into "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that does not fade away" (1Peter 1:4).*<sup>266</sup>

<sup>263</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:11.

<sup>264</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–22 (slightly edited).

<sup>265</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

<sup>266</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by J. Willcock; Ecclesiastes 3:9–11 (slightly edited).



## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

## Ecclesiastes 3:11c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]	<i>from, off, out from, of, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
b <sup>ē</sup> lîy (בְּלִי) [pronounced <i>b<sup>ē</sup>LEE</i> ]	<i>a wearing out; destruction; a defect, a failure; a state of being without</i>	substantive	Strong's #1097 BDB #115
The min preposition and the negative b <sup>ē</sup> lîy (בְּלִי) [pronounced <i>b<sup>ē</sup>LEE</i> ], and together they mean <i>from want of, for lack of, on account of there being no, from the deficiency of no, so that there is no</i> .			
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i> ]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
I wonder if these 3 words together mean something.			
lôʾ (לֹא or לוֹ) [pronounced <i>low</i> ]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
mâtsâʾ (מָצָא) [pronounced <i>maw-TSAW</i> ]	<i>to attain to, to find, to detect, to happen upon, to come upon, to find unexpectedly, to discover; to meet (encounter)</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #4672 BDB #592
ʾâdâm (אָדָם) [pronounced <i>aw-DAWM</i> ]	<i>a man, a human being, mankind; transliterated Adam</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #120 & #121 BDB #9
The word <i>the Adam</i> can mean <i>man, mankind, humankind, men, human beings</i> .			
ʾêth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	generally untranslated; possibly be translated <i>to, toward (s)</i>	mark of a direct object; indicates next word is the object of the verb	Strong's #853 BDB #84
maʿăseh (מַעֲשֶׂה) [pronounced <i>mah-ġa-SEH</i> ]	<i>deed, act, action, work, production, that which is done; that which is produced [property, goods, crops]; that which anyone makes or does; a course of action; a business</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #4639 BDB #795
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i> ]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
ʿâsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>ġaw-SAWH</i> ]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to produce, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793



## Ecclesiastes 3:11c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
ʿĒlōhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #430 BDB #43
min (מִן) [pronounced min]	from, off, out from, of, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
rô'sh (רֹאשׁ) [pronounced rohsh]	head [of a man, city, state, nation, place, family, priest], top [of a mountain]; chief, prince, officer; front, choicest, best; first; height [of stars]; sum, census	masculine singular noun	Strong's #7218 BDB #910
All of the BDB definitions: 1) head, top, summit, upper part, chief, total, sum, height, front, beginning; 1a) head (of man, animals); 1b) top, tip (of mountain); 1c) height (of stars); 1d) chief, head (of man, city, nation, place, family, priest); 1e) head, front, beginning; 1f) chief, choicest, best; 1g) head, division, company, band; 1h) sum.			
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿad (עַד) [pronounced gahd]	as far as, even to, up to, until	preposition of duration or of limits	Strong's #5704 BDB #723
Together, min...ʿad (מִן ... עַד) mean from...to or both...and; as in from soup to nuts or both young and old.			
çôwph (סוֹף) [pronounced sohf]	end [of a wadi], conclusion; termination	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5490 BDB #693

**Translation:** From a [position] of lacking, man cannot [fully] discover [all] the work which the Elohim has done, from beginning to end.

Man never, on his own, fully appreciates all that God has done, from beginning to end. Even we as believers, with Bible doctrine, are unable to fully appreciate all that God does, although we have a better appreciation than the unbeliever does.

Apart from Bible doctrine, man has little appreciation for the extent of God's plan over the ages. With Bible doctrine, with an understanding of human history, and current events, we can have a better understanding and appreciation of life and our place in the world. Obviously, we will not understand all that God does, but the Bible gives us a nice framework within which to know God and His plan.

Man has the ability to understand some things in life, including some things about universal truths. But much of this much be revealed by God for many to better understand.

We must also bear in mind that Solomon, when writing this, was about a third of the way through Israel's history as a client nation. The prophets with their amazing revelation of the future had not come on the scene yet.

### **Ecclesiastes 3:11c Man cannot fully discover all the works of God (commentary)**

W. Clarkson: *We do well to remember that what we see is only a very small part indeed of the whole—only a page of the great volume, only a scene in the great drama, only a field of the large landscape—and we may well be silenced, if not convinced. But even that does not cover everything. We need to remember that we are human, and not Divine; that we, who are God's very little children, cannot hope to understand all that is in the mind of our heavenly Father—cannot expect to fathom his holy purpose, to read his unfathomable thoughts. We see enough of Divine wisdom, holiness, and love to believe that, when our understanding is enlarged and our vision cleared, we shall find that "all the paths of the Lord were mercy and truth"—even those which most troubled and bewildered us when we dwelt upon the earth.*<sup>267</sup>

I should add that God lets us know what we need to know. Let me illustrate this: a race car driver may know a lot about the mechanics of his vehicle or not. There are aspects of the mechanics of his vehicle which he does not need to know. Knowing them would not make him any better or worse.

Gary H. Everett: *Ecclesiastes 3:11 c then tells us that no man can find contentment in these seasons by pursuing earthly works and ambitions. If we try to fully understand the fullness of the world around us during each season of life, just as Solomon, we will realize that we cannot complete such pursuits; for God's creation is far too vast and our lives too short. This causes us to become unfulfilled with earthly pursuits and dreams, because by them we will only find discontentment in watching them go incomplete as we move into another season of life.*

Everett continues: *As Solomon amidst his vast gardens and building projects, we must conclude that contentment and joy will only be found in pursuing our divine assignment on a daily basis. All other pursuits and ambitions will fall incomplete and unfulfilled at the end of one's life. We must find our joy today as we serve the Lord.*<sup>268</sup>

Eaton: *The Preacher's vast researches have found nothing in the finite earthly realm which can satisfy the human heart intellectually or practically. . . . This is the nearest he comes to Augustine's maxim: 'You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they can find peace in you.'*<sup>269</sup>

Matthew Henry: *Those things which to us seem most casual and contingent are, in the counsel and foreknowledge of God, punctually determined, and the very hour of them is fixed, and can neither be anticipated nor adjourned a moment.*<sup>270</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *So that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end; or, without man being able to penetrate; yet so that he cannot, etc. Man sees only minute parts of the great whole; he cannot comprehend all at one view, cannot understand the law that regulates the time and season of every circumstance in the history of man and the world. He feels that, as there has been an infinite past, there will be an infinite future, which may solve anomalies and demonstrate the harmonious unity of God's design, and he must be content to wait and hope. Comparison of the past with the present may help to adumbrate the future, but is inadequate to unravel the complicated thread of the world's history (comp. Ecclesiastes 8:16, Ecclesiastes 8:17, and Ecclesiastes 9:1, where a similar thought is expressed).*<sup>271</sup>

Ray C. Stedman: *We are growing in our knowledge, but we discover that the more we know the more we know we do not know. The increase of knowledge only increases the depth of wonder and of delight. In the sovereign wisdom of God we cannot solve all mysteries. As the Apostle Paul put it, "we see through a glass darkly," (1Cor. 13:12 KJV); we are looking forward to the day when we shall see face-to-face.*

<sup>267</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by W. Clarkson; Ecclesiastes 3:11.

<sup>268</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–15.

<sup>269</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

<sup>270</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.

<sup>271</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:11.

## Ecclesiastes 3:11c Man cannot fully discover all the works of God (commentary)

Ray C. Stedman: *We cannot know all the answers to all the conundrums and enigmas of life. That is why the exhortation of Scripture is always that we must trust the revelation of a Father's wisdom in areas we cannot understand. Jesus said over and over that the life of faith is like that of a child. A little child in his father's arms is unaware of many things that his father has learned. But, resting in the father's arms, he is quite content to let those enigmas unfold as he grows, trusting in the wisdom of his father. That is the life of faith, and that is what we are to do in our experience.*<sup>272</sup>

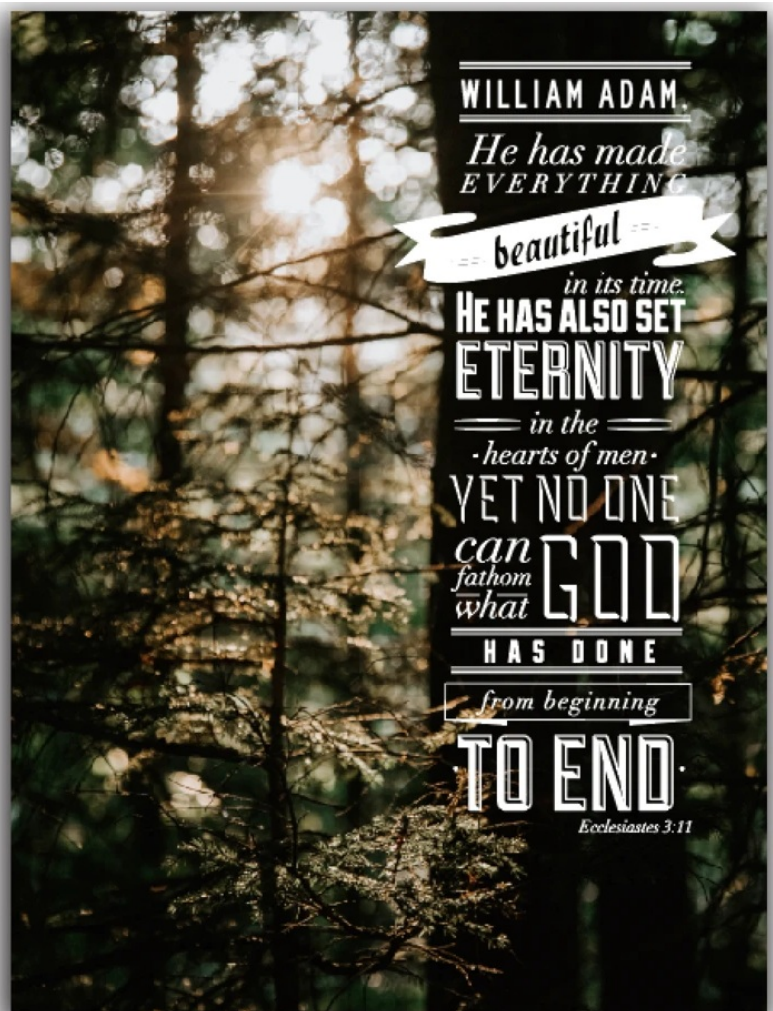
### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 3:11 He made everything beautiful in its time. Furthermore, He has placed the eternal [or, the hidden things] into their hearts. From a [position] of lacking, man cannot [fully] discover [all] the work which the Elohim has done, from beginning to end.

**Ecclesiastes 3:11** (a graphic); from **Old Lutheran**; accessed March 23, 2020. I guess that William Adam designed it? No idea who he is.

A. H. Moment on fatalism: *[It is] God [Who acts]...not fate. His acts "shall be for ever," not of short duration but of eternal import. He is independent of all contingency—the wicked cannot frustrate the Almighty's purposes: "Nothing can be put to it and nothing can be taken from it." His government is for man's highest good—by each swing of the pendulum the Divine Father would move the race nearer to Himself: "And God does this so that they should fear before Him." He is never surprised—nothing is new to Him, nothing old. He acts in the eternal Now. All things—past, present, future—are ever under His all-seeing eye: "That which has been is now, and that which is to be has already been." It is, however, impossible for us now to understand all about the management of this "huge timepiece," which measures off the*



Forest

<sup>272</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

events great and small, in the fixed course of things.<sup>273</sup>

Ecclesiastes 3:11 God made everything beautiful in its time. Furthermore, God placed eternity and other hidden treasures into the heart of man. Yet, from a position of want, man cannot fully appreciate all the work which God has done, from beginning to end.

One of the difficulties of Ecclesiastes is, the author appears to have many different views of man, life and God. D. Thomas makes these remarks: *The author of Ecclesiastes was too wise to take what we call a one-sided view of human life. No doubt there are times and moods in which this human existence seems to us to be all made up of either toil or endurance, delight or disappointment. But in the hour of sober reflection we are constrained to admit that the pattern of the web of life is composed of many and diverse colors. Our faculties and capacities are many, our experiences are varied, for the appeals made to us by our environment change from day to day, from hour to hour. "One man in his time plays many parts."*<sup>274</sup>

Arno Gaebelein on Ecclesiastes 3:12-15: *What then is the good? To what can man in such condition, with such constant changes, and with an unsatisfied feeling of the infinite in his heart resort to? The searcher gives his results. Let man rejoice and do good in his life. Let him eat and drink and enjoy the food of all his labor. But let him also do so fearing God in view of God's judgment, for "God requires that which is past." This is about as far as the natural man can see.*<sup>275</sup>

**I know that nothing [is] better in them that if to be happy and to do good in his lives. And also all the man that he will eat and he has drunk and he has seen good in all his toil; a gift of Elohim she [is].**

Ecclesiastes  
3:12–13

**I know that [there is] nothing better for them but to be happy and to do good in their lives. Furthermore, every man who eats and drinks, that he will see good in all of his work; it [is] a gift of Elohim.**

**There is nothing better for men than to be happy and to do good in their lives. Furthermore, in the simple pleasures of eating and drinking, that each man will find the good in all of his toil; for this is God's gift to him.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	I know that nothing [is] better in them that if to be happy and to do good in his lives. And also all the man that he will eat and he has drunk and he has seen good in all his toil; a gift of Elohim she [is].
Dead Sea Scrolls	.
Jerusalem targum	.
Targum (Onkelos)	.
Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan)	.
Aramaic Targum	King Solomon said by the spirit of prophecy, I know that there is nothing good among the children of men, but that they rejoice in the joy of the law, and do good in the days of their life. And also that if any man eats and drinks and sees good in

<sup>273</sup> *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (edited).

<sup>274</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by D. Thomas; Ecclesiastes 3:9–13.

<sup>275</sup> Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–22 (slightly edited).



	his days, and causes his children to inherit all his labour in the time of his death, this is a gift given to him from the Lord.
Revised Douay-Rheims	And I have known that there was no better thing than to rejoice, and to do well in this life. For every man that eates and drinketh, and sees good of his labour, this is the gift of God.
Douay-Rheims 1899 (Amer.)	.
Aramaic ESV of Peshitta	.
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	.
Plain English Aramaic Bible	.
Lamsa's Peshitta (Syriac)	I know that there is no good in worldly things, but for men to rejoice and to do good in their lives. And also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor; it is the gift of the LORD.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	I know that there is no good in them, except <i>for a man</i> to rejoice, and to do good in his life. Also, every man who shall eat and drink, and see good in all his labor, <i>this</i> is a gift of God.

Significant differences:

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	I am certain that there is nothing better for a man than to be glad, and to do good while life is in him. And for every man to take food and drink, and have joy in all his work, is a reward from God.
Easy English	We should enjoy our lives. There is nothing better that we can do than that. We should also do good things during our lives. We should get pleasure from what we eat. We should enjoy what we drink. And we should be happy when we are doing our work. These are all gifts from God.
Easy-to-Read Version—2001	I learned that the best thing for people to do is to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live. God wants every person to eat, drink, and enjoy his work. These are gifts from God.
Easy-to-Read Version—2006	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.
God's Word™	.
Good News Bible (TEV)	So I realized that all we can do is be happy and do the best we can while we are still alive. All of us should eat and drink and enjoy what we have worked for. It is God's gift.
The Message	I've decided that there's nothing better to do than go ahead and have a good time and get the most we can out of life. That's it—eat, drink, and make the most of your job. It's God's gift.
Names of God Bible	I realize that there's nothing better for them to do than to be cheerful and enjoy what is good in their lives. It is a gift from <b>Elohim</b> to be able to eat and drink and experience the good that comes from every kind of hard work.
NIRV	People should be happy and do good while they live. I know there's nothing better for them to do than that. Each of them should eat and drink. People should be satisfied with all their hard work. That is God's gift to them.
New Simplified Bible	I am certain that there is nothing better for a man than to rejoice and to do good works in life. Every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor. It is the gift of God.

### Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

Casual English Bible	.
----------------------	---



College Press paraphrase	I know that among men there is nothing better than to find pleasure and joy in one's lifetime. However, God does have a gift for men. It is not to understand the mysterious ways of God, but it is to be happy and find pleasure in living and see good in all of one's labor.
Contemporary English V.	I know the best thing we can do is to always enjoy life, because God's gift to us is the happiness we get from our food and drink and from the work we do.
The Living Bible	So I conclude that, first, there is nothing better for a man than to be happy and to enjoy himself as long as he can; and second, that he should eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of his labors, for these are gifts from God.
New Berkeley Version	.
New Life Version	.
New Living Translation	So I concluded there is nothing better than to be happy and enjoy ourselves as long as we can. And people should eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of their labor, for these are gifts from God.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	I know that the best thing for us people to do is to rejoice and to do good things during the time that we are alive. And I also know that everyone should enjoy what they eat and drink, and enjoy the work that they do. Those are gifts that God gives to us.
Unfolding Bible Simplified	.

#### **Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:**

American English Bible	So, when a man has it all (All that he needs to eat and to drink), He'll know that his ways have been blest, And he'll know that these gifts came from God.
Beck's American Translation	.
Common English Bible	I know that there's nothing better for them but to enjoy themselves and do what's good while they live. Moreover, this is the gift of God: that all people should eat, drink, and enjoy the results of their hard work.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	To enjoy his life, to make the best of it, beyond doubt this is man's highest employment; that gift at least God has granted him, to eat and drink and see his toil rewarded.
Translation for Translators	I know that the best [LIT] thing for us people to do is to rejoice and to do good things all during the time that we are alive. And I also know that everyone should eat and drink, and enjoy the work that they do. Those are things that God gives to us.

#### **Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

Conservapedia Translation	I know that there is no good in this, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life. And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his works, for it is the gift of God.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	I consequently learnt that there is nothing better for them, than to be glad, and do good in their lives; and also for all men to eat and drink and experience pleasure in all the labours God has given to them.
God's Truth (Tyndale)	So I perceived, that in these things there is nothing better for a man, then to be merry and to do well so long as he lives. For all that a man eats and drinks, yes what so ever a man enjoys of all his labor, the same is a gift from God.
HCSB	I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and enjoy the [Lit <i>his</i> ] good life. It is also the gift of God whenever anyone eats, drinks, and enjoys all his efforts.

International Standard V	I have concluded that the only worthwhile thing for them is to take pleasure in doing good in life; moreover, every person should eat, drink, and enjoy the benefits of everything that he undertakes, since it is a gift from God.
Jubilee Bible 2000	.
H. C. Leupold	.
Lexham English Bible	So I realized that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and enjoy themselves during their lives. And for anyone to eat and drink, that is, to enjoy the fruit of all his toil, this also is a gift of God.
NIV, ©2011	.
Peter Pett's translation	.
Unfolding Bible Literal Text	.
Unlocked Literal Bible	I know that there is nothing better for anyone than to rejoice and to do good so long as he lives—and that everyone should eat and drink, and should understand how to enjoy the good that comes from all his work. This is a gift from God.
Urim-Thummim Version	I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life. And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labor, it is the gift of Elohim.
Wikipedia Bible Project	I knew that there is nothing good in these, if not to rejoice, to make good while he lives. And also every man that ate and drank, and saw good things out of all his labor--- a gift of god, it is.

#### **Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):**

Christian Community (1988)	I know that there is nothing better for him to do than to seek pleasure and well-being during his life. To eat, drink and find satisfaction in his work is a gift from God.
The Heritage Bible	I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life. And also, every man should eat and drink, and see the good of all his wearisome toil; it is the gift of God.
New American Bible (2011)	I recognized that there is nothing better than to rejoice and to do well during life [Eccl 2:24]. Moreover, that all can eat and drink and enjoy the good of all their toil—this is a gift of God.
New English Bible—1970	I know that there is nothing good for man for man: prob. rdg, cp 2:24; Heb in them except to be happy and live the best life he can while he is alive. Moreover, that a man should eat and drink and enjoy himself, in return for all his labours, is a gift of God.
New Jerusalem Bible	I know there is no happiness for a human being except in pleasure and enjoyment through life. And when we eat and drink and find happiness in all our achievements, this is a gift from God.
New RSV	I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil.
Revised English Bible—1989	I know that there is nothing good for anyone except to be happy and live the best life he can while he is alive. Indeed, that everyone should eat and drink and enjoy himself, in return for all his labours, is a gift of God.

#### **Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:**

Complete Jewish Bible	I know that there is nothing better for them to do than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live. Still, the fact that everyone can eat and drink and enjoy the good that results from all his work, is a gift of God.
exeGesés companion Bible	I know that there is no good for them, but to cheer and to work good in their life. And also that all humanity eat and drink and see the good of all his toil, - the gift of Elohim.

Hebraic Roots Bible	I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice to do good in his life. And also every man that eats and drinks, and sees good in his labor, it is the gift of Elohim.
The Israel Bible	Thus I realized that the only worthwhile thing there is for them is to enjoy themselves and do what is good in their lifetime; also, that whenever a man does eat and drink and get enjoyment out of all his wealth, it is a gift of <i>Hashem</i> .
Israeli Authorized Version Kaplan Translation <i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	.
Tree of Life Version	I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and enjoy themselves in their lifetime. Also when anyone eats and drinks, and finds satisfaction in all of his labor, it is the gift of God.

### Weird English, Old English, Anachronistic English Translations:

Alpha & Omega Bible	I KNOW THAT THERE IS NO GOOD IN THEM, EXCEPT FOR A MAN TO REJOICE, AND TO DO GOOD IN HIS LIFE. ALSO IN THE CASE OF EVERY MAN WHO SHALL EAT AND DRINK, AND SEE GOOD IN ALL HIS LABOR, THIS IS A GIFT OF THEOS ( <i>The Alpha &amp; Omega</i> ).
Awful Scroll Bible	I am to have appreciated that beneficial of Him, and am to rejoice to prepare that serviceable to Him, yet being lively. He of mankind continues to eat and is to have drank - is he indeed to have perceived that serviceable from his labor, is the gift of He of mighty ones? -
Charles Thompson OT Concordant Literal Version	.
Darby Translation	I know that there is no good for them Save to rejoice and to achieve good in one's life; And, moreover, anyone of humanity, That he should eat and drink and see good from all his toil, It is a gift of Elohim."
exeGesés companion Bible	.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	I have da'as that there is nothing better for adam, than that they have simchah and do tov while they live. And also that kol haAdam should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his amal. This is a gift of Elohim.
Rotherham's <i>Emphasized B.</i>	I know that there is no blessedness in them,—save to be glad, and to do well with one's life. Though indeed, that any man should eat and drink, and see blessedness, in all his toil, it is, the gift of God.
Third Millennium Bible	.

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	.
The Expanded Bible	So I ·realize [know] that ·the best thing [ <sup>1</sup> there is nothing better] for them is to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live. God wants all people to eat and drink and be happy in their ·work [toil], which are gifts from God [2:24–26; 3:22; 5:18–20; 8:15; 9:7–10; <sup>c</sup> the little pleasures are distractions from the meaningless world].
Kretzmann's Commentary	Verses 12-22 The Nature of Human Happiness I know that there is no good in them, in the works of God given to men, but for a man to rejoice, in a cheerful use of the blessings of the Lord, and to do good in his life, to himself and to others in the proper use of God's gifts, for this is one essential part of true human happiness.

	And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labor, it is the gift of God, and should be acknowledged as such with the proper thanksgiving.
Syndein/Thieme	I know that there is nothing better for them in time then to possess inner happiness from doctrine and to manufacture out of doctrine, divine good in his lifetime. And, also that every man {in time} who eats and who drinks even he shall see good {freedom, privacy and 'live and let live'} for all of his hard work . . . it is the gift of God.
The Voice	I know there is nothing better for us than to be joyful and to do good throughout our lives; to eat and drink and see the good in all of our hard work is a gift from God.

### Bible Translations with Many Footnotes:

College Press Bible Study The Complete Tanach	. I knew that there is nothing better for them but to rejoice and to do good during his lifetime.  <b>I knew:</b> now, since the time of visitation is concealed, that there is no [other] good for man but to rejoice with his portion and to do that which is good in the sight of his Creator, as long as he lives. And also, every man who eats and drinks and enjoys what is good in all his toil, it is a gift of God.  <b>and enjoys what is good:</b> The Torah and the commandments.
The Geneva Bible Kaplan Translation NET Bible®	. . <i>Enjoy Life in the Present</i> I have concluded <sup>21</sup> that there is nothing better for people <sup>22</sup> than <sup>23</sup> to be happy and to enjoy themselves <sup>24</sup> as long as they live, and also that everyone should eat and drink, and find enjoyment in all his toil, for these things <sup>25</sup> are a gift from God. <sup>21</sup> tn Heb "I know." <sup>22</sup> tn Heb "for them"; the referent (people, i.e., mankind) has been specified in the translation for clarity. <sup>23</sup> tn Qoheleth uses the exceptive particle כִּי־לֹא (ki...lo, "except") to identify the only exception to the futility within man's life (BDB 474 s.v. כִּי 2). <sup>24</sup> tn Heb "to do good." The phrase בּוֹט תּוֹשַׁעַל (la'asot tov) functions idiomatically for "to experience [or see] happiness [or joy]." The verb תּוֹשַׁעַל ('asah) probably denotes "to acquire; to obtain" (BDB 795 s.v. תּוֹשַׁעַל II.7), and בּוֹט (tov) means "good; pleasure; happiness," e.g., Eccl 2:24; 3:13; 5:17 (BDB 375 s.v. בּוֹט 1). <sup>25</sup> tn Heb "for it." The referent of the 3rd person feminine singular independent person pronoun ("it") is probably the preceding statement: "to eat, drink, and find satisfaction." This would be an example of an anacoluthon (GKC 505-6 §167.b). Thus the present translation uses "these things" to indicate the reference back to the preceding.
New American Bible (2011)	.

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Brenner's Mechanical Trans.	.....
Charles Thompson OT	.
C. Thompson (updated) OT	I have found that there is no good in them (I mean in regard to every man who eats and drinks, and can see good in all his labour) if there is not a gift of God that he may be made glad and do good in his life.
Context Group Version	I know that there is nothing better for them, than to rejoice, and to do good so long as they live. And also that all of man should eat and drink, and enjoy good in all his labor, is the gift of God.

English Standard Version	.
Green's Literal Translation	.
Modern English Version	I experienced that there is nothing better for them than to be glad and do good in their life. And also that everyone should eat and drink and experience good in all their labor. This is a gift of God.
Modern Literal Version	.
Modern KJV	.
New American Standard B.	I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime; moreover, that every man who eats and drinks sees good in all his labor—it is the gift of God.
New European Version	.
New King James Version	.
Niobi Study Bible	.
Owen's Translation	.
Restored Holy Bible 6.0	.
Updated Bible Version 2.17	.
A Voice in the Wilderness	.
Webster's Bible Translation	.
World English Bible	.
Young's Literal Translation	.
Young's Updated LT	I have known that there is no good for them except to rejoice and to do good during their life, yea, even every man who eats and has drunk and seen good by all his labour, it is a gift of God.

### The gist of this passage:

12-13

Ecclesiastes 3:12a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]	and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because	wāw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
yāda' (יָדָעַ) [pronounced yaw-DAHĠ]	to know, to perceive, to acquire knowledge, to become acquainted with, to know by experience, to have a knowledge of something; to see; to learn; to recognize [admit, acknowledge, confess]	1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #3045 BDB #393
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee]	for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time	explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
'ēyn (אֵין) [pronounced ān]	nothing, not, [is] not; not present, not ready; expresses non-existence, absence or non-possession; [there is] no [none, not one, no one, not]	particle of negation; substantive of negation	Strong's #369 BDB #34
ṭōwb (טוֹב) [pronounced toh <sup>b</sup> v]	pleasant, pleasing, agreeable, good, better; approved	masculine feminine singular adjective which can act like a substantive	Strong's #2896 BDB #373



## Ecclesiastes 3:12a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
As a noun, this can mean <i>the good thing, that which is good [pleasing, approved, kind, upright, right]; goodness, uprightness, kindness, right; that which is fair [beautiful]</i> . Owens translates this very well in 1Kings 2:18.			
b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	No Strong's # BDB #88
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
ʾîm (אִם) [pronounced eem]	<i>if, though; lo, behold; oh that, if only; when, whenever; since, though when (or, if followed by a perfect tense which refers to a past event)</i>	primarily an hypothetical particle	Strong's #518 BDB #49
This is variously translated <i>but</i> (Owens, ESV, WEB),			
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to</i>	directional/relational/possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
sâmach (שָׂמַח) [pronounced saw-MAHKH]	<i>to rejoice, to be glad, to be joyful, to be merry</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #8055 BDB #970

**Translation:** I know that [there is] nothing better for them but to be happy...

From Solomon's vantage point, living a life which is far different from the average bloke, he has determined that there is nothing better for man than to be happy; to enjoy that life which he has (or, the life which God has given him). This is the advice of Solomon, or the observation of Solomon, who has spent a significant portion of his life chasing pleasure.

### Ecclesiastes 3:12a There is nothing better for man than to be happy (commentary)

Eaton: *This "holds out again hope of an enjoyable life from the hand of God . . . sees such a life as man's privilege."*<sup>276</sup>

David Guzik: *In light of God's making everything beautiful and in His gift of eternity in their hearts — then it is wise to receive the good things of this life, and to receive them as the gift of God.*<sup>277</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice; rather, I knew, perceived, that there was no good for them; i.e. for men. From the facts adduced, Koheleth learned this practical result—that man had nothing in his own power (see on Ecclesiastes 2:24) which would conduce to his happiness, but to make the best of life such as he finds it.*<sup>278</sup>

<sup>276</sup> David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

<sup>277</sup> David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

<sup>278</sup> The Pulpit Commentary; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:12.

## Ecclesiastes 3:12a There is nothing better for man than to be happy (commentary)

Stedman first quotes the RSV: *I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live;* (Ecclesiastes 3:12)

Ray C. Stedman: Yes, everybody agrees with that. That is what the commercials tell us: "Live life with gusto. You only go around once. Seize it now." All right. The Searcher says so too.<sup>279</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

## Ecclesiastes 3:12b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to</i>	directional/relational/ possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʿâsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced ʿaw-SAWH]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to produce, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
tôwb (טוֹב) [pronounced toh <sup>b</sup> v]	<i>pleasant, pleasing, agreeable, good, better; approved</i>	masculine feminine singular adjective which can act like a substantive	Strong's #2896 BDB #373
b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
chayyîym (חַיִּים) [pronounced khay-YEEM]	<i>life, lives, living, being alive, having life, immortality, a long life, sustenance, sustaining life; refreshment; being vigorous; prosperity, welfare, happiness, living prosperously</i>	masculine plural substantive; masculine plural adjective with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #2416 BDB #313

**Translation:** ...and to do good in their lives.

One of the things in life which contributes to one's enjoyment is to do good in life. The person who thinks only about himself and does nothing for other people—that is a man most miserable with his life.

<sup>279</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

## Ecclesiastes 3:12b ...to do good in one's life (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *To do good in his life... This has been taken by many in the sense of "doing one's self good, prospering, enjoying one's self."... and therefore nearly equivalent to "rejoice" in the former part of the verse.*

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *But the expression is best taken here, as when it occurs elsewhere (e.g. Ecclesiastes 7:20), in a moral sense, and it thus teaches the great truth that virtue is essential to happiness, that to "trust in the Lord ... to depart from evil, and to do good" (Psalm 36:3, 27), will bring peace and content (see in the epilogue, Ecclesiastes 12:13, Ecclesiastes 12:14).*

The Pulpit Commentary concludes: *There is no Epicureanism in this verse; the enjoyment spoken of is not licentiousness, but a happy appreciation of the innocent pleasures which the love of God offers to those who live in accordance with the laws of their higher nature.*<sup>280</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 3:12 I know that [there is] nothing better for them but to be happy and to do good in their lives.

One set of translations made it sound as if Solomon is suggesting, do whatever makes you happy. Even the Easy-to-Read version goes one way in 2003 and another in 2006:

Easy-to-Read Version—2001 **I learned that the best thing for people to do is to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live.** God wants every person to eat, drink, and enjoy his work. These are gifts from God.

Easy-to-Read Version—2006 **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.

Notice, the first talks about a man being happy and enjoying himself; and the second is for a man to be joyful and to do good all of their lives. That is quite a difference in interpretation.

Gary H. Everett introduces the next two verses: *The closing verses to Ecclesiastes (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14) will warn us that everything we do in these seasons of life must be undergirded with the fear of God and the keeping of His commandments. The fact that there are twenty-eight is significance. Anytime in historical events the number seven or a factor of seven is used, it serves as a witness of divine intervention. One clear example is found in Matthew's description of Jesus' divine lineage, where God brought Israel through seasons of change every fourteen generations.*

Everett then cites: Matt. 1:17 **So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.** (ESV)

Are we to read a similarity or the reason for a similarity between the 14 states of being and the 14 generations?

Everett continues: *We see these divine seasons (and purposes) listed in Ecc\_3:2-8. We clearly identify with such descriptions of our lives as we recall how we move from birth to childhood to adolescence to adulthood to old age and finally to death. God's involvement in human affairs leads to the understanding that there will be an eternal judgment (Ecc\_3:17). Therefore, enjoy the goodness*

<sup>280</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:12.

*that God gives to us in this life, but remember to fear God because His judgment will come upon every man.*<sup>281</sup>

Clearly ultimate judgment is inevitable: Ecclesiastes 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.* (ESV)

### Ecclesiastes 3:13a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
gam (גם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i> ]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168
Together, the wâw conjunction and the gam particle might mean <i>and also, together with, along with, joined with, and, furthermore, and furthermore.</i>			
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i> ]	<i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all; can also be rendered any of</i>	masculine singular construct followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
'âdâm (אָדָם) [pronounced <i>aw-DAWM</i> ]	<i>a man, a human being, mankind; transliterated Adam</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #120 & #121 BDB #9
The word <i>the Adam</i> can mean <i>man, mankind, humankind, men, human beings.</i>			
she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced <i>sheh</i> ] or shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced <i>shehl</i> ]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
This is spelled shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced <i>shehl</i> ], but apparently is shortened further and affixed to a word or set of words. This relative particle appears to be a form of or a synonym of the relative pronoun 'âsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>uhsh-ER</i> ], which means <i>that, which, when, who or how</i> . Strong's #834 BDB #81. Although BDB says that its usage appears to be confined to later Hebrew and passages with a northern Palestine coloring <sup>282</sup> , it occurs as early as Gen. 6:3.			
'âkal (אָכַל) [pronounced <i>aw-KAHL</i> ]	<i>to eat; to dine; to devour, to consume, to destroy</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #398 BDB #37
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
shâthâh (שָׁתָה) [pronounced <i>shaw-THAW</i> ]	<i>to drink [actually or metaphorically]; to drink together [at a banquet]; to feast; to sit</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #8354 BDB #1059

**Translation:** Furthermore, every man who eats and drinks,...

There are simple pleasures in life. After having worked for a few hours, nothing tastes better than a simple glass of cold water. If you are very thirsty and somewhat hungry, try the taste of a simple strawberry. You will be amazed at its range of flavors and how it satisfies one's thirst.

<sup>281</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–15.

<sup>282</sup> *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*; Hendrickson Publishers; ©1996; p. 979.

So Solomon proposes that, the simple pleasure of eating and drinking can be a great reward in life.

So far, Solomon is not suggesting any sinful pleasures in life.

Ecclesiastes 3:13b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
râ'âh (רָאָה) [pronounced raw-AWH]	<i>to see, to look, to look at, to view, to gaze; to behold; to observe; to perceive, to understand, to learn, to know</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #7200 BDB #906
ṭôwb (טוֹב) [pronounced toh <sup>b</sup> v]	<i>pleasant, pleasing, agreeable, good, better; approved</i>	masculine singular adjective which can act like a substantive	Strong's #2896 BDB #373
b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
kôl (כָּל) [pronounced kohl]	<i>every, each, all of, all; any of, any; some have translated, all manner of</i>	masculine singular construct not followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
ʿâmâl (עָמַל) [pronounced ġaw-MAWL]	<i>intense labor, exhausting toil, exhaustion, miserable work, work and toil so tiring, you just want to cry; misery, travail; production from labor</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5999 BDB #765

**Translation:** ...that he will see good in all of his work;...

The end result of work is often a sense of accomplishment; and many can see good in the work that they do. In the ancient world, where most men did things related to farming, ranching, or building—one would see real results from a day's work.

**Application:** So often in life, there is a difference of attitude which makes all the difference in the world. Two people can have the exact same job, and one loves his work and the other despises it. Quite obviously, it is not the actual job which is key.

Matthew Henry: [Solomon] had advised (Ecclesiastes 2:24), to enjoy the good of our labour, in a humble dependence upon God and his providence, neither lifted up with hopes, nor cast down with fears, but with evenness of mind expecting every event.<sup>283</sup>

<sup>283</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–10.



**Ecclesiastes 3:13c**

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
mattâth (מַתָּת) [pronounced <i>maht-TAWTH</i> ]	<i>gift, reward, present</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #4991 BDB #682
This word is only found 8x in the Old Testament; and only in the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Ezekiel.			
ʿĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i> ]	<i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43
hîy' (אִיה) [pronounced <i>hee</i> ]	<i>she, it; also used as a demonstrative pronoun: that, this (one)</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>is</i> , <i>is</i> implied	Strong's #1931 BDB #214

**Translation:** ...it [is] a gift of Elohim.

This simple pleasures—eating, drinking and a sense of accomplishment—these things are gifts from God. In context, I think that this specifically refers to the gift of accomplishment.

Ecclesiastes 3:13 Furthermore, every man who eats and drinks, that he will see good in all of his work; it [is] a gift of Elohim.

Throughout, Solomon is speaking of legitimate activities and legitimate, yet simple, rewards. Criminal and sinful activity may produce some amount of pleasure, but it will not result in any sort of long-term satisfaction in life.

### **Ecclesiastes 3:13 Take pleasure in one's work (various commentators)**

The Pulpit Commentary: *And also that every man should eat and drink... it is the gift of God. This enforces and intensifies the statement in the preceding verse; not only the power to "do good," but even to enjoy what comes in his way (see on Ecclesiastes 2:24), man must receive from God.*

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *When we pray for our daily bread, we also ask for ability to take, assimilate, and profit by the supports and comforts afforded to us. "It" is better omitted, as "is the gift of God" forms the predicate of the sentence. Ecclesiastes 11:1-10:17, "The gift of the Lord remains with the godly, and his favor brings prosperity for ever."* <sup>284</sup>

...also that it is God's gift to man that every one should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil. (Ecc\_3:13 RSV)

Ray C. Stedman: *Underline the words, "take pleasure." That is what the Searcher finds that man cannot produce. Things in themselves give a momentary, not lasting, pleasure. True enjoyment is the gift of God, it is what God wants. That is what the Searcher has been arguing all along.*

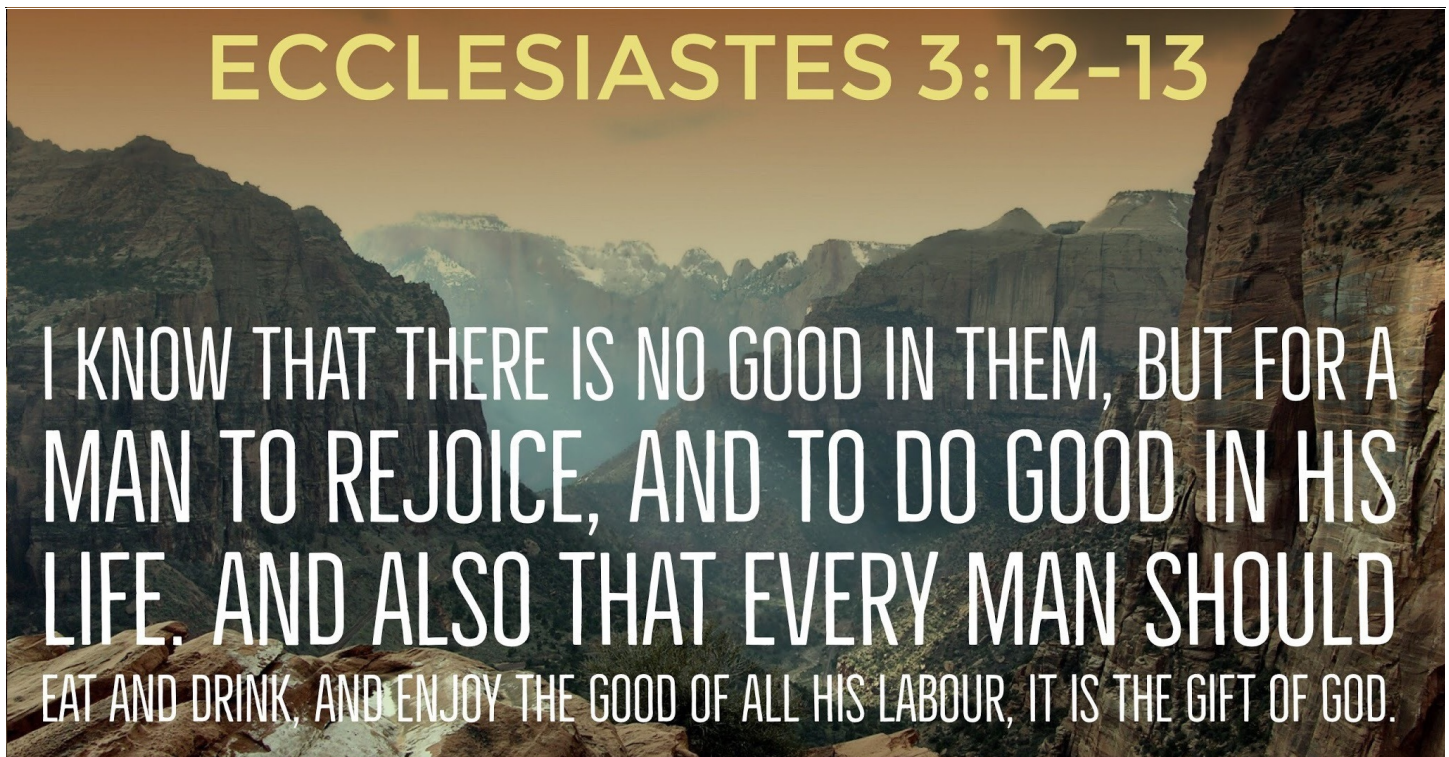
<sup>284</sup> The Pulpit Commentary; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:13 (slightly edited).

### Ecclesiastes 3:13 Take pleasure in one's work (various commentators)

Ray C. Stedman: *What a different picture this is of life under the sovereign Lordship of a Living God from what most people think God is like! I saw a book on sex the other day entitled, "Designed for Pleasure." That is true. But it is not merely sex that is designed for pleasure, all things are designed for human pleasure. If you think the thing in question is going to produce lasting pleasure, however, you will miss it. The secret is that it is the knowledge of God in that relationship that produces enjoyment. God wants it so. We are not in the grasp of the Great Cosmic Joykiller, as many people seem to view God. God delights in human enjoyment.*<sup>285</sup>

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)



**Ecclesiastes 3:12–13** (a graphic); from [Edify Unify](#); accessed March 23, 2020.

**Ecclesiastes 3:12–13** There is nothing better for men than to be happy and to do good in their lives. Furthermore, in the simple pleasures of eating and drinking, that each man will find the good in all of his toil; for this is God's gift to him.

There are clearly two ways to interpret this passage: (1) the epicurean maxim, *Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die*; or, (2) the concept of simple pleasures in life being allotted to all mankind.

### Ecclesiastes 3:12–13 God's simple pleasures allotted to mankind (commentators)

W. Clarkson: *[Is this approach to life] the refuge of the skeptic? They may be such. The epicure who has lost his faith in God says, "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die." There is no sacredness in the present, and no solid hope for the future. What is the use of aiming at a high ideal? Why waste breath and strength on duty, on aspiration, on piety? Why attempt to rise to the pursuit of the eternal and the Divine? Better lose ourselves in that which is at hand, in that which we can grasp as a present certainty.*

<sup>285</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

### Ecclesiastes 3:12–13 God's simple pleasures allotted to mankind (commentators)

Clarkson continues: *The best thing, the only certain good, is to eat and drink and to labor; is to minister to our senses, and to work upon the material which is visible to our eye and responsive to our touch. So speaks the skeptic; this is his miserable conclusion; thus he owns himself defeated and dishonored. For what is human life worth when the element of sacredness is expunged, when piety and hope are left out of it? It is no wonder that the ages of unbelief have been the times when men have had no regard for other people's dues, and very little for their own.*

But Clarkson also presents the opposing viewpoint: *It is not certain what was the mood in which the Preacher wrote; but let us prefer to think that behind his words, actuating and inspiring him, was a true spirit of faith in God and in Divine providence; let us take him to mean—what we know to be true—that, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, a wise and loyal-hearted man will hold that there is much that is worth pursuing and possessing in the simple pleasures, in the daily duties, and in the ordinary services which are open to us all.*

1. Daily God invites us to eat and drink, to partake of the bounties of his hand; let us appreciate his benefits with moderation and gratitude.
2. Daily he bids us go forth to "our work and to our labor until the evening;" let us enter upon it and carry it out in the spirit of conscientiousness and fidelity toward both God and man (Col. 3:23).
3. Daily God gives us the means of getting good to ourselves and doing good to others; let us eagerly embrace our opportunity, let us gladly avail ourselves of our privilege; so doing we shall make our life peaceful, happy, worthy.

Clarkson concludes: *In the light that shines into our hearts from the truth of Christ we judge...[that] these lesser things—pleasure, activity, acquisition—are well in their way and in their measure...[and that] human life has possibilities and obligations which immeasurably transcend these things; such, that to put these into the front rank and to fill our life with them is a fatal error. Made subordinate to that which is higher, they take their place and they render their service—a place and a service not to be despised; but made primary and supreme, they are usurpers that do untold injury, and that must be relentlessly dethroned.*<sup>286</sup>

Gary H. Everett: *We must resign ourselves to serving the Lord with gladness of heart (Ecclesiastes 3:12) and enjoy the benefits that God has given us during our daily service to Him, and this without coveting more than we have been given (Ecclesiastes 3:13). This is the secret of happiness in the midst of our being subjected to travail all the days of our lives.*<sup>287</sup>

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *God does not condemn, but approves of, the use of earthly blessings (Ecclesiastes 3:12–13); it is the abuse that He condemns, the making them the chief end (1Cor. 7:31). The earth, without human desires, love, taste, joy, sorrow, would be a dreary waste, without water; but, on the other hand, the misplacing and excess of them, as of a flood, need control. Reason and revelation are given to control them.*<sup>288</sup>

A. H. Moment: *[Let us not] withhold our confidence and love from God as a Father—who is ever doing for us "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." And, now, in view of the fact that "the Lord reigns"—that the "Clock of Destiny" is God's machine, ever running in the interest of man's highest good—what should be our daily conduct and highest ambition? Let this third chapter of Ecclesiastes give us, in closing, an exhortation, as it has already imparted to us profound instruction. In verse 12 let us read that it is our mission here "to do good"—in verse 13, "to enjoy the good of all our labour," seeing that this is "the gift of God".*<sup>289</sup>

<sup>286</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by W. Clarkson; Ecclesiastes 3:12–13.

<sup>287</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–15.

<sup>288</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1 (slightly edited).

<sup>289</sup> *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (edited).



## Ecclesiastes 3:12–13 God's simple pleasures allotted to mankind (commentators)

J. Willcock: *The author here is referring to temporal things as the secret by which the happiness may be procured for man, which is based upon: a cheerful enjoyment of the gifts of God, and a benevolent use of them...therefore, enjoyment of life is based upon the twofold duty of accepting with gratitude the gifts of God and of applying them to good uses was prescribed by the Law of Moses (Deut. 26:1-14); and, to a truly pious mind, the one part of the duty will suggest the other.*

Willcock later adds this: *We shall in this way discover for ourselves the truth of that saying of our Lord's, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). While those who selfishly keep all they have for themselves find that, however their goods increase, their satisfaction in them cannot be increased—nay, rather that it rapidly diminishes. Hence it is that the apostle counsels the rich "to do good, to be rich in good works, to be ready to distribute, willing to communicate" (1Tim. 6:17-19). The general teaching of the Scriptures, therefore, is in harmony with the results of our own experience, and leads to the same conclusion, that "doing good" is a condition of pure happiness.*<sup>290</sup>

I believe the overall concept is, God has allotted these simple pleasures to all of mankind.

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

The Message combines this passage into a paragraph: *But in the end, does it really make a difference what anyone does? I've had a good look at what God has given us to do—busywork, mostly. True, God made everything beautiful in itself and in its time—but he's left us in the dark, so we can never know what God is up to, whether he's coming or going. I've decided that there's nothing better to do than go ahead and have a good time and get the most we can out of life. That's it—eat, drink, and make the most of your job. It's God's gift. (Ecclesiastes 3:9–14)*

---

D. Thomas: *Different minds, observing and considering the same facts, are often very differently affected by them. The measure of previous experience and culture, the natural disposition, the tone and temper with which men address themselves to what is before them,—all affect the conclusion at which they arrive. The conviction produced in the mind of the Preacher of Jerusalem is certainly deserving of attention; he saw the hand of God in nature and in life, where some see only chance or fate. To see God's hand, to admire his wisdom, to appreciate his love, in our human life,—this is an evidence of sincere and intelligent piety.*<sup>291</sup>

This is the second time that Solomon says, *I know...*

**I have known that all which is doing the Elohim he is to forever; upon him nothing to be added and from him [nothing] to be withdrawn. And the Elohim does that; they fear from to His faces.**

Ecclesiastes  
3:14

**I know that all which Elohim does is forever; and upon it nothing [can] be added and from it, [nothing can] be taken. The Elohim does this; [and] they fear/respect from before Him.**

**I know that all which God does is forever; and you cannot add to it or take from it. This is what God does; and man should fear and respect Him.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

<sup>290</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by J. Willcock; Ecclesiastes 3:12–13 (paraphrased).

<sup>291</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by D. Thomas; Ecclesiastes 3:14.

**Ancient texts:**

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	I have known that all which is doing the Elohim he is to forever; upon him nothing to be added and from him [nothing] to be withdrawn. And the Elohim does that; they fear from to His faces.
Dead Sea Scrolls	.
Jerusalem targum	.
Targum (Onkelos)	.
Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan)	.
Revised Douay-Rheims	.
Douay-Rheims 1899 (Amer.)	I have learned that all the works which God hath made, continue for ever: we cannot add any thing, nor take away from those things which God hath made that he may be feared.
Aramaic ESV of Peshitta	.
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	.
Aramaic Targum	I know by the spirit of prophecy, that everything which the Lord does in the world, whether good or evil, whatsoever is decreed from His month, will be for ever; to it man has no power to add, nor has any one power to take from it; and at the same time, when punishment comes into the world, it is the Lord who does it, that the children of man may fear before Him.
Plain English Aramaic Bible	.
Lamsa's Peshitta (Syriac)	I know that whatsoever the LORD does, it shall be for ever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it; and the LORD has so made it that men should reverence him.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	I know that whatsoever things God has done, they shall be forever. It is impossible to add to it, and it is impossible to take away from it; and God has done it, that men should fear before Him.

Significant differences:

**Limited Vocabulary Translations:**

Bible in Basic English	I am certain that whatever God does will be for ever. No addition may be made to it, nothing may be taken from it; and God has done it so that man may be in fear before him.
Easy English	Everything that God does will be for all time. We cannot do anything more than what God has done. We cannot take anything away from what he has done. God wants us to worship him. That is the reason for all that he does.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	I learned that anything God does will continue forever. People can't add anything to the work of God. And people can't take anything away from the work of God. God did this so people would respect him.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	I learned that anything God does will continue forever. People cannot add anything to the work of God, and they cannot take anything away from it. God did this so that people would respect him.
God's Word™	.
Good News Bible (TEV)	I know that everything God does will last forever. You can't add anything to it or take anything away from it. And one thing God does is to make us stand in awe of him. I've also concluded that whatever God does, that's the way it's going to be, always. No addition, no subtraction. God's done it and that's it. That's so we'll quit asking questions and simply worship in holy fear.
The Message	I realize that whatever <b>Elohim</b> does will last forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing can be taken away from it. <b>Elohim</b> does this so that people will fear him.
Names of God Bible	I know that everything God does will last forever. Nothing can be added to it. And nothing can be taken from it. God does that so people will have respect for him.
NIRV	I know that everything God does will last forever. Nothing can be added to it. And nothing can be taken from it. God does that so people will have respect for him.



New Simplified Bible I know that whatever God does it will be forever. Nothing can be added to it, nor any thing taken from it. God does it in order that men should reverence (respect) him.

### Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

Casual English Bible .  
 College Press paraphrase One other thing I willingly admit: whatever God does will endure, nothing can be added and nothing can be subtracted. God works in this consistent way because of His very nature, and in order that men may stand in awe of Him.  
 Contemporary English V. Everything God has done will last forever; nothing he does can ever be changed. God has done all this, so that we will worship him.  
 The Living Bible And I know this, that whatever God does is final—nothing can be added or taken from it; God's purpose in this is that man should fear the all-powerful God. [*God's purpose in this is that man should fear the all-powerful God, implied*]  
 New Berkeley Version .  
 New Life Version I know that everything God does will last forever. There is nothing to add to it, and nothing to take from it. God works so that men will honor Him with fear.  
 New Living Translation And I know that whatever God does is final. Nothing can be added to it or taken from it. God's purpose is that people should fear him.  
 Unlocked Dynamic Bible I also know that what God does endures forever. No one can add to what God does, and no one can take away from the things that he does. God does those things in order that people will honor him.  
 Unfolding Bible Simplified .

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible All that God does lasts through ages;  
 So to them, you can add nothing more,  
 Nor can you take it away.  
 For, all that God has accomplished  
 Was done so we'd live before Him in fear.  
 Beck's American Translation .  
 Common English Bible I know that whatever God does will last forever; it's impossible to add to it or take away from it. God has done this so that people are reverent before him. [*Or to inspire awe before the divine*]  
 New Advent (Knox) Bible But be sure all God has made will remain for ever as he made it; there is no adding to it, no taking away from it; so he will command our reverence.  
 Translation for Translators I *also* know that what God does endures forever. No one can add to what God does, and no one can take away from the things that God does. God does those things in order that people would revere him.

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Conservapedia Translation I know that whatever God does, it shall be done forever: Nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken away from it: and God does this so that men should fear him. I do not know if I quite got hold of this one<sup>292</sup>  
 Revised Ferrar-Fenton Bible I have learnt, that whatever **GOD** has made, that will endure for ever. There is no adding to it,—and there is no taking from it,—and that God's Creation is wonderful, next to Himself.  
 God's Truth (Tyndale) I considered also that whatsoever God does, it continues for ever, and that nothing can be put unto it, nor taken from it: And that God does it to the intent, that men should fear him.

<sup>292</sup> These are the translator's remarks, not mine.

HCSB	I know that all God does will last forever; there is no adding to it or taking from it. God works so that people will be in awe of Him.
International Standard V	I have concluded that everything that God undertakes will last for eternity—nothing can be added to it nor taken away from it—and that God acts this way so that people will fear him.
Jubilee Bible 2000	I have understood that whatever God does, it shall be for ever; nothing can be added to it, nor any thing taken from it because God does <i>it</i> that <i>men</i> should fear before him.
H. C. Leupold	.
Lexham English Bible	I know everything God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, and nothing can be taken from it, for God so acts that humans might stand in awe before him.
NIV, ©2011	.
Peter Pett's translation	.
Unfolding Bible Literal Text	.
Unlocked Literal Bible	I know that whatever God does lasts forever. Nothing can be added to it or taken away, because it is God who has done it so that people will approach him with honor.
Urim-Thummim Version	I know that, whatever Elohim does, it will be for the ages: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and Elohim does it that men should fear before him.
Wikipedia Bible Project	I knew that everything done by God will exist forever--- nothing may be added to it, and nothing can be taken away, and God has made it so that one will fear his presence.

### Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)	I know that everything God does remains forever; there is nothing to add, nothing to take from it. Yet God has ordained that men fear him.
The Heritage Bible	I know by seeing that all that God does, it shall be forever; nothing can be added to it, and nothing can be scraped off from it; and God does it that men should fear before his face.
New American Bible (2002)	I recognized that whatever God does will endure forever; there is no adding to it, or taking from it. Thus has God done that he may be revered.
New American Bible (2011)	.
New English Bible—1970	I know that whatever God does lasts for ever; to add to it or subtract from it is impossible. And he has done it all in such a way that men must feel awe in his presence.
New Jerusalem Bible	I know that whatever God does will be for ever. To this there is nothing to add, from this there is nothing to subtract, and the way God acts inspires dread.
New RSV	I know that whatever God does endures for ever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; God has done this, so that all should stand in awe before him.
Revised English Bible—1989	I know that whatever God does lasts for ever; there is no adding to it, no taking away. And he has done it all in such a way that everyone must feel awe in his presence.

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	I know that whatever God does will last forever; there is nothing to add or subtract from it; and God has done it so that people will fear him.
exeGesés companion Bible	I know that whatever Elohim works, is eternal; neither augmented; nor diminished:

Hebraic Roots Bible	and Elohim works so that they awe at his face. I know that whatever The Elohim does, it shall be forever; nothing is to be added to it, and nothing is to diminish from it. And The Elohim does it so that they fear before Him.
The Israel Bible	I realized, too, that whatever <i>Hashem</i> has brought to pass will recur evermore: Nothing can be added to it And nothing taken from it— and <i>Hashem</i> has brought to pass that men revere Him.
Israeli Authorized Version Kaplan Translation <i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	.
Tree of Life Version	I know that everything that God does will endure forever. There is no adding to it or taking from it. God has made it so, that they will revere Him.

### Weird English, Old English, Anachronistic English Translations:

Alpha & Omega Bible	I KNOW THAT WHATSOEVER THINGS THEOS ( <i>The Alpha &amp; Omega</i> ) HAS DONE, THEY SHALL BE FOR EVER: IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ADD TO IT, AND IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO TAKE AWAY FROM IT: AND THEOS ( <i>The Alpha &amp; Omega</i> ) HAS DONE IT, THAT MEN MAY FEAR BEFORE HIM.
Awful Scroll Bible	I am to have ascertained, that what He of mighty ones retains to prepare is to be enduring! There is to be nothing made added to it or to be diminish. He of mighty ones is to have prepared this, that they are to hold Him awful turned before Him.
Charles Thompson OT Concordant Literal Version	.
Darby Translation	I know that all the One, Elohim, is doing, It shall be for the eon; Onto it there can be nothing to add, And from it there can be nothing to subtract; The One, Elohim, He does it that they may fear before Him."
exeGesés companion Bible	.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	I have da'as that, all that HaElohim doeth will endure l'olam; nothing can be added to it, nor any thing taken from it; HaElohim doeth it, that men should fear before Him.
Rotherham's <i>Emphasized B.</i>	.
Third Millennium Bible	.

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	I know that whatever God does, it endures forever; nothing can be added to it nor can anything be taken from it, for God does it so that men will fear and worship Him [with awe-filled reverence, knowing that He is God].
The Expanded Bible	I know that everything God does will continue forever. People cannot add anything to what God has done, and they cannot take anything away from it. God does it this way to make people ·respect [or be afraid of; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12, 13] him.
Kretzmann's Commentary	I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever, for His works are established and upheld by His almighty power; nothing can be put to it, by the weak attempts of frail human beings, nor anything taken from it, they cannot interfere with His government; and God doeth it that men should fear before Him, for the contemplation of God's works brings about a feeling of awe and reverence, together with the knowledge that the omniscience of God is familiar with even those things which men often believe hidden from His eye.
Syndein/Thieme	I realized/understand {yada`}, too, that whatsoever 'Elohiym/Godhead has manufactured/done {'asah} will endure forever. Nothing can be added to it, nor any thing taken from it. 'Elohiym/Godhead manufactures {'asah - out of His Word - divine good production} that men 'respect {the authority of}/fear Him.

The Voice I know everything God does endures for all time. Nothing can be added to it; nothing can be taken away from it. We humans can only stand in awe of all God has done.

### Bible Translations with Many Footnotes:

College Press Bible Study .  
The Complete Tanach I knew that everything that God made, that will be forever; we cannot add to it, nor can we subtract from it; and God made it so that they fear Him.

**I knew that everything that God made:** [i.e.,] that the Holy One, blessed be He, [made] in the Creation, is fit to exist forever, and it cannot be changed, either by adding or by diminishing, and when it is changed, God commanded and caused it to be changed, in order that they should fear Him. The ocean broke through its boundary in the generation of Enosh and inundated a third of the world, and God did this so that they would fear Him. For seven days, the course of the sun was changed in the Generation of the Flood, to rise in the west and set in the east, in order that they fear Him. The sun went back ten steps in the days of Hezekiah, and in the days of Ahaz his father, the day was shortened and the night was lengthened on the day of his death, so that he should not be eulogized. All this was so that they would fear Him. Therefore, there is nothing better for a man to occupy himself with than with His commandments and to fear Him.

The Geneva Bible .  
Kaplan Translation .  
NET Bible® *God's Sovereignty*  
I also know that whatever God does will endure forever;  
nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken away from it.  
God has made it this way, so that men will fear him.

New American Bible (2011) .

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Brenner's Mechanical Trans. ....  
Charles Thompson OT .  
C. Thompson (updated) OT I have found that all the things which God has made will continue their age; there is no adding to it nor taking from it; and that God has acted that they may be awed at his presence.

Context Group Version .  
English Standard Version .  
Green's Literal Translation .  
Modern English Version I have perceived that everything that God has done will be lasting. And to this there is nothing to be added, and from it there is nothing to be taken away. And God has done this so that in His presence men fear Him.

Modern Literal Version .  
Modern KJV .  
New American Standard B. .  
New European Version .  
New King James Version I know that whatever God does,  
It shall be forever.  
Nothing can be added to it,  
And nothing taken from it.  
God does it, that men should fear before Him.

Niobi Study Bible .  
Owen's Translation .  
Restored Holy Bible 6.0 .

Updated Bible Version 2.17 I know that, whatever God does, it will be forever: nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; and God has done it, that men should fear before him.

A Voice in the Wilderness .  
 Webster's Bible Translation .  
 World English Bible .  
 Young's Literal Translation .  
 Young's Updated LT

I have known that all that God does is to the age, to it nothing is to be added, and from it nothing is to be withdrawn; and God has wrought that they do fear before Him.

The gist of this passage:

Ecclesiastes 3:14a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
yâda' (יָדָעַ) [pronounced yaw-DAHG]	to know, to perceive, to acquire knowledge, to become acquainted with, to know by experience, to have a knowledge of something; to see; to learn; to recognize [admit, acknowledge, confess]	1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #3045 BDB #393
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee]	for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time	explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced koh]	the whole, all, the entirety, every	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
'ăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced ash-ER]	that, which, when, who, whom; where	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
Together, kôl 'ăsher mean <i>all which, all whom, all that [which]; whomever, whatever, whatever else, all whose, all where, wherever, everyone who, everyone that.</i>			
'âsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced gaw-SAWH]	to do, to make, to construct, to produce, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
'Ēlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #430 BDB #43
hûw' (הוּא) [pronounced hoo]	he, it; him, himself as a demonstrative pronoun: that, this (one); same	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb to be, is implied	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]	to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224



## Ecclesiastes 3:14a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational/possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʿôwlâm (עלום) [pronounced ô-LAWM]	<i>long duration, forever, everlasting, eternal, perpetuity, antiquity, futurity; what is hidden, hidden time</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5769 BDB #761

ʿôwlâm together with the lâmed preposition mean *forever, always*.

This is treated as a single word leʿolâm (לעלם) [pronounced leh-ôh-LAWM]; and it means *forever, always*.

**Translation:** I know that all which Elohim does is forever;...

This is the second of 2 *I knows...* found in this chapter. In fact, between vv. 9–22, 4x Solomon has seen something (made an observation); twice he has stated that *he knows, he perceives* something; and twice, Solomon will say something in his heart.

V. 13 is the 3<sup>rd</sup> time that God is said to do something (God will *do* something 4x in this chapter—again, between vv. 9–22).

What God does is lasting; it is forever.

## Ecclesiastes 3:14a Whatever God does is forever (various commentators)

W. Clarkson: *[There is a] fixedness of the Divine purpose. "The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations" (Psalm 33:11). We believe that from the beginning God intended to work out the righteousness and the blessedness of the human race; and whatever has come between him and the realization of his gracious end will be cleared away. Man will one day be all that the Eternal One designed that he should become.*<sup>293</sup>

David Guzik: *Here the Preacher escapes — ever so briefly — his under the sun thinking. It is not the mere mention of God that brings the escape; it is also the knowledge that God is eternal and that this matters to us (God does it, that men should fear before Him).*<sup>294</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *I know that, whatsoever God does, it will be forever. A second thing (see Ecclesiastes 3:12) that Koheleth knew, learned from the truths adduced in Ecclesiastes 3:1-9, is that behind man's free action and volition stands the will of God, which orders events with a view to eternity, and that man can alter nothing of this providential arrangement (comp. Isa. 46:10; Psalm 33:11).*

Chuck Smith: *Now I know this about God. My works are going to pass away. My works are going to be forgotten. But whatever God does, that's forever.*<sup>295</sup>

<sup>293</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by W. Clarkson; Ecclesiastes 3:14–15 (slightly edited).

<sup>294</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

<sup>295</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

## Ecclesiastes 3:14a Whatever God does is forever (various commentators)

D. Thomas: *God's work is eternal. All men's works are both unstable and transitory. Fresh ends are ever being approved and sought by fresh means. The laws of nature know no change; the principles of moral government are the same from age to age. When we learn to distrust our own fickleness, and to weary of human uncertainty and mutability, then we fall back upon the unchanging counsels of him who is from everlasting to everlasting.*<sup>296</sup>

J. Willcock: *What God does stands fast; no created power can nullify or change it (Psalm 23:1-6:11; Isa. 46:9, Isa. 46:10; Dan. 4:35).*<sup>297</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

## Ecclesiastes 3:14b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i> ]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside; because of, on account of</i>	preposition of relative proximity with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
ʾēyn (אֵין) [pronounced <i>ān</i> ]	<i>nothing, not, [is] not; not present, not ready; expresses non-existence, absence or non-possession; [there is] no [none, not one, no one, not]</i>	particle of negation; substantive of negation	Strong's #369 BDB #34
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l</i> ʰ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational/possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
yâçaph (יָצַח) [pronounced yaw-SAHPH]	<i>to add, to augment, to increase, to multiply; to add to do = to do again; to continue to</i>	Hiphil infinitive construct	Strong's #3254 BDB #414
wê (or vê) (וְ, or וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]	<i>from, off, out from, of, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>	preposition of separation with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l</i> ʰ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational/possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
gâraʿ (גָּרַע) [pronounced <i>gaw-RAHG</i> ]	<i>to diminish, to restrain, to withdraw, to reduce, to lessen</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #1639 BDB #175

**Translation:** ...and upon it nothing [can] be added and from it, [nothing can] be taken.

<sup>296</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by D. Thomas; Ecclesiastes 3:14.

<sup>297</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by J. Willcock; Ecclesiastes 3:14–17.

Man cannot add anything to what God does; and man cannot take away from what God does.

Illustration: We have all flown in a plane. Is there something that you can do to slow the plane down or to make it go faster? Apart from doing something that would get you arrested, the plane is going to move at whatever speed the pilot has chosen.

### **Ecclesiastes 3:14b Nothing can be added to or taken from God's Work (comments)**

W. Clarkson: *[There is a] constancy of the Divine Law. The same great moral laws, and the same physical laws also, which govern the action and the destiny of men in primeval times still prevail, and will always abide. Sin has meant suffering and sorrow, righteousness has worked out well-being and joy; diligence has been followed by fruitfulness, and idleness by destitution; generosity has been recompensed with love, and selfishness with leanness of soul, etc.*<sup>298</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *Nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it. We cannot hasten or retard God's designs; we cannot add to or curtail his plans. Septuagint, "It is impossible to add...to it, and it is impossible to take away from it." Thus Ecclesiasticus 18:6, "As for the wondrous works of the Lord, it is impossible to lessen or to add to them...neither can the ground of them be found out."*<sup>299</sup>

Chuck Smith: *[Y]ou can't add to the work of God. You can't take away.*

The Chuck Smith speaks of the advantage of this: *Now I love this because I think of the work of God in my life of imputing the righteousness to me through my faith in Jesus Christ. I can't add to it. I can't get a set of rules and start doing all these nice little things and be more righteous. Nor can you take away from that righteousness that I have, that perfect standing that I have before God in Jesus Christ. You can't add to it; you can't take from it. The work of God is complete. The work of God is eternal. And God has worked in me His righteousness by my faith in Jesus Christ.*

Smith continues: *Now one of the problems that we often have is our endeavor to add to God's work. If I could only, you know, read ten chapters of the Bible everyday, then I could be more righteous. If I'd only pray for four hours a day, then I'd be more righteous. No, no, you can't add. You are righteous, the righteousness of Christ which is through faith. You are righteous in God's sight. "Oh, I got so angry today and screamed at the kids. I'm so unrighteous." No, you can't take away from that righteousness that is yours in Christ Jesus. You can't diminish. God accounts you righteous in His sight. The work of God in imputing righteousness to me.*

Smith concludes: *So I don't need to go around hanging my head, "Oh, I'm so miserable today. I'm such a sinner. I'm so horrible. And I'm so this and that." God is counting me righteous because I am trusting and believing in His work in Jesus Christ. And I can't go around and say, "Well, I'm so righteous, so much more righteous than you, you sinner, you know. I saw what you did. I wouldn't think of doing that," and I can't go around in a self-righteous mold because I have these spiritual gifts or I have done this or that. It doesn't make me any more righteous. You can't add to the work of God. It's complete. It's full. And I'm so glad.*<sup>300</sup>

D. Thomas: *God's work is perfect and unalterable. "Nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it." This cannot be said to be the general conviction; on the contrary, men are always finding fault with the constitution of things. If they had been consulted in the creation of the universe, and in the management of human affairs, all would have been far better than it is! Now, all depends upon the end in view. The scientific man would make an optical instrument which should serve as both microscope and telescope—a far more marvelous construction than the eye.*

<sup>298</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by W. Clarkson; Ecclesiastes 3:14–15.

<sup>299</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:14.

<sup>300</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

## Ecclesiastes 3:14b Nothing can be added to or taken from God's Work (comments)

D. Thomas continues: *The pleasure-seeker would eliminate pain and sorrow from human life, and would make it one prolonged rapture of enjoyment. But the Creator had no intention of making an instrument which should supersede human inventions; his aim was the production of a working, everyday, useful organ of vision. The Lord of all never aimed at making life one long series of gratification; he designed life to be a moral discipline, in which suffering, weakness, and distress fulfill their own service of ministering to man's highest welfare. For the purposes intended, God's work needs no apology and admits of no improvement.*<sup>301</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

## Ecclesiastes 3:14c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i> ]	<i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #430 BDB #43
ʿâsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i> ]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to produce, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced <i>sheh</i> ] or shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced <i>shehl</i> ]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
This is spelled shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced <i>shehl</i> ], but apparently is shortened further and affixed to a word or set of words. This relative particle appears to be a form of or a synonym of the relative pronoun ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>uhsh-ER</i> ], which means <i>that, which, when, who</i> or <i>how</i> . Strong's #834 BDB #81. Although BDB says that its usage appears to be confined to later Hebrew and passages with a northern Palestine coloring <sup>302</sup> , it occurs as early as Gen. 6:3.			
yârê' (יָרֵא) [pronounced <i>yaw-RAY</i> ]	<i>to fear, to be afraid; to fear-respect, to reverence, to have a reverential respect</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #3372 BDB #431
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>mihn</i> ]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
lâmed (לְ) [pronounced <i>l'</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510

<sup>301</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by D. Thomas; Ecclesiastes 3:14.

<sup>302</sup> *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*; Hendrickson Publishers; ©1996; p. 979.

### Ecclesiastes 3:14c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
pânîym (פָּנִים) [pronounced paw-NEEM]	face, faces, countenance; presence	masculine plural construct (plural acts like English singular) with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #6440 BDB #815

Together, the two prepositions and pânîym mean *from before, from the presence of, from a position before a person or object, from before a place*. However, this also expresses source or cause, and is also rendered *because of, on account of*. Literally, this is *from to faces of...*

With the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix, this means, *from before him*.

**Translation:** *The Elohim does this; [and] they fear/respect from before Him.*

I would understand this to be what Solomon is suggesting; or what Solomon believes all men should do. We should all have a healthy fear/respect for God.

### Ecclesiastes 3:14c God acts and men fear Him (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *God does it, that men should fear before him*. There is a moral purpose in this disposal of events. Men feel this uniformity and unchangeableness in the working of Providence, and there learn to cherish a reverential awe for the righteous government of which they are the subjects. It was this feeling which led ancient etymologists to derive Θεός and Deus from δέος, "fear" (comp. Rev. 15:3, Rev. 15:4).

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *This is also a ground of hope and confidence. Amid the jarring and fluctuating circumstances of men God holds the threads, and alters not his purpose. "I the Lord change not; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed"* (Mal. 3:6).<sup>303</sup>

Ray Stedman: *God has sovereignly, independently, set up the plan of life in a way that we cannot interfere with. He has done so, in order that men should fear before him.*

Ray Stedman: *All through the Bible we read that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," (Psalm 111:10, Prov. 9:10). Until a man recognizes and trusts the superior wisdom of God he has not begun to fear God. This fear is not abject terror of God, it is respect and honor for him. If you attempt to live your life without the recognition of God, ultimately you will find yourself, as the Searcher found himself, empty, dissatisfied and restless, feeling that life is miserable and meaningless. The secret of life is the presence of God himself.*

Ray Stedman: *Most of the struggle of life comes from us wanting to play God ourselves, wanting to be in charge of what happens to us. That is true even of Christians. When God refuses to go along we sulk and pout and get angry with him. We throw away our faith and say, "What's the use? I tried it but it doesn't work." What a foolish statement! God will not surrender his prerogatives. "Nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it -- God has made it so in order that men should fear before him."*<sup>304</sup>

<sup>303</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:14 (slightly edited).

<sup>304</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.



### Ecclesiastes 3:14c God acts and men fear Him (various commentators)

D. Thomas: *God's work has a purpose with reference to man. What God has done in this world he has done for the benefit of his spiritual family. Everything that is may be regarded as the vehicle of communication between the creating and the created mind. The intention of God is "that men should fear before him," i.e. venerate and glorify him. Our human probation and education as moral and accountable beings is his aim. Hence the obligation on our part to observe, inquire, and consider, to reverence, serve, and obey, and thus consciously and voluntarily secure the ends for which the Creator designed and fashioned us.*<sup>305</sup>

J. Willcock: *"That men should fear before him." It should fill our heart with reverence. This is, indeed, the purpose for which God has given this revelation of himself, and no other view of the Divine character is calculated to produce the same effect. The thought of God's infinite power would not impress us in like manner if at the same time we believed that his will was variable, that it could be propitiated and changed. But the conviction that his will is righteous and immutable should lead us to "sanctify him in our hearts, and make him our Fear and our Dread" (Isa. 8:13), and give us hope and confidence in the midst of the vicissitudes of life (Ecclesiastes 3:6).*<sup>306</sup>

#### Chapter Outline

#### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 3:14 I know that all which Elohim does is forever; and upon it nothing [can] be added and from it, [nothing can] be taken. The Elohim does this; [and] they fear/respect from before Him.

Ecclesiastes 3:14 I know that all which Elohim does is forever; and upon it nothing [can] be added and from it, [nothing can] be taken. The Elohim does this; [and] they fear/respect from before Him.

### Ecclesiastes 3:14 Concerning what God does (various commentators)

Eaton sees three aspects of God's action highlighted in Ecclesiastes 3:14:

- • God's actions are permanent (it shall be forever)
- • God's actions are effective and complete (nothing can be added to it)
- • God's actions are totally secure (nothing taken from it).

Eaton concludes: *All this leads on the part of man to fear, not a craven terror in the face of the monstrous or the unknown, but rather the opposite, reverence and awesome regard for God.*<sup>307</sup>

Expositor's Bible Commentary: *Of what use, then, was it for men to "kick against the goads," to attempt to modify immutable ordinances? "Whatever God has ordained continues forever; nothing can be added to it, and nothing can be taken from it" (Ecclesiastes 3:14). Nay, why should we care to alter or modify the social order? Everything is beautiful and appropriate in its season, from birth to death, from war to peace (Ecclesiastes 3:11).*

<sup>305</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by D. Thomas; Ecclesiastes 3:14.

<sup>306</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by J. Willcock; Ecclesiastes 3:14–17.

<sup>307</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

## Ecclesiastes 3:14 Concerning what God does (various commentators)

Expositor's Bible Commentary continues: *If we cannot find the satisfying Good in the events and affairs of life, that is not because we could devise a happier order for them, but because "God has put eternity into our hearts" as well as time, and did not intend that we should be satisfied till we attain an eternal good. If only we "understood" that, if only we recognised God's design for us "from beginning to end," and suffered eternity no less than time to have its due of us, we should not fret ourselves in vain endeavours to change the unchangeable, or to find an enduring good in that which is fugitive and perishable. We should rejoice and do ourselves good all our brief life (Ecclesiastes 3:12); we should eat and drink and take pleasure in our labours (Ecclesiastes 3:13); we should feel that this faculty for innocently enjoying simple pleasures and wholesome toils is "a gift of God": we should conclude that God had ordained that regular cycle and order of events which so often forestalls the wish and endeavour of the moment, in order that we should fear Him in place of relying on ourselves (Ecclesiastes 3:14), and trust our future to Him who so wisely and graciously recalls the past.*<sup>308</sup>

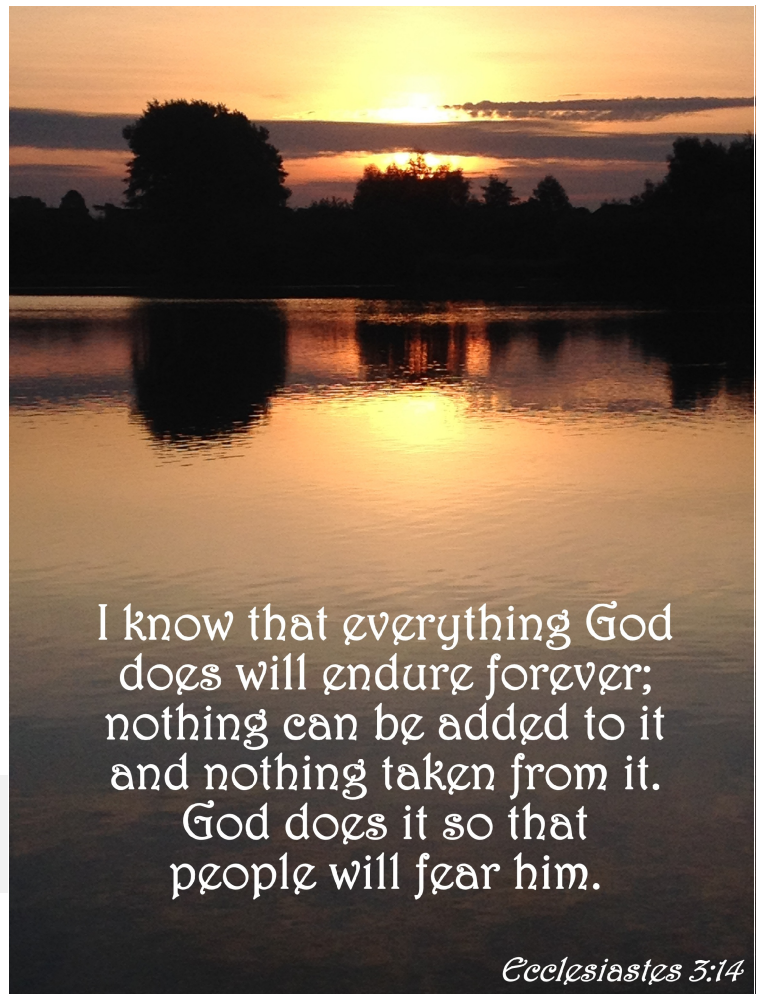
[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 3:14 I know that all which God does is forever; and you cannot add to it or take from it. This is what God does; and man should fear and respect Him.

**Ecclesiastes 3:14** (a graphic); from [WordPress](#); accessed March 23, 2020.

There is a lot of information packed into this short verse.



[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

<sup>308</sup> *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–15 (slightly edited).

V. 15 was a rather difficult to translate.

**What which is already he [was]; and that [which is] to be already he was. And the Elohim seeks [the] persecuted [or, (the) past].** Ecclesiastes 3:15 **That which is, already has been; and that [which] will be already was. The Elohim seeks the past.**

**That which is, had already been; and that which will be, has already occurred. God, nevertheless, seeks the past (as well as the present).**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	What which is already he [was]; and that [which is] to be already he was. And the Elohim seeks [the] persecuted [or, (the) past].
Dead Sea Scrolls	.
Jerusalem targum	.
Targum (Onkelos)	.
Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan)	.
Aramaic Targum	What has been from the beginning has come to pass; and what will be at the end of days has already happened; and at the great day of judgment the Lord will demand the poor and the needy from the hands of the wicked who persecuted him.
Revised Douay-Rheims	.
Douay-Rheims 1899 (Amer.)	That which hath been made, the same continueth: the things that shall be, have already been: and God restoreth that which is past.
Aramaic ESV of Peshitta	.
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	.
Plain English Aramaic Bible	.
Lamsa's Peshitta (Syriac)	That which is now, already has been; and that which is to be, has already been; and God will avenge him who has been persecuted.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	That which has been is now; and whatever things are appointed to be have already been; and God will seek out that which is past.

Significant differences:

#### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	Whatever is has been before, and what is to be is now; because God makes search for the things which are past.
Easy English	Future events will be the same as past events were. God causes the same things to happen again and again. The Teacher is telling us when something is right. It is only right if we do it at the right time. And it is God who says this. He says whether it is right. We think that 'under the sun' (verse 1) means 'here on the earth'. Also, God causes things to happen at the right time (verse 11). It is important to understand this. There is a reason for all the things that God does. And he wants us to worship him.
Easy-to-Read Version—2001	Things that happened in the past have happened, {and we can't change them}. And things that will happen in the future will happen, {and we can't change them}. But God wants to help people that have been treated badly.
Easy-to-Read Version—2006	What happened in the past has happened, and what will happen in the future will happen. But God wants to help those who have been treated badly. [Or "What

	happens now also happened in the past. What happens in the future has also happened before. God makes things happen again and again.”]
God’s Word™	.
Good News Bible (TEV)	.
The Message	Whatever was, is. Whatever will be, is. That’s how it always is with God.
Names of God Bible	Whatever has happened in the past is present now. Whatever is going to happen in the future has already happened in the past. <i>Elohim</i> will call the past to account.
NIRV	Everything that now exists has already been. And what is coming has existed before. God will judge those who treat others badly.
New Simplified Bible	That which is has already been and that which is to be has already been. God seeks what has passed by.

### Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

Casual English Bible	.
College Press paraphrase	In addition, consider this! God will see to it that history repeats itself. That which was, now is; and that which is to be, has already been. (Is there anything of which one might say, “See this, it is new?”)
Contemporary English V.	Everything that happens has happened before, and all that will be has already been-- God does everything over and over again.
The Living Bible	Whatever is has been long ago; and whatever is going to be has been before; God brings to pass again what was in the distant past and disappeared [God brings to pass again what was in the distant past and disappeared, literally, “God seeks what has been driven away.”].
New Berkeley Version	.
New Life Version	That which is, already has been. And that which will be, has already been. For God allows the same things to happen again.
New Living Translation	What is happening now has happened before, and what will happen in the future has happened before, because God makes the same things happen over and over again.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	Things that exist now have already existed previously, and things that will happen in the future have already happened previously; God causes us to want to understand mysteries.
Unfolding Bible Simplified	.

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	And all that is, has been before... Yes, it’s all happened before, And God searches to see what we’ve chosen.
Beck’s American Translation	.
Common English Bible	Whatever happens has already happened, and whatever will happen has already happened before. And God looks after what is driven away [Or <i>God seeks out what is pursued, or God seeks what has gone by, or God seeks the pursued</i> ; Heb uncertain].
New Advent (Knox) Bible	Nothing that has been, but lasts on still; nothing that will be, but has been already; he is ever repeating the history of the past.
Translation for Translators	Things that exist now have already existed previously, and things that will happen in the future have already happened previously; God causes the same things to happen many times.

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

Conservapedia Translation	The way things were is the way things are now. The future will be like the past too; God requires this consistency.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	What was produced formerly exists, and what was formerly will come again; for God attends to its course.
God's Truth (Tyndale)	The thing that has been, is now: and the thing that is for to come, has been before time, for God restores again the thing that was past.
HCSB	Whatever is, has already been, and whatever will be, already is. God repeats what has passed [Or God calls the past to account, or God seeks what is past, or God seeks the persecuted; lit God seeks [the] pursued].
International Standard V	That which was, now is; and that which will be, already is; and God examines what has already taken place.
Jubilee Bible 2000	.
H. C. Leupold	.
Lexham English Bible	What is—it already was, and what will be—it already is, for God will do what he has done.
NIV, ©2011	.
Peter Pett's translation	.
Unfolding Bible Literal Text	.
Unlocked Literal Bible	Whatever exists has already existed; whatever will exist has already existed. God makes human beings seek hidden things.
Urim-Thummim Version	What has been is now; and what is to be has already been; and Elohim requires what is past.
Wikipedia Bible Project	What was already is, and what will be already was, and God will demand the chased.

**Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):**

Christian Community (1988)	What has happened comes again; what is now has already been; God recovers what has gone.
The Heritage Bible	What has been, it has long continued; and what will be, it has been a long time; and God searches out what follows.
New American Bible (2002)	What now is has already been; what is to be, already is; and God restores what would otherwise be displaced. God restores: the meaning is probably that God allows no part of his creation to drop out of existence
New American Bible (2011)	* What now is has already been; what is to be, already is: God retrieves what has gone by. Eccl 1:9. * [3:15] The verse is difficult. Literally it reads "and God seeks out what was pursued." It appears to be a variation of the theme in 1:9, "There is nothing new under the sun."
New English Bible—1970	Whatever is has been already Or Whatever has been already is, and whatever is to come has been already, and God summons each event back in its turn.
New Jerusalem Bible	What is, has been already, what will be, is already; God seeks out anyone who is persecuted.
New RSV	That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already is; and God seeks out what has gone by [Heb <i>what is pursued</i> ].
Revised English Bible—1989	Whatever is has been already, and whatever is to come has been already, with God summoning each event back in its turn.

**Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:**

Complete Jewish Bible	That which was is here already;
-----------------------	---------------------------------



exeGeser's companion Bible	and that which will be has already been, but God seeks out what people chase after. What became, already is; and what becomes, already became: and Elohim seeks what is pursued.
Hebraic Roots Bible	.
The Israel Bible	What is occurring occurred long since, And what is to occur occurred long since: and Hashem seeks the pursued.
Israeli Authorized Version	.
Kaplan Translation	.
<i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	Whatever is has already been, and what shall be has been before. But Elohim seeks out what has been pursued.
Tree of Life Version	Whatever exists, has already been and whatever will be, has already been, but God recalls what has passed.

### Weird English, Old English, Anachronistic English Translations:

Alpha & Omega Bible	THAT WHICH HAS BEEN IS NOW; AND WHATEVER THINGS ARE APPOINTED TO BE HAVE ALREADY BEEN; AND THEOS ( <i>The Alpha &amp; Omega</i> ) WILL SEEK OUT THAT WHICH IS PAST.
Awful Scroll Bible	It is to already be a being already, for what He of mighty ones remains to be the securer of - is it to be occurring chased after?
Charles Thompson OT	.
Concordant Literal Version	That which is, it already was, And what is to come already has been; And the One, Elohim, He shall seek out what has been pursued away."
Darby Translation	.
exeGeser's companion Bible	.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	That which is hath been already; and that which is to be hath already been; and HaElohim will call that which is past to account.
Rotherham's <i>Emphasized B.</i>	That which was, already, had been, and, that which shall be, already, shall have been,—but, God, seeketh that which hath been chased away.
Third Millennium Bible	.

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	That which is has already been, and that which will be has already been, for God seeks what has passed by [so that history repeats itself].
The Expanded Bible	What happens now has happened in the past, and what will happen in the future has happened before. God makes the same things happen again and again.
Kretzmann's Commentary	That which hath been is now, it was established by God's creative act; and that which is to I, hath already been, in agreement with God's plans before the creation of the world; and God requireth that which is past, literally, "God seeketh that which was driven away," restoring that which seemed changed and crowded out by the cycle of events in the history of the world.
Syndein/Thieme	Whatever is . . . has already been. And what will be . . . has been before. And, God will call the past to account..
The Voice	What has been and what is to be—already is. And God holds accountable all the pursuits of humanity [Meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.].

The contrast between God and humanity could not be starker. The teacher drives this point home by reminding his reader that human lives and earthly accomplishments are fleeting. Nothing tangible is permanent. No work lasts. It all slips away and vanishes into thin air. Compare that to God. Everything God does is substantial. Everything God accomplishes lasts forever. Every word God speaks

makes a difference. And so, God places within every person a sense of eternity to know yet not understand Him. This world with all its goodness and beauty is not as good as it gets. There is more, so much more, and we are made for that reality too. But not now, not yet.

The creation story in Genesis 2 recognizes the common origin of humanity and the animals. There God forms the first human from the “dirt out of the ground” and breathes into him the breath of life, and the man known as Adam becomes a living being. But within a few short verses, God declares that it is “not good” for Adam to be alone and seeks a “perfectly suited partner” for the human. So God forms from the “ground” every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and He brings them to Adam to see if any of them are a “right and proper partner.” Finally, when no suitable companion has been found, God fashions another creature from Adam’s own human flesh. When Adam sees her, he knows he has met a perfect partner. Clearly, both Genesis and Ecclesiastes stress how much humanity shares in common with the animals. While we may be different—as explained in the Genesis story—we are all creatures, made of the same stuff, breathing the same air. And perhaps most to the point, we share a common destiny: death.

### Bible Translations with Many Footnotes:

College Press Bible Study  
The Complete Tanach

That which was is already [done], and that which is [destined] to be, already was, and God seeks the pursued.

**That which was is already:** That which was before us, was already done, and we saw it or heard it from others who saw it, and we can attest to it, for we saw that the Holy One, blessed be He, seeks the pursued. Jacob was pursued, [and] Esau was a pursuer, (Mal. 1:2f): “And I loved Jacob. And I hated Esau.” The Egyptians pursued Israel. The Egyptians drowned in the sea, and Israel went forth with a high hand.

**and that which:** is destined to be at the end is a model of what already was. As it was in the beginning, so will it be at the end. The Holy One, blessed be He, does not change His standards in the world.

**and God seeks the pursued:** to punish the pursuer. Therefore, what is the profit of one who does evil in what he toils? He is destined to be called to account.

The Geneva Bible  
Kaplan Translation  
NET Bible®

Whatever exists now has already been, and whatever will be has already been; for God will seek to do again<sup>26</sup> what has occurred<sup>27</sup> in the past.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26tn</sup> The phrase “to do again” does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

<sup>27tn</sup> Heb “God will seek that which is driven away.” The meaning of שֶׁקֶבֶת (yġvaqqesh ‘et-nirdaf) is difficult to determine: שֶׁקֶבֶת (yġvaqqesh) is Piel imperfect 3rd person masculine singular from שָׁקַב (baqash, “to seek”) and נִדְּרָף (nirdaf) is a Niphal participle 3rd person masculine singular from נִדָּף (radaf, “to drive away”). There are several options: (1) God watches over the persecuted: שֶׁקֶבֶת (“seeks”) functions as a metonymy of cause for effect (i.e., to protect), and נִדְּרָף (“what is driven away”) refers to “those who are persecuted.” But this does not fit the context. (2) God will call the past to account: שֶׁקֶבֶת functions as a metonymy of cause for effect (i.e., to hold accountable), and נִדְּרָף is a metonymy of attribute (i.e., the past). This approach is adopted by several English translations: “God requires that which is past” (KJV), “God will call the past to account” (NIV) and “God summons each event back in its turn” (NEB). (3) God finds what has been lost: שֶׁקֶבֶת functions as a metonymy of cause for effect (i.e., to find), and נִדְּרָף refers to what has

been lost: “God restores what would otherwise be displaced” (NAB). (4) God repeats what has already occurred: שִׁקְבִי functions as a metonymy of effect (i.e., to repeat), and הָיָה־נָא is a metonymy (i.e., that which has occurred). This fits the context and provides a tight parallel with the preceding line: “That which is has already been, and that which will be has already been” (3:15a) parallels “God seeks [to repeat] that which has occurred [in the past].” This is the most popular approach among English versions: “God restores that which has past” (Douay), “God seeks again that which is passed away” (ASV), “God seeks what has passed by” (NASB), “God seeks what has been driven away” (RSV), “God seeks out what has passed by” (MLB), “God seeks out what has gone by” (NRSV), and “God is ever bringing back what disappears” (Moffatt).

<sup>28th</sup> The phrase “in the past” does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

New American Bible (2011) .

### **Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

Brenner’s Mechanical Trans. ....

Charles Thompson OT .

C. Thompson (updated) OT What hath been is now; and what are to be have already been; and God will find out him who is persecuted:...

Context Group Version That which is has been long ago; and that which is to be has long ago been: and God seeks again that which has passed away.

English Standard Version .

Green’s Literal Translation .

Modern English Version That which is has already been,  
and what is to come has also already been;  
and God seeks out what has been driven away.

Modern Literal Version What is, has been long ago and what is to be, has long ago been. And God seeks again what has passed away.

Modern KJV .

New American Standard B. .

New European Version That which is has been long ago, and that which is to be has been long ago: and God seeks again that which is passed away.

New King James Version That which is has already been,  
And what is to be has already been;  
And God requires [Lit. *seeks*] an account of what is past [*what is pursued*].

Niobi Study Bible .

Owen’s Translation .

Restored Holy Bible 6.0 .

Updated Bible Version 2.17 That which is has been long ago; and that which is to be has long ago been: and God seeks again that which has passed away.

A Voice in the Wilderness That which has been, is now; and that which is to be, already has been; and God exacts what is pursued.

Webster’s Bible Translation .

World English Bible .

*Young’s Literal Translation* .

Young’s Updated LT What is that which has been? Already it is, and that which is to be has already been, and God requires that which is pursued.

### **The gist of this passage:**

## Ecclesiastes 3:15a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
mâh (מַה) [pronounced maw]	<i>what, how, why</i>	interrogative; exclamatory particle	Strong's #4100 BDB #552
she- (שֶׁ-) [pronounced sheh] or shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced shehl]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
kebâr (כִּבְּרָא) [pronounced keh-b-AWR]	<i>an extent of time; formerly, already, long ago, a great while</i>	adverb	Strong's #3528 BDB #460
hûw' (הוּא) [pronounced hoo]	<i>he, it; him, himself as a demonstrative pronoun: that, this (one); same</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> , is implied	Strong's #1931 BDB #214

**Translation:** *That which is, already has been;...*

Whatever is happening in the human realm has happened before.

### Ecclesiastes 3:15a What is happening today has already taken place (commentary)

The Pulpit Commentary: *That which has been is now; so Septuagint; "That which has been made, the same remains" (Vulgate); better, that which has been, long ago it is; i.e. was in existence long before. The thought is much the same as in Ecclesiastes 1:9, only here it is adduced not to prove the vanity and endless sameness of circumstances, but the orderly and appointed succession of events under the controlling providence of God.*<sup>309</sup>

J. Willcock: *And now, as he looks upon human history, he sees the same regularity in the order of things. "That which hath been is now, and that which is to be hath already been." But the former feeling of weariness and oppression is modified by the thought of God's perfection, and by the "fear" which it excites. He recognizes the fact of a personal will governing the events of history. It is no mechanical process of revolution that causes the repetition time after time of similar events, the same causes producing the same effects; no wheel of destiny alternately raising and depressing the fortunes of men. It is God who recalls, "who seeks again that which is passed away" (Ecclesiastes 3:15).*<sup>310</sup>

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

<sup>309</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:15 (slightly edited).

<sup>310</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by J. Willcock; Ecclesiastes 3:14–17.

## Ecclesiastes 3:15b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced ash-ER]	that, which, when, who, whom; where	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]	to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]	to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
kebâr (כָּבֹד) [pronounced keh-b-AWR]	an extent of time; formerly, already, long ago, a great while	adverb	Strong's #3528 BDB #460
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]	to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224

**Translation:** ...and that [which] will be already was.

Things which people have planned to do in the future; those things have been done already.

### Ecclesiastes 3:15b That which will be already was (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *That which is to be has already been.* The future will be a reproduction of the past. The laws which regulate things change not; the moral government is exercised by him who "is, and was, and is to come" (Rev. 1:8), and therefore in effect history repeats itself; the same causes produce the same phenomena.<sup>311</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *In one sense and at one time it may seem as if there were "no new thing under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9), either in the history of the race or in the experience of the individual; but at another time and in another sense an almost infinite variety appears in both. The monotony of life, of which complaint is often heard (Ecclesiastes 1:10), exists rather in the mind or heart of the complainant than in the texture of life itself. What more diversified than the events and purposes the Preacher has catalogued?*<sup>312</sup>

Chuck Smith: *That which has been is now; and that which is to be has already been* (Ecclesiastes 3:15)... That's weird. God is outside of our time dimension. God is in the eternal dimension. So with God, "a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is as a day" (2 Peter 3:8). In other words, there is no time. You're in the eternal now. So that any event that will ever take place is taking place. Any event that has ever taken place is taking place. That which has been is now; that which shall be has already been..<sup>313</sup>

<sup>311</sup> The Pulpit Commentary; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:15 (slightly edited).

<sup>312</sup> The Pulpit Commentary; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, homiletics; Ecclesiastes 3:1–9.

<sup>313</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.



## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

## Ecclesiastes 3:15c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו, or וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿĒlōhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i> ]	<i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #430 BDB #43
bâqash (שָׁקַב) [pronounced <i>baw-KAHSH</i> ]	<i>to seek, to search, to desire, to strive after, to attempt to get, to require, to demand, to ask, to seek with desire and diligence</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Piel imperfect	Strong's #1245 BDB #134
ʾêth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	generally untranslated; possibly be translated <i>to, toward (s)</i>	mark of a direct object; indicates next word is the object of the verb	Strong's #853 BDB #84
râdaph (רָדַף) [pronounced <i>raw-DAHf</i> ]	<i>pursued, persecuted, driven away, chased away; being in the past</i>	Niphal participle	Strong's #7291 BDB #922

The NET Bible: Heb “God will seek that which is driven away.” The meaning of פְּדִרְנִתָּא שְׁקִבִי (yġvaqqesh ʾet-nirdaf) is difficult to determine: שְׁקִבִי (yġvaqqesh) is Piel imperfect 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular from שָׁקַב (baqash, “to seek”) and פְּדִרְנִתָּא (nirdaf) is a Niphal participle 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular from רָדַף (radaf, “to drive away”). There are several options: (1) God watches over the persecuted: שְׁקִבִי (“seeks”) functions as a metonymy of cause for effect (i.e., to protect), and פְּדִרְנִתָּא (“what is driven away”) refers to “those who are persecuted.” But this does not fit the context. (2) God will call the past to account: שְׁקִבִי functions as a metonymy of cause for effect (i.e., to hold accountable), and פְּדִרְנִתָּא is a metonymy of attribute (i.e., the past). This approach is adopted by several English translations: “God requires that which is past” (KJV), “God will call the past to account” (NIV) and “God summons each event back in its turn” (NEB). (3) God finds what has been lost: שְׁקִבִי functions as a metonymy of cause for effect (i.e., to find), and פְּדִרְנִתָּא refers to what has been lost: “God restores what would otherwise be displaced” (NAB). (4) God repeats what has already occurred: שְׁקִבִי functions as a metonymy of effect (i.e., to repeat), and פְּדִרְנִתָּא is a metonymy (i.e., that which has occurred). This fits the context and provides a tight parallel with the preceding line: “That which is has already been, and that which will be has already been” (3:15a) parallels “God seeks [to repeat] that which has occurred [in the past].” This is the most popular approach among English versions: “God restores that which has past” (Douay), “God seeks again that which is passed away” (ASV), “God seeks what has passed by” (NASB), “God seeks what has been driven away” (RSV), “God seeks out what has passed by” (MLB), “God seeks out what has gone by” (NRSV), and “God is ever bringing back what disappears” (Moffatt).<sup>314</sup>

**Translation:** The Elohim seeks the past.

This is somewhat tricky. The final word is râdaph (רָדַף) [pronounced *raw-DAHf*], and it means, *pursued, persecuted, driven away, chased away; being in the past*. Given the general context so far, it appears that this

<sup>314</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc3.htm> (footnote); accessed March 8, 2020.

would refer to that which is in the past rather than to a pursuer or a persecutor (or one who has been persecuted). Strong's #7291 BDB #922.

I chose 6 translations before, all of which have been give the imprimatur (that is, these are Bibles approved for use by Catholics). As you can see, they all have a different approach to the final line.

### Interpreting Ecclesiastes 3:15c (various translations)

Christian Community (1988)	What has happened comes again; what is now has already been; God recovers what has gone.
The Heritage Bible	What has been, it has long continued; and what will be, it has been a long time; and God searches out what follows.
New American Bible (2002)	What now is has already been; what is to be, already is; and God restores what would otherwise be displaced.
New American Bible (2011)	* What now is has already been; what is to be, already is: God retrieves what has gone by.
New Jerusalem Bible	What is, has been already, what will be, is already; God seeks out anyone who is persecuted.

This seems to be the least likely interpretation; it does not seem to make any sense contextually or standing on its own.

Revised English Bible–1989 Whatever is has been already, and whatever is to come has been already, with God summoning each event back in its turn.

This seems to make the most sense; but it is hard to get this translation out of the given Hebrew words. But the interpretation would be that God brings these various events back, out of the past.

The fact that we can pursue many different possible interpretations of this verse, all from Catholic approved Bibles, suggests that those who translate these Bibles into English do not do it in accordance with a set of doctrines, but with an intention of giving the best English rendering.

As an aside: most Bible translations seem to focus on giving what they believe to be the best translation, given their own set of guidelines. That is, the focus is more on the translation rather than on the doctrines of the translators (the JW translation being the glaring exception). There are some passages where this is more difficult to determine. So, case in point, there are 6 Catholic approved translations listed above, and clearly, they have different ideas as to how to translate this verse (particularly the final phrase).

In my work, which has mostly been in the Old Testament, I tend to find great continuity between Jewish and Catholic translations. I do not recall dealing with a passage, reading those two sets of translations, and thinking, "Well, that group is how a Catholic would see this issue, and this group is how orthodox Jews would understand its meaning." If there is a passage in the Old Testament where we can view a definite doctrinal difference between Catholics and Jews, I am not aware of it.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 3:15 [The Elohim seeks the past.](#)

### Ecclesiastes 3:15c God requires that which is past (various commentators)

David Guzik: *God requires an account of what is past: Again, this reflects a brief escape from under the sun thinking. If God judges the heart and deeds of man, then everything has meaning.*<sup>315</sup>

Kidner: *God has no abortive enterprises or forgotten men. Once again Qoheleth has shown, in passing, that the despair he describes is not his own, and need not be ours.*<sup>316</sup>

Plumptre: *The past is thought of as vanishing, put to flight, receding into the dim distance. It might seem to be passing into the abyss of oblivion; but God recalls it, brings back the same order, or an analogous order of events, and so history repeats itself.*<sup>317</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *God requires that which is past; literally, God seeks after that which has been chased away; Septuagint, "God will seek him who is pursue" Vulgate, "God renews that which is passed." The meaning is—God brings back to view, recalls again into being, that which was past and had vanished out of sight and mind.*

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *The sentence is an explanation of the preceding clauses, and has nothing to do with the inquisition at the day of judgment. Hengstenberg has followed the Septuagint, Syriac, and Targum, in translating, "God seeks the persecuted," and seeing herein an allusion to the punishment of the Egyptians for pursuing the Israelites to the Red Sea, or a general statement that God succors the oppressed. But this idea is quite alien to the intention of the passage, and injures the coherence.*<sup>318</sup>

Chuck Smith: *God requires that which is past (Ecclesiastes 3:15 )... You can't escape it. You say, "Well, I don't understand that." Well, join the crowd. You see, not only are we living in this time continuum, but we are also living in this finite existence and it is impossible that the finite can understand the infinite. Time deals with the finite aspects. Eternal deals with the infinite. And you can't cross the gulf. It's too great. You can only make childish illustrations, but you can't cross the gulf from the finite to the infinite.*<sup>319</sup>

Ray C. Stedman: *A better translation of that last phrase is, "God brings back what has already passed away."*

Ray C. Stedman: *The Searcher is here referring to the repetition of the lessons of life. We do not seem to learn these very well. I have learned some lessons in life and said, "Lord, I see what you are after. I've got it now. You don't have to bring this one back again." Down the road, however, I make the same mistake again. Some circumstance painfully recalls to mind what I had once seen as a principle in life. I have to come with hat in hand and say, "Lord, I'm a slow learner. Have patience with me." God says, "I understand. I'm prepared to have patience with you and teach you this over and over and over again until you get it right." Have you found life to be like that? The Searcher tells us that he too had to learn this.*<sup>320</sup>

Perhaps the idea is, once the past is past, we cannot return to it. We cannot deal with it. At best, we can make our peace with it or deal with our lives in the future with respect to things we did in the past. But, what we cannot do is change the past.

God, although He does not change the past, has a different relationship to it. He relates to the past just as He relates to our present, just as He relates to the future. This may be key as to why God knows the end from the beginning and that nothing in time is a surprise to Him. This is why God had to make provision for everything in eternity past; because the past is the same to Him as our present, as God lives outside of time.

<sup>315</sup> David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

<sup>316</sup> David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

<sup>317</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by J. Willcock; Ecclesiastes 3:14–17.

<sup>318</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:15 (slightly edited).

<sup>319</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

<sup>320</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

Now, on the other hand, Jesus, when on earth, was fully engaged in time. At any given moment, Jesus, in His humanity, had a past, present and future. It is less clear to me His relationship to time at this moment.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

God seeking what is past is a rather difficult point to understand.

### Requiring that which is past (from the Pulpit Commentary)

- I. IN THE REALM OF NATURE. God seeks after that which is past or has been driven away, in the sense that he recalls or brings again phenomena that have vanished; as e.g. the reappearance of the sun with its light and heat, the various seasons of the year with their respective characteristics, the circling of the winds with other meteorological aspects of the firmament. The thought here is the uniformity of sequence in the physical world (Ecclesiastes 1:4-7).
- II. IN THE SPHERE OF INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE. God seeks after that which has been driven away in the sense that he reproduces in the life of one individual experiences that have existed in another, or in himself at a former point in his career. The thought is, that by Heaven's decree a large amount of sameness exists in the phases of thought and feeling through which different individuals pass, or the same individuals at successive stages of their development.
- III. IN THE DOMAIN OF HISTORY. God seeks after that which has been driven away, in the sense that, on the broad theatre of action which men name "time," or "the world," he frequently, in the evolutions of his providence; seems to recall the past by reproducing "situations" "incidents," "events," "experiences," similar to, if not identical with, those which occurred before. The thought is that history frequently repeats itself.
- IV. IN THE PROGRAM OF THE UNIVERSE. God will eventually seek after that which has been driven away, by calling up again out of the past for judgment every individual that has lived upon the globe, with every word that has been spoken and every act that has been done, with every secret thought and imagination, whether it has been good or whether it has been bad. The thought is that the distant past and the distant future will one day meet. The place will be before the great white throne; the time will be the last day

*The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, homiletics; Ecclesiastes 3:15.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 3:15 That which is, already has been; and that [which] will be already was. The Elohim seeks the past.

### Ecclesiastes 3:15 The present and the past (various commentators)

*Expositor's Bible Commentary: They travel their cycles; they return in their appointed order. The uniformity of nature is reproduced in the uniform recurrence of the chances and changes of human life; for in this, as in that, God repeats Himself, recalling the past (Ecclesiastes 3:15). The thing that is is that which has been, and that which will be. Social laws are as constant and as inflexible as natural laws. The social generalisations of modern science-as given, for instance, in Buckle's "History"-are but a methodical elaboration of the conclusion at which the Preacher here arrives.*<sup>321</sup>

<sup>321</sup> *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1-15 (slightly edited).

### Ecclesiastes 3:15 The present and the past (various commentators)

Chuck Smith: *Ecclesiastes 3:15 is an interesting verse because it is sort of a definition of eternity. And if you have had trouble understanding eternity before, you'll really have trouble now. You see, we live in a time continuum on this planet Earth. Because the planet rotates on its axis about once every twenty-four hours, we call it a day. We measure the time in hours. Because the earth is in an orbit around the sun every 365 days and nine hours and fifty-six minutes and 4/100's of a second, we call that a year. We live on this earth and thus we are spinning around in our days and orbiting around in our years in the time continuum.*

Chuck Smith: *Now, if you get outside of the earth, and you begin to accelerate your speed, time no longer is moving in this but it begins to stretch out into a plane according to this speed to where if you can accelerate to this speed of light, time stands still. Now, if we could hop on a ray of light, turning into the energy, get out in this long plane, you could take off on a ray of light in what? One in a quarter seconds, tip your hat to the man on the moon; seven and a half minutes, race past the sun; fourteen minutes, button up your coat as you go past Pluto, so cold--fourteen hours, rather, Pluto. Hundred thousand years you could leave the Milky Way galaxy. One million five hundred thousand years, you could arrive at Adromeda. Make a U-turn, head back to the earth. And in three million years, you could return to the earth on that ray of light and you would be about a day older. But the earth would have gone through three million orbits around the sun, which those who are living upon the earth would have counted as years. So you'd go to look for the house that you used to live in and the cities and the people, and what's going to be in three million years, you see? But you've escaped the time zone. You're into the eternal where there is no time. As you get into the eternal, it is the now zone. God said, "I am." That is expressing His eternal nature. You're no longer within, you're no longer bounded by time, beginning and end; you're now in the eternal. Now. So when you can escape the time zone.*<sup>322</sup>

I don't know about Chuck's view of time right here. I might want to keep the first paragraph and erase the second.

#### Chapter Outline

#### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 3:15 That which is, had already been; and that which will be, has already occurred. God, nevertheless, seeks the past (as well as the present).

Ray C. Stedman see v. 16 as beginning a new section of the book of Ecclesiastes: *Verse 16 of Chapter 3 begins a section which runs through Chapter 5, in which a series of objections to this thesis are examined by the Searcher.*<sup>323</sup>

<sup>322</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

<sup>323</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.



## Introduction to Ecclesiastes 3:16–22 (Arno Gaebelein)

Arno Gaebelein on Ecclesiastes 3:16-22: *The thought of judgment expressed in verse 15 is now more fully taken up. It seems as if a ray of light now breaks in. There must be from the side of God's judgment. Under the sun he saw in the place of judgment wickedness, and in the place of righteousness, wickedness was there also. Then he said in his heart, "God will judge the righteous and the wicked." He draws the conclusion that the present injustice must be dealt with by God. But here he stops short. He may surmise, but certainly he has not. Instead of advancing in his searchings as a natural man he comes back to his old wail of vanity. "I said in my heart, it is because of the sons of men that God may prove them, and that they may see they themselves are but as beasts. For that which befalls the sons of men befalls beasts; even one thing befalls them: as the one dies so dies the other; yea, they have all one breath; and man has no pre-eminence above the beasts: for all is vanity."* It shows that as far as life beyond the present is concerned all is darkness for man. He may have "eternity set in his heart", but he has no light. Death comes alike to man and beast; they die and are gone, hence the conclusion, "man has no pre-eminence above the beast."

But man has, as the revelation of God teaches. But here we do not listen to God's revelation but to the searchings and observations of man only. The natural man knows, "all" men and beasts "go to one place, all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." Then there is just a faint suggestion of something which might be beyond the grave. The correct rendering of Ecclesiastes 3:21 is, "who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward, and the spirit of the beast goes downward to the earth?" Man and beast share the same being, draw breath in the same way, spring from the dust, return to the dust, but who can give assurance that the spirit of man really goes upward? Who knows if this is really true. Who has come back and told us the truth about it? Who knows? Such is still the cry of the natural man with all his boasted discoveries and research.

Finally he reaches the same goal as Koheleth--*all is vanity*. Oh! blessed truth as given by revelation and above all in the person of our Lord and His precious gospel! Man indeed has the pre-eminence and is not like the beast that perisheth. Redeemed by Him who became man, to die for our sins, not only the spirit of the redeemed goes upward but in its time the body will leave the dust and be changed like unto the glorious body of Him, who as glorified man sits at the right hand of God.

Returning to the wise king with his search, in view of all this, which he has brought forth in this chapter he gives his counsel as to what man is to do under these harassing circumstances. "Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better than that a man (the natural man) should rejoice in his own works, for that is his portion; for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?" (See also Ecclesiastes 6:12).<sup>324</sup>

David Guzik more briefly sums this up: *Injustice is unanswered by death.*<sup>325</sup>

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

## Introducing Ecclesiastes 3:16–17 God's justice/man's injustice (commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *Acknowledging the providential government of God, which controls events and places man's happiness out of his own power, one is confronted also by the fact that there is much wickedness, much injustice, in the world, which oppose all plans for peaceful enjoyment. Doubtless there shall be a day of retribution for such iniquities; and God allows them now in order to try men and to teach them humility. Meantime man's duty and happiness consist, as before said, in making the best use of the present and improving the opportunities which God gives him.*<sup>326</sup>

<sup>324</sup> Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

<sup>325</sup> David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

<sup>326</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:16–22.

## Introducing Ecclesiastes 3:16–17 God's justice/man's injustice (commentators)

D. Thomas: *Man's unrighteousness contrasted with God's righteousness. Every observant, judicial, and sensitive mind shares this experience. Human society, civil relations, cannot be contemplated without much of disapproval, disappointment, and distress. And who, when so affected by the spectacle which this world presents, can do other than raise his thoughts to that Being, to those relationships that are characterized by a moral excellence which corresponds to our highest ideal, our purest aspirations?* <sup>327</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

**And still, I have seen, under the sun, a place of the judgment, there [is] the malevolent; and a place of the righteousness, there [is] the malevolent.**

Ecclesiastes  
3:16

**And yet I have seen, under the sun, [in the] place of justice, there [is] the malevolent; and [in the] place of righteousness, there [is] the malevolent.**

**Despite what we know about God, I have seen, with my own two eyes, on this earth, malevolent men in a place where there should be justice; and I find these same malevolent men in a place where there ought to be righteousness.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	And still, I have seen, under the sun, a place of the judgment, there [is] the malevolent; and a place of the righteousness, there [is] the malevolent.
Dead Sea Scrolls	.
Jerusalem targum	.
Targum (Onkelos)	.
Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan)	.
Aramaic Targum	And further, I saw under the sun in this world, the place of judgment, in which false judges condemn the innocent, in his judgment, in order to acquit the guilty; and the place where the innocent is found, there the guilty is to tyrannise over him, because of the guilt of the wicked generation.
Revised Douay-Rheims	.
Douay-Rheims 1899 (Amer.)	I saw under the sun in the place of judgment wickedness, and in the place of justice iniquity.
Aramaic ESV of Peshitta	.
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	.
Plain English Aramaic Bible	.
Lamsa's Peshitta (Syriac)	And moreover, I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and in the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	And moreover I saw under the sun: In the place of judgment, wickedness was there; and in the place of righteousness, there was godliness.

Significant differences:

#### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

<sup>327</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by D. Thomas; Ecclesiastes 3:16–17.

Bible in Basic English	And again, I saw under the sun, in the place of the judges, that evil was there; and in the place of righteousness, that evil was there.
Easy English	<b>Are people like animals?</b> I saw something else about the people who live in this world. People should say if something is wrong. But they say that it is right. They should be fair to each other but they are not fair.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	I also saw these things in this life [Literally, “under the sun.”]: I saw that the courts should be filled with goodness and fairness, but there is evil there now.
God’s Word™	<b>Humans and Animals Meet the Same End</b> I saw something else under the sun: There is wickedness where justice should be found. There is wickedness where righteousness should be found.
Good News Bible (TEV)	<b>Injustice in the World</b> In addition, I have also noticed that in this world you find wickedness where justice and right ought to be.
The Message	<b>God’s Testing Us</b> I took another good look at what’s going on: The very place of judgment—corrupt! The place of righteousness—corrupt!
Names of God Bible NIRV	. Here’s something else I saw on earth. Where people should be treated right, they are treated wrong. Where people should be treated fairly, they are treated unfairly.
New Simplified Bible	.

### Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

Casual English Bible	.
College Press paraphrase	Let us look more closely under the sun. We shall discover disturbing things. I saw in the place where justice should be found that wickedness was there. I saw in the place where there should have been a just man, that there was an evildoer.
Contemporary English V. The Living Bible	Everywhere on earth I saw violence and injustice instead of fairness and justice. Moreover, I notice that throughout the earth justice is giving way to crime, and even the police courts are corrupt.
New Berkeley Version	.
New Life Version	<b>Sin Is Everywhere</b> Also I have seen under the sun that in the place of what is right and fair there is sin. And in the place of what is right and good there is wrong-doing.
New Living Translation	<b>The Injustices of Life</b> I also noticed that under the sun there is evil in the courtroom. Yes, even the courts of law are corrupt!
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	Furthermore, I saw that on this earth, even in the courts where we expect judges to make right decisions about what people had done, they did many wicked things.
Unfolding Bible Simplified	.

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	I’ve also noticed that under the sun, There’s a place where the godless are judged And a place where the righteous are judged.
Beck’s American Translation	.

Common English Bible	Enjoy what you do now I saw something else under the sun: in the place of justice, there was wickedness; and in the place of what was right, there was wickedness again!
New Advent (Knox) Bible Translation for Translators	. <b><i>Injustices in the world</i></b> Furthermore, I saw that on this earth [MTY], even in the courts where we expect judges to make right decisions about what people had done, they did many wicked [DOU] things.

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Conservapedia Translation	And I also saw an earthly place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and at the place of righteousness, that injustice was there. No stock can be put in earthly things, even those which appear to be most just can and do harbor wickedness
Revised Ferrar-Fenton Bible	And, further, I observed under the sun, that on the Seat of <b>JUSTICE</b> there was Villainy, and on the seat of Righteousness,—Wickedness!
God's Truth (Tyndale)	Moreover, I saw under the sun ungodliness in the stead of judgment, and iniquity in stead of righteousness.
HCSB	The Mystery of Injustice and Death I also observed under the sun: there is wickedness at the place of judgment and there is wickedness at the place of righteousness.
International Standard V	<b><i>From Dust to Dust</i></b> I also examined on earth: where the halls of justice were supposed to be, there was lawlessness; and where the righteous were supposed to be, [Lit. and the place of judgment] there was lawlessness.
Jubilee Bible 2000	.
H. C. Leupold	.
Lexham English Bible	.
NIV, ©2011	.
Peter Pett's translation	.
Unfolding Bible Literal Text	.
Unlocked Literal Bible	.
Urim-Thummim Version	And again, I have seen under the sun the Place of Judgment - there is the wicked; and the Place of Righteousness - there is the wicked.
Wikipedia Bible Project	And I also saw, under the sun, the place of judgment, there the evil is, and the place of justice, there the evil are.

### Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)	I have also seen under the sun, instead of justice, wickedness, and in the place of the just, the wicked.
The Heritage Bible	And again, I saw under the sun the place of judgment; there was wickedness; and in the place of righteousness, there was wrong.
New American Bible (2002)	.
New American Bible (2011)	<i>The Problem of Retribution.</i> And still under the sun in the judgment place I saw wickedness, and wickedness also in the seat of justice. Eccl 4:1.
New English Bible—1970	<b><i>Injustice in the world.</i></b> Moreover I saw here under the sun that, where justice ought to be, there was wickedness, and where righteousness ought to be, there was wickedness.

New Jerusalem Bible	Again I observe under the sun: crime is where justice should be, the criminal is where the upright should be.
New RSV	.

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	Another thing I observed under the sun: There, in the same place as justice, was wickedness; there, in the same place as righteousness, was wickedness.
exeGesés companion Bible	And again, I saw under the sun the place of judgment - that wickedness was there; and the place of justness - that wickedness was there.
Hebraic Roots Bible	And again I saw under the sun at the place of justice: wickedness is there; and at the place of righteousness, wickedness is there.
The Israel Bible	And, indeed, I have observed under the sun: Alongside justice there is wickedness, Alongside righteousness there is wickedness.
Israeli Authorized Version	.
Kaplan Translation	.
<i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	Then again I saw under the sun: In the place of right-ruling, wrongness was there. And in the place of righteousness, wrongness was there.
Tree of Life Version	.

### Weird English, Old English, Anachronistic English Translations:

Alpha & Omega Bible	.
Awful Scroll Bible	I am to have realized under the sun, that at the place of justice there is to be wickedness, surely at the place of righteousness there is to be wickedness.
Charles Thompson OT	.
Concordant Literal Version	.
Darby Translation	.
exeGesés companion Bible	.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	And moreover I saw under the shemesh that in the Mekom Mishpat (place of judgment) resha (wickedness) was there; and in the Mekom Tzedek, resha (wickedness) was there.
Rotherham's <i>Emphasized B.</i>	Then, again, I saw under the sun, the place of justice, that there was lawlessness, and, the place of righteousness, that there was lawlessness.
Third Millennium Bible	.

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	.
The Expanded Bible	Unfairness on Earth I also saw this ·here on earth [ <sup>L</sup> under the sun; 1:3]: ·Where there should have been justice [ <sup>L</sup> The place of judgment], there was evil; ·where there should have been right [ <sup>L</sup> the place of righteousness; <sup>C</sup> the courtroom], there was evil.
Kretzmann's Commentary	And, moreover, I saw under the sun the place of judgment, where the judges and rulers of men should dispense justice only, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there, perversion of justice by persons in authority being all too common.



Syndein/Thieme	And indeed I have observed under the sun: In the place of justice there is also wickedness/reversionism. In the place of righteousness there is also wickedness/reversionism.
The Voice	<b>Teacher:</b> Again, I looked <i>at everything that goes on</i> under the sun and realized that in place of justice, wickedness prevails. In place of righteousness, wrongdoing succeeds.

### Bible Translations with Many Footnotes:

College Press Bible Study The Complete Tanach	. And moreover, I saw under the sun, [in] the place of justice, there is wickedness, and [in] the place of righteousness, there is wickedness.  <b>the place of justice, etc.:</b> I saw with the holy spirit the place of the Chamber of Hewn Stone in Jerusalem, which was (Isa. 1:21): “full of justice” ; there they will judge wickedly, as it is said (Micah 3:11): “Its heads judge for bribes,” and I saw their punishment.  <b>and the place of righteousness:</b> the middle gate, which was the place of deciding the laws.  <b>there is wickedness:</b> there sat Sarsachim, Rab-Saris, Nergal- Sarezar, Rab-Mag (Jer. 39:3), and Nebuchadnezzar and his hosts, and they judged Israel with harsh tortures and death sentences.  <b>there is wickedness:</b> Heb. עֲשָׂרָה. The accent mark is before the last syllable, indicating that it is a noun like עֲשָׂרָה, but since it is the end of the verse, it is changed to be vowelized with a “kamatz,” although we do not find another instance of this word that changes in the case of an ethnachta or a sof pasuk.
The Geneva Bible Kaplan Translation NET Bible®	. . <i>The Problem of Injustice and Oppression</i> I saw something else on earth: <sup>29</sup> In the place of justice, there was wickedness, and in the place of fairness, <sup>30</sup> there was wickedness. <sup>29tn</sup> Heb “under the sun.” <sup>30tn</sup> Or “righteousness.”
New American Bible (2011)	.

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Brenner’s Mechanical Trans.	.....
Charles Thompson OT	...and yet I saw under the sun a place of judgment; was the ((a) an objection, (b) the answer.) wicked there? and a place for the just; was the pious there?
C. Thompson (updated) OT Context Group Version	. And moreover I saw under the sun, in the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and in the place of vindication, that wickedness was there.
English Standard Version	.
Green’s Literal Translation	.
Modern English Version	The Vanity of Injustice Moreover I saw what was under the sun: In the place of justice, there was wickedness; and in the place of righteousness, there was wickedness.
Modern Literal Version	.
Modern KJV	.
New American Standard B.	.
New European Version	.

New King James Version

Injustice Seems to Prevail

Moreover I saw under the sun:

In the place of judgment [*justice*],

Wickedness was there;

And in the place of righteousness,

Iniquity [*Wickedness*] was there.

Owen's Translation

Restored Holy Bible 6.0

Updated Bible Version 2.17

A Voice in the Wilderness

Webster's Bible Translation

World English Bible

Young's Literal Translation

And again, I have seen under the sun the place of judgment--there is the wicked; and the place of righteousness--there is the wicked.

The gist of this passage:

## Ecclesiastes 3:16a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ôwd (דוּעַ) [pronounced <i>gohd</i> ]	<i>still, yet, again, again and again, repeatedly, in addition to; continue, continually; more, farther, besides; as yet, even yet</i>	adverb	Strong's #5750 BDB #728
râ'âh (רָאָה) [pronounced <i>raw-AWH</i> ]	<i>to see, to look, to look at, to view, to gaze; to behold; to observe; to perceive, to understand, to learn, to know</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #7200 BDB #906
tachath (תַּחַת) [pronounced <i>TAH-khahth</i> ]	<i>underneath, below, under, beneath; instead of, in lieu of; in the place [in which one stands]; in exchange for; on the basis of</i>	preposition of location or foundation	Strong's #8478 BDB #1065
shemesh (שֶׁמֶשׁ) [pronounced <i>SHEH-mesh</i> ]	<i>sun; sunrise, sun-rising, east, sun-setting, west (of direction); openly, publically</i>	masculine or feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #8121 BDB #1039
mâqôwm (מִקוֹמָם) [pronounced <i>maw-KOHM</i> ]	<i>place, situated; for a soldier, it may mean where he is stationed; for people in general, it would be their place of abode (which could be their house or their town)</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4725 BDB #879
mîsh <sup>e</sup> pâṭ (מִשְׁפָּט) [pronounced <i>mîsh<sup>e</sup>-PAWT</i> ]	<i>judgement, justice, a verdict rendered by a judge, a judicial decision, a judicial sentence, a verdict, a judgement of the court</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #4941 BDB #1048
shâm (שָׁם) [pronounced <i>shawm</i> ]	<i>there; at that time, then; therein, in that thing</i>	adverb with the directional hê	Strong's #8033 BDB #1027

## Ecclesiastes 3:16a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
This simply means <i>there</i> ; hê acts almost like a demonstrative. Owens calls this a locational hê.			
resha' (עֶשֶׂה) [pronounced REH-shahg]	malevolent, corrupt, maleficent, wickedness, evil, malfeasance	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #7562 BDB #957

**Translation:** *And yet I have seen, under the sun, [in the] place of justice, there [is] the malevolent;...*

This phrase, *under the sun*, is found in every chapter of Ecclesiastes (except Eccles. 7); and multiple times in most of the chapters of Ecclesiastes. When this is affixed to the words, *I have seen*, this is what Solomon has observed with his own two eyes on this earth. In the book of Ecclesiastes, what Solomon observes under the sun is found at least 10x.

Solomon is a brilliant man, and his soul is, at various time in his life, infused with wisdom.

I would assume here, the place of judgment might be considered the courtroom; and Solomon is aware of courts which do not uphold the laws and who do not judge fairly.

Many people would agree that this can be found in some courts in the United States, where the judge is a person of injustice, given to bribery, but, more often, given over to an ideological bend which allows the judge to bend the laws to suit his own beliefs.

**Application:** It is interesting today that many people revere scientists and believe them to be the men of truth. But every scientist has feet of clay; every scientist is subject to various ideological leanings; and every scientist is capable of being wrong. This is true of every field today, because men have sin natures. All men, with one exception.

### Ecclesiastes 3:16a There is injustice where justice should be (commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment. Koheleth records his experience of the prevalence of iniquity in high places. The place of judgment (mishat); where justice is administered. The accentuation allows (cf. Gen. 1:1) this to be regarded as the object of the verb. The Revised Version, with Hitzig, Ginsburg, and others, take מִשַּׁח as an adverbial expression equivalent to "in the place." The former is the simpler construction. "And moreover," at the commencement of the verse, looks back to Ecclesiastes 3:10, "I have seen the travail," etc. That wickedness (resha) was there. On the judicial seat iniquity sat instead of justice.*<sup>328</sup>

D. Thomas: *The prevalence of wickedness upon earth and among men. The observation of the wise man was naturally directed to the state of society in his own times and in his own and of the neighboring countries. Local and temporal peculiarities do not, however, destroy the applicability of the principle to human life generally. Wickedness was and is discernible wherever man is found. Unconscious nature obeys physical laws, brute nature obeys automatic and instinctive impulse. But man is a member of a rational and spiritual system, whose principles he often violates in the pursuit of lower ends.*

<sup>328</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:16.

## Ecclesiastes 3:16a There is injustice where justice should be (commentators)

D. Thomas continues: *In the earliest ages "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." A remedial system has checked and to some extent counteracted these evil tendencies; yet to how large an extent is the same reflection just!*<sup>329</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

## Ecclesiastes 3:16b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
mâqôwm (מִקְוָם) [pronounced <i>maw-KOHM</i> ]	<i>place, situated; for a soldier, it may mean where he is stationed; for people in general, it would be their place of abode (which could be their house or their town)</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4725 BDB #879
tsedeq (צֶדֶק) [pronounced <i>TZEH-dehk</i> ]	<i>justice, rightness, straightness; what is right and just; righteousness, rightness, vindication</i>	masculine singular substantive with the definite article	Strong's #6664 BDB #841
shâm (שָׁם) [pronounced <i>shawm</i> ]	<i>there; at that time, then; therein, in that thing</i>	adverb with the directional hê	Strong's #8033 BDB #1027
This simply means <i>there</i> ; hê acts almost like a demonstrative. Owens calls this a locational hê.			
resha' (רֶשָׁע) [pronounced <i>REH-shahg</i> ]	<i>malevolent, corrupt, maleficent, wickedness, evil, malfeasance</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article; pausal form	Strong's #7562 BDB #957

**Translation:** ...and [in the] place of righteousness, there [is] the malevolent.

Let's assume that Solomon is talking about those who keep the law (whom, I believe, were soldiers, for the most part in that era). Solomon is saying, right where we should expect righteousness and justice, we find corruption.

## Ecclesiastes 3:16b In the place of righteousness, there is malevolence (comments)

The Pulpit Commentary: *The place of righteousness (tsedek). "Righteousness" is the peculiar characteristic of the judge himself, as "justice" is of his decisions. That iniquity (resha) was there. The word ought to be translated "wickedness" or "iniquity" in both clauses. The Septuagint takes the abstract for the concrete, and at the end has apparently introduced a clerical error, which has been perpetuated in the Arabic and elsewhere, "And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, there was the ungodly (ἀσεβής); and the place of the righteous, there was the godly (εὐσεβής)." The Complutensian Polyglot reads ἀσεβής in both places.*

<sup>329</sup> The Pulpit Commentary; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by D. Thomas; Ecclesiastes 3:16–17.

### **Ecclesiastes 3:16b In the place of righteousness, there is malevolence (comments)**

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *It is impossible to harmonize these statements of oppression and injustice here and elsewhere (e.g. Ecclesiastes 4:1 5:8 8:9–10) with Solomon's authorship of the book. It is contrary to fact that such a corrupt state of things existed in his time, and in writing thus he would be uttering a libel against himself. If he was cognizant of such evils in his kingdom, he had nothing to do but to put them down with a high hand. There is nothing to lead to the belief that he is speaking of other countries and other times; he is stating his own personal experience of what goes on around him.*

The Pulpit Commentary concludes: *It is true that in Solomon's latter days disaffection secretly prevailed, and the people felt his yoke grievous (1Kings 12:4); but there is no evidence of the existence of corruption in judicial courts, or of the social and political evils of which he speaks in this book. That he had a prophetic foresight of the disasters that would accompany the reign of his successor, and endeavors herein to provide consolation for the future sufferers, is a pious opinion without historical basis, and cannot be justly used to support the genuineness of the work.*<sup>330</sup>

D. Thomas: *Wickedness, in the form of injustice, prevails even where justice should be impartially administered. It is well known that in every age complaints have been made of the venality of Eastern magistrates. In the Old Testament references are frequent to the "gifts," the bribes, by which suitors sought to obtain decisions in their favor. Corruption here is worse than elsewhere, for it is discouraging to uprightness, and lowers the tone of public morals. We may be grateful that, in our own land and in our own day, such corruption is unknown—that our judges are above even temptation to bribery. But the fact has to be faced that injustice, whether from motives of malice or from motives of avarice, has existed widely in human communities.*<sup>331</sup>

#### **Chapter Outline**

#### **Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines**

Ecclesiastes 3:16 **And yet I have seen, under the sun, [in the] place of justice, there [is] the malevolent; and [in the] place of righteousness, there [is] the malevolent.**

There are institutions which are in charge of maintaining the rule of law; that their function is righteousness and justice; and yet, Solomon has observed himself that those positions have been corrupted.

All mankind is corrupt, save the Lord. Therefore, we observe that man's corrupt nature often corrupts the institutions which are in charge of administering justice.

### **Ecclesiastes 3:16 In the place of justice, Solomon saw maleficence (commentators)**

David Guzik: *Solomon looked at the world — the here and now world, apart from considering eternity — and saw that there was great evil and injustice. Instead of fair judgment he found wickedness; instead of righteousness he found iniquity.*

Guzik continues: *This is a significant problem under the sun. If man does not have to reckon with eternity; if this life is all there is, then many of the wicked and evil people win and many good and righteous people lose. The idea of karma does not consistently work — at least not in this life.*<sup>332</sup>

<sup>330</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:16.

<sup>331</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by D. Thomas; Ecclesiastes 3:16–17.

<sup>332</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.



## Ecclesiastes 3:16 In the place of justice, Solomon saw maleficence (commentators)

Ray C. Stedman: *Someone says, "Wait a minute. You say that God has a wonderful plan for my life, that he is a God of justice, but last week I was seeking justice in a courtroom and I found that the cards were stacked against me; all I got was the rawest injustice. How do you square that with this 'wonderful plan for my life?'" The Searcher takes this up, Verse 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. (Ecclesiastes 3:16 RSV)

Ray C. Stedman: *Human courts are designed to correct injustice, but they are often filled with wickedness and injustice. Just last week I was a witness in a case in which a man's business was being destroyed by legal maneuverers. Everyone knew this was unjust, but because of certain legalities no one could get hold of the matter to correct it. That kind of injustice creates anger and frustration in many hearts. People say, "What do you mean, I am to accept that as from the hand of God?"* <sup>333</sup>

Wright: *One of the greatest problems in understanding the total plan of God is that reward and punishment sometimes seem conspicuously absent.* <sup>334</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 3:16 Despite what we know about God, I have seen, with my own two eyes, on this earth, malevolent men in a place where there should be justice; and I find these same malevolent men in a place where there ought to be righteousness.

<p><b>I have said, [even] I, in my heart the righteous and the unrighteous will judge Elohim; for a time to every matter and upon all of the work there.</b></p>	<p>Ecclesiastes 3:17</p>	<p><b>I have said in my heart [that] Elohim will judge the righteous and the unrighteous; for [there is] a time to every matter and on every work there.</b></p>
--	------------------------------	--

**I know in my heart that, God will, eventually, judge the righteous and the unrighteous. He has set aside time for every matter and for all of the work and toil done there.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

<p>Masoretic Text (Hebrew)</p> <p>Dead Sea Scrolls</p> <p>Jerusalem targum</p> <p>Targum (Onkelos)</p> <p>Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan)</p> <p>Revised Douay-Rheims</p> <p>Douay-Rheims 1899 (Amer.)</p> <p>Aramaic ESV of Peshitta</p>	<p>I have said, [even] I, in my heart the righteous and the unrighteous will judge Elohim; for a time to every matter and upon all of the work there.</p> <p>.</p> <p>.</p> <p>.</p> <p>.</p> <p>.</p> <p>And I said in my heart: God shall judge both the just and the wicked, and then shall be the time of every thing.</p> <p>.</p>
--	---

<sup>333</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

<sup>334</sup> David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

V. Alexander's Aramaic T. Aramaic Targum	.	I said in my heart, that God will judge in the great day of judgement the righteous and the guilty, because a time is appointed for every thing, and for every work done in this world they will be judged there.
Plain English Aramaic Bible Lamsa's Peshitta (Syriac)	.	I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked; for there is a time for every purpose and for every work.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	.	And I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the ungodly; for there is a time there for every action and for every work.

Significant differences:

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	.	I said in my heart, God will be judge of the good and of the bad; because a time for every purpose and for every work has been fixed by him.
Easy English	.	'God will be the judge of all good people and of all bad people,' I told myself. Everything will happen at the right time.
Easy-to-Read Version—2006	.	So I said to myself, "God has planned a time for everything, and he has planned a time to judge everything people do. He will judge good people and bad people."
God's Word™	.	
Good News Bible (TEV)	.	I told myself, "God is going to judge the righteous and the evil alike, because every thing, every action, will happen at its own set time." Probable text its own set time; Hebrew its own set time there
The Message	.	I said to myself, "God will judge righteous and wicked." There's a right time for every thing, every deed—and there's no getting around it.
Names of God Bible	.	I thought to myself, " <b>Elohim</b> will judge righteous people as well as wicked people, because there is a specific time for every activity and every work that is done."
NIRV	.	I said to myself, "God will judge godly and sinful people alike. He has a time for every act. He has a time to judge everything that is done."
New Simplified Bible	.	

### Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

Casual English Bible	.	
College Press paraphrase	.	I said to myself, "Beware, evildoer! God will judge between you and the righteous man." And I also understand that there is a time when God will judge every delight of man and every deed.
Contemporary English V.	.	So I told myself that God has set a time and a place for everything. He will judge everyone, both the wicked and the good.
The Living Bible	.	I said to myself, "In due season God will judge everything man does, both good and bad."
New Berkeley Version	.	
New Life Version	.	I said to myself, "God will judge both the man who is right and good, and the sinful man." For there is a time for everything to be done and a time for every work.
New Living Translation	.	I said to myself, "In due season God will judge everyone, both good and bad, for all their deeds."
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	.	So I said to myself, "God will judge both righteous people and wicked people. There is certainly a time for him to do that because there is a time for him to do everything."
Unfolding Bible Simplified	.	

**Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:**

American English Bible	So, in my heart, I've concluded That both the unrighteous and just will be judged. Yes, there is a season for all, And for every deed, there is a right time.
Beck's American Translation	.
Common English Bible	I thought to myself, God will judge both righteous and wicked people, because there's a time for every matter and every deed.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	I marked, too, how wrong was done instead of right, injustice instead of justice, there under the sun's eye; 17 and I told myself that God would give judgement one day between the just and the sinners, and all things would reach their appointed end then. [3] V. 16 is included for context. [3] The Hebrew text has 'For there is a time for every purpose and for every deed there', it is not clear in what sense.
Translation for Translators	So I said to myself [SYN], "God will judge both righteous <i>people</i> and wicked <i>people</i> ; there is a time <i>for him to do that</i> , because there is a time for him to do everything."

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

College Press Bible Study	I said to myself, "God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man," for a time for every matter and for every deed is there.
Conservapedia Translation	.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	But I said to my heart, God will judge both Righteousness and Wickedness,—for there is a time for every purpose under the sun, and for all that is created there.
God's Truth (Tyndale)	Then thought I in my mind: God shall separate the righteous from the ungodly, and then shall be the time of judgement of all counsels and works.
HCSB	.
International Standard V	I told myself, "God will judge both the righteous and the wicked, because there is a time set to judge [The Heb. lacks to judge] every event and every work."
Jubilee Bible 2000	I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked; for <i>there is</i> a time determined <i>to judge</i> every will and regarding everything that is done.
H. C. Leupold	.
Lexham English Bible	So I said to myself, "God will surely judge the righteous and the wicked, for he has appointed a time <i>of judgment</i> for every deed and every work."
NIV, ©2011	.
Peter Pett's translation	.
Unfolding Bible Literal Text	.
Unlocked Literal Bible	.
Urim-Thummim Version	I said in my heart, Elohim will judge the righteous and the wicked: because there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.
Wikipedia Bible Project	I said to myself-- God will judge both the righteous and the wicked: because there is a time for all that's sought, and for every deed, there.

**Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):**

Christian Community (1988)	And I said to myself, "God will judge the just and the wicked for there is a time for everything, and a judgment for every deed."
The Heritage Bible	I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, because <i>there is</i> a time for every delight and for every work there.
New American Bible (2002)	And I said to myself, both the just and the wicked God will judge, since there is a time for every affair and on every work a judgment.

New American Bible (2011)	I said in my heart, both the just and the wicked God will judge, since a time is set for every affair and for every work.* Eccl 8:6a; 11:9; 12:14. * [3:17] <b>A time is set...work:</b> another possible reading would see this verse referring to a judgment in or after death: "a time for every affair and for every work there" (that is, in death or in Sheol).
New English Bible—1970	I said to myself, 'God will judge the just man and the wicked equally; every activity and prob. rdg, Heb and upon every purpose has its proper time.'
New Jerusalem Bible	And I think to myself: the upright and the criminal will both be judged by God, since there is a time for every thing and every action here.
New RSV	.

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	I said to myself, "The righteous and the wicked God will judge, because there is a right time for every intention and for every action."
exeGesés companion Bible	I said in my heart, Elohim judges the just and the wicked; for there is a time for every desire and for every work.
Hebraic Roots Bible	I said in my heart, The Elohim shall judge the righteous and the wicked; for there is a time there for every good purpose and for every work.
The Israel Bible	I mused: " <i>Hashem</i> will doom both righteous and wicked, for there is a time for every experience and for every happening."
Israeli Authorized Version	.
Kaplan Translation	.
<i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	I said in my heart, "Elohim judges the righteous and the wrong, for there is a time for every matter and for every work."
Tree of Life Version	I said in my heart: "The righteous and the wicked, God will judge. For there is a time for every activity and for every deed."

### Weird English, 𐤀𐤋𐤁𐤁 English, Anachronistic English Translations:

Alpha & Omega Bible	AND I SAID IN MY HEART, THEOS ( <i>The Alpha &amp; Omega</i> ) WILL JUDGE THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE UNGODLY: FOR THERE IS A TIME THERE FOR EVERY ACTION AND FOR EVERY WORK.
Awful Scroll Bible	I am to have ventured in <i>the sensibility</i> of my heart, "He of mighty ones sustains to judge they righteous and they wicked; for there is to be an occasion for the pursuits and deeds."
Charles Thompson OT	.
Concordant Literal Version	I said in my heart: As for the righteous and the wicked, the One, Elohim, shall judge both of them. For He has set a season for every event and for every deed."
Darby Translation	.
exeGesés companion Bible	.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	I said in mine lev, HaElohim shall judge the tzaddik and the resha (wicked); for an et (season) for every matter and for every ma'aseh is there.
Rotherham's <i>Emphasized B.</i>	Said, I, in my heart, Both the righteous and the lawless, will God judge,—for there will be a time for every pursuit, and concerning every work—there.
Third Millennium Bible	.

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	I said to myself, "God will judge both the righteous and the wicked," for there is a time [appointed] for every matter and for every deed.
The Expanded Bible	I said ·to myself [ <sup>L</sup> in my heart],

Kretzmann's Commentary	·God has planned [ <sup>L</sup> There is] a time for every ·thing [activity] and every action, so he will judge both ·good people and bad [the righteous and the evil/wicked]. I said in mine heart, in meditating upon a possible change in the unfortunate conditions obtaining, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, if not on this side of the grave, then in the last great Judgment; for there is a time there, in heaven above, for every purpose and for every work, for God is still supreme Sovereign in the universe.
Syndein/Thieme	I thought in my 'right lobe'/heart, 'Elohiym/Godhead shall judge the righteous and the wicked . . . for there is a time for every activity and a time for every deed.
The Voice	I said to myself, "God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a right time for every pursuit and for every action [Meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain]."

### Bible Translations with Many Footnotes:

The Complete Tanach	I said to myself, "God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter and for every deed there."  <b>I said to myself, etc.:</b> Therefore, I say: The Holy One, blessed be He, judges everyone after a time, and even though the matter is delayed, it will ultimately reach its time, for there is a time for every matter, even for retribution, and there is a time for the visitation of judgment.  <b>and for every deed:</b> that man did, they will judge him there when the time of the visitation arrives; there at that time, a time is given for every deed, to be judged for it. [The Rabbis say:] At the gate of the fold there are words (of bargaining), but in the stall (where the sheep are delivered) there is strict accounting (Shab. 32a).
The Geneva Bible Kaplan Translation NET Bible®	. . I thought to myself, "God will judge both the righteous and the wicked; for there is an appropriate time for every activity, and there is a time of judgment <sup>31</sup> for every deed. <sup>31tn</sup> The phrase "a time of judgment" does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.
New American Bible (2011)	.

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Brenner's Mechanical Trans. Charles Thompson OT	..... Then I said in my heart God will judge the whole class of the righteous, and the whole class of the wicked. For there is a time for every thing; and he is there over all the work.
C. Thompson (updated) OT Context Group Version	. I said in my heart, God will judge the vindicated and the wicked; for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.
English Standard Version Green's Literal Translation Modern English Version	. . I thought in my heart: God will bring judgment to the righteous and the wicked, for there is an appropriate time for every matter and deed.
Modern Literal Version Modern KJV	. .
New American Standard B.	I said to myself [Lit <i>in my heart</i> ], "God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man," for a time for every matter [Or <i>delight</i> ] and for every deed is there.
New European Version	.



New King James Version	.
Niobi Study Bible	.
Owen's Translation	.
Restored Holy Bible 6.0	.
Updated Bible Version 2.17	.
A Voice in the Wilderness	.
Webster's Bible Translation	.
World English Bible	.
Young's Literal Translation	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.
Young's Updated LT	.

**The gist of this passage:**

Ecclesiastes 3:17a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]	and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
'âmar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]	to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer	1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
'ânîy (אֲנִי) [pronounced aw-NEE]	I, me; in answer to a question, it means I am, it is I	1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #589 BDB #58
b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
lêb (לֵב) [pronounced lay <sup>b</sup> ]	heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking; midst	masculine singular noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix	Strong's #3820 BDB #524
'êth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated; possibly be translated to, toward (s)	mark of a direct object; indicates next word is the object of the verb	Strong's #853 BDB #84
tsaddîyq (צַדִּיק) [pronounced tsahd-DEEK]	just, righteous, justified, vindicated; absolute or perfect righteousness [if applied to God]	masculine singular adjective, often used as a substantive; with the definite article	Strong's #6662 BDB #843
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
'êth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated; possibly be translated to, toward (s)	mark of a direct object; indicates next word is the object of the verb	Strong's #853 BDB #84

## Ecclesiastes 3:17a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
râshâ' (רָשָׁא) [pronounced raw-SHAWG]	unrighteous; malevolent, lawless, corrupt, wicked (hostile to God); criminal; guilty [of sin] [against God or man]; having an unrighteous cause	masculine singular adjective; can act like a substantive; with the definite article	Strong's #7563 BDB #957
James Rickard: "Wicked man" is the noun RESHA, עֲשָׂרָה that means, "wicked or criminal." It embodies the character that is opposite the character of God, being in opposition to the just and righteous characteristics of God (see Job 34:10; Psalm 5:4; 84:10). <sup>335</sup>			
shâphaṭ (שָׁפַט) [pronounced shaw-FAHT]	to judge, to condemn, to punish; to defend [especially the poor and oppressed], to defend [one's cause] and deliver him from his enemies; to rule, to govern	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #8199 BDB #1047
'Ēlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #430 BDB #43

**Translation:** I have said in my heart [that] Elohim will judge the righteous and the unrighteous;...

When Solomon writes, *I said in my heart*, this represents his philosophical musings. He is a very bright man, but he is recording what he thought when out of fellowship when considering matters of justice and unrighteousness.

Solomon knows, without a doubt, that every person will be judged, whether righteous or unrighteous. Bear in mind, we are made righteous because we are in Christ. David and Solomon were made righteous because God covered over their unrighteous when they believed in Him.

## Ecclesiastes 3:17a God will judge the righteous and the unrighteous (comments)

The Pulpit Commentary: *I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked. In view of the injustice that prevails in earthly tribunals, Koheleth takes comfort in the thought that there is retribution in store for every man. when God shall award sentence according to deserts.*

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *God is a righteous Judge strong and patient, and his decisions are infallible. Future judgment is here plainly stated, as it is at the final conclusion (Ecclesiastes 11:1–10, 14). They who refuse to credit the writer with belief in this great doctrine resort to the theory of interpolation and alteration in order to account for the language in this and analogous passages. There can be no doubt that the present text has hitherto always been regarded as genuine, and that it does clearly assert future retribution, though not so much as a conclusion firmly established, but rather as a belief which may explain anomalies and afford comfort under trying circumstances.*<sup>336</sup>

<sup>335</sup> From <http://gracedoctrine.org/proverbs-chapter-9/> accessed December 9, 2015 (slightly edited).

<sup>336</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:17 (slightly edited).

## Ecclesiastes 3:17a God will judge the righteous and the unrighteous (comments)

D. Thomas: *The universal judgment of a righteous God. The atheist has no refuge from such observations and reflections as those recorded in verse 16. But the godly man turns from earth to heaven, and rests in the conviction that there is a Divine and righteous Judge, to whose tribunal all men must come, and by whose just decisions every destiny must be decided.*

Thomas continues: *All characters, the righteous and the wicked alike, will be judged by the Lord of all. Has the unjust escaped the penalty due from a human tribunal? He shall not escape the righteous judgment of God. Has the innocent, been unjustly sentenced by an earthly and perhaps corrupt judge? There is for him a court of appeal, and his righteousness shall shine as the noonday.*

Thomas concludes: *All kinds of works shall meet with retribution; not only the acts of private life, but also acts of a judicial and governmental kind. The unjust judge shall meet with his recompense, and the wronged and persecuted shall not be unavenged.*<sup>337</sup>

J. Willcock: *[O]ut of this belief in God's wise providence a healthy spirit should gather strength to bear patiently and cheerfully the difficulties and trials of life. The belief that our life is governed by an unalterable law is calculated, as I have said, to lead to a listless, hopeless state of mind, in which one ceases to strive against the inevitable. But that state of mind is very different from the resignation of those who believe that the government of the world is regular and unchangeable, because unerring wisdom guides him who is the Creator and Preserver of all things. Their faith can sustain them in the greatest trials, when God's ways seem most inscrutable; they can hope against hope, and, in spite of all apparent contradictions, believe that "all things work together for good to them that love God."*<sup>338</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

## Ecclesiastes 3:17b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
‘êth (עֵת) [pronounced éyath]	<i>time, the right time, the time proper ; opportunity</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6256 BDB #773
lâmed (ל) [pronounced lə]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
kôl (כָּל) [pronounced kohl]	<i>every, each, all of, all; any of, any; some have translated, all manner of</i>	masculine singular construct not followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
chêphets (חֵפֶץ) [pronounced KHAY-fets]	<i>a delight, a pleasure; desire; will; pursuit, ardor, affair; matter; something precious</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2656 BDB #343

<sup>337</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by D. Thomas; Ecclesiastes 3:16–17.

<sup>338</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by J. Willcock; Ecclesiastes 3:14–17.

Ecclesiastes 3:17b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or וַ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
‘al (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i> ]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside; because of, on account of</i>	preposition of relative proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i> ]	<i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all; can also be rendered any of</i>	masculine singular construct followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
ma‘ăseh (מַעֲשֶׂה) [pronounced <i>mah-ğa-SEH</i> ]	<i>deed, act, action, work, production, that which is done; that which is produced [property, goods, crops]; that which anyone makes or does; a course of action; a business</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #4639 BDB #795
shâm (שָׁם) [pronounced <i>shawm</i> ]	<i>there; at that time, then; therein, in that thing</i>	adverb of place	Strong's #8033 BDB #1027

**Translation:** ...for [there is] a time to every matter and on every work there.

This goes along with the song in vv. 2–8; there is a time for everything, and that will include the judgments of God. The song covered the activities of man; this verse says that the same is true of God—when justice must be applied, God has set aside the right time (or the appointed time) to do that.

I do not fully appreciate the difference of the prepositions here; I would have expect the lâmed preposition to be found twice.

No matter what is done on earth; no matter what the issue is, everything will be subject to God's justice.

There is a certain amount of fatalism found here. [At the appointed time, Solomon reasons, God will judge the just and the evil.](#) There is an interesting contrast between this verse and [Psalm 7 \(HTML\) \(PDF\) \(WPD\)](#), where David prays to God for justice to be brought to those pursuing him; and then, at the end of the psalm, he appears to come to a point of peace, recognizing that God will take care of these evil men. Solomon agrees that justice will occur, but at the right time. The implication of what Solomon is saying is, he (Solomon) does not have a say in the matter. There is a time set aside—determined by God—and Solomon cannot influence that.

**Application:** God does not just allow us to interact with mankind, but God allows us to interact with Him! I can provide two illustrations of this: (1) Abraham is speaking with God about the destruction of Sodom, and he starts with 50 men to preserve the city, and comes down to 10 ("If You, God, will not destroy the city for 50 righteous men; how about 40 righteous men? Will you still preserve it then?"). (2) God threatens to destroy all Israel—those people whom He has brought out of Egypt, and Moses, as their intermediary, pleads for God to spare them.

**Application:** God has predetermined His plan, but He has predetermined His plan with the volition of mankind involved. Let me give you an illustration of this: David one day decided that, he lived in a palace, but worship was taking place in a tent. What God should have is a Temple, where He would be worshiped. Today, most people who know something about the Old Testament know about worship that took place prior to A.D. 70 involved Temple worship. The building of the Temple was God's sovereign decision, but that is because He allowed for David to put his idea into motion. David had an original idea and God allowed for David's vision.

**Illustration:** We need to be careful in this arena. God has given us a great deal of leeway when it comes to the local church. Even though many churches have a whole set of rules and regulations; and rituals which they follow (which are different from church to church, denomination to denomination), we need to be careful about this. Let me give you several illustrations: (1) Some churches are established by members and they pool their resources and build a church on land which they have purchased. There is nothing wrong with this, as long as giving followed the guidelines given in 2Corinthians. (2) I have attended a small church—a congregation of 5 people—who met in a public building, where there were no out of pocket expenses for the congregation. (3) I have met in an inexpensive rented building and in people's homes for church. None of these violate the concept of the local church, even though they are all very different. One place where I am not yet convinced is the *internet church*, where a pastor stands in front of no one and teaches; and his congregation log on. I personally believe that, if a space can be found—in a home or wherever—and 3 or 4 members of the congregation are physically able to attend, then they should gather together. At the same time, I am not against people who are physically unable to attend finding some alternative means of hearing the Word of God taught (which would allow for an internet based church).

The Pulpit Commentary: *For there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.* The adverb rendered "there" (*שם*, *sham*) is placed emphatically, at the end of the sentence. Thus the Septuagint, *"There is a reason for every action, and for every work there (ἐκεῖ)"*...But it is unexampled to find the elliptical "there," when no place has been mentioned in the context.

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *Some take the adverb here in the sense of "then."...But really no time has been mentioned, unless we conceive the writer to have been guilty of a clumsy tautology, expressing by "then" the same idea as "a time for every purpose," etc. Ewald would understand it of the past; but this is quite arbitrary, and limits the signification of the sentence unnecessarily.*

The Pulpit Commentary concludes: *It is best, with many modern commentators, to refer the adverb to God, who has just been spoken of in the preceding clause. A similar use is found in Gen. 49:24. With God, spud Deum, in his counsels, there is a time or judgment and retribution for every act of man, when anomalies which have obtained on earth shall be rectified, injustice shall be punished, virtue rewarded. There is no need, with some commentators, to read up, "he appointed;" the usual reading gives a satisfactory sense.*<sup>339</sup>

Ecclesiastes 3:17 I have said in my heart [that] Elohim will judge the righteous and the unrighteous; for [there is] a time to every matter and on every work there.

### Ecclesiastes 3:17 Solomon's conclusion regarding God's justice (commentators)

Guzik then comes to this conclusion: *The Preacher said — perhaps hoped — that he knew God would judge the righteous and the wicked, and not only in this life. Because there is a time there for every purpose and for every work, God will judge the deeds of man to see if it fit the proper purpose and work.*<sup>340</sup>

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

<sup>339</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:17.

<sup>340</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.



Ecclesiastes 3:17 I know in my heart that, God will, eventually, judge the righteous and the unrighteous. He has set aside time for every matter and for all of the work and toil done there.

### **Wickedness in the place of judgment (from the Pulpit Commentary)**

The entire title was: *Wickedness in the place of judgment; or, the mystery of providence.*

- I. THE PROFOUND PROBLEM. The moral disorder of the universe. "I saw under the sun in the place of judgment that wickedness was there, and in the place of righteousness that wickedness was there" (verse 16).
  1. The strange spectacle. What fascinated the Preacher's gaze and perplexed the Preacher's heart was not so much the existence as the triumph of sin—the fact that sin existed where and as it did. Had he always beheld sin in its naked deformity, essential loathsomeness, and abject baseness, receiving the due reward of its misdeeds, trembling as a culprit before the bar of providential judgment, and suffering the punishment its criminality merited, the mystery and perplexity would most likely have been reduced by half. What, however, he did witness was iniquity, not trembling but triumphing, not sorrowing but singing, not suffering the due recompense of her own evil deeds but snatching off the rewards and prizes that belonged to virtue. In short, what he perceived was the complete moral disorder of the world—as it were society turned topsy-turvy; the wicked up and the righteous down; bad men exalted and good men despised; vice arrayed in silks and bedizened with jewels, and virtue only half covered with tattered rags.
  2. Two particular sights.
    - (1) Iniquity usurping the place of judgment; thrusting itself into the very council-chambers where right and justice should prevail; now as a judge who deliberately holds the scales uneven because the one litigant is rich and the other poor, anon as an advocate who employs all his ingenuity to defend a prisoner whom he knows to be guilty, and again as a witness who has accepted a bribe and calmly swears to a lie.
    - (2) Iniquity preoccupying the place of righteousness; i.e. the tribunal, whether secular or ecclesiastical, whose efforts should be all directed to finding out and maintaining the cause of righteousness.
- II. THE PERPLEXING MYSTERY. "I said in mine heart" (verse 17). The Preacher was troubled about it, as David (Psalm 37:1, Psalm 37:7), Job (Job 21:7), Asaph (Psalm 73:3), and Jeremiah (Jer. 12:1) had been. To him, as to them, it was an enigma. But why should it have been?
  1. On one hypothesis it is no enigma. On the supposition that God, duty, and immortality are non-existent, it is not a mystery at all that vice should prevail and virtue have a poor time of it so long as it remains above ground, for (on the hypothesis) fleeing to a better country beyond the skies is out of the question. The mystery would be that it were otherwise.
  2. On another hypothesis it is an enigma. What creates the mystery is that these things occur while God is, duty presses, and immortality awaits. Since God is, why does he suffer these things to happen? Why does he not interpose to put matters right? If right and wrong are not empty phrases, how comes it that moral distinctions are so constantly submerged? With "eternity in their hearts," how is it to be explained that men are so regardless of the future?
- III. THE PROPOSED SOLUTION. This lay in three things.
  1. The certainty of a future judgment. "I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked; for there is a time for every purpose and for every work" (verse 17). Convinced that God, duty, and immortality were no fictions but solemn realities, the Preacher saw that these implied the certainty of a judgment in the future world when all the entanglements of this world would be sorted out, its inequalities evened, and its wrongs righted; and seeing this, he discerned in it a sufficient reason why God should not be in a hurry to east down vice from its undeserved eminence and exalt virtue to its rightful renown.
  2. The discrimination of human character. The Preacher saw that God allowed wickedness to triumph and righteousness to suffer, in order that he might thereby "prove them," i.e. sift and distinguish

## Wickedness in the place of judgment (from the Pulpit Commentary)

them from one another by the free development of their characters. Were God by external restraints to place a check on the ungodly or by outward helps to recompense the pious, it might come to be doubtful who were the sinful and who the virtuous; but granting free scope to both, each manifests its hidden character by its actions, according to the principle, "Every tree is known by its fruits" (Matt. 7:16-20).

3. The revelation of human depravity. Because a future judgment awaits, it is necessary that the wickedness of the wicked should be revealed. Hence God abstains from interfering prematurely with the world's disorder that men may see to what thorough inherent depravity they have really come; that, oppressing and destroying one another, they are little better than brute beasts who, without consideration or remorse, prey on each other.

*The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, homiletics; Ecclesiastes 3:16–17.<sup>341</sup>

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Solomon seems to have come to a very reasonable conclusion back in v. 17, but here, he seems to become confused again. Solomon suddenly decides to consider the life of man and the life of beasts. Does this life not have the same end?

I believe that the understanding of this passage is reasonably easy; but the translation was very difficult. My commentary may change somewhat when I view how others have translated this passage.

## Introducing Ecclesiastes 3:18–21: Considering man and animals (commentators)

W. Clarkson: *"Before and after Christ." These words have a strange sound in our ears; they evidently do not belong to New Testament times.*<sup>342</sup>

D. Thomas: *The double nature of man has been recognized by every student of human nature. The sensationalist and materialist lays stress upon the physical side of our humanity, and endeavors to show that the intellect and the moral sentiments are the outgrowth of the bodily life, the nervous structure and its susceptibilities and its powers of movement. But such efforts fail to convince alike the unsophisticated and the philosophic. It is generally admitted that it would be more reasonable to resolve the physical into the psychical than the psychical into the physical.*

D. Thomas continues: *The author of Ecclesiastes was alive to the animal side of man's nature; and if some only of his expressions were considered, he might be claimed as a supporter of the baser philosophy. But he himself supplies the counteractive. The attentive reader of the book is convinced that the author traced the human spirit to its Divine original, and looked forward to its immortality.*<sup>343</sup>

What is happening here might be the difference between not believing in the Revealed God and believers in Him. This changes one's entire fundamental outlook (assuming that the person grows spiritually).

<sup>341</sup> There are many errors in this document. It claims to reference vv. 16 & 18, but it really references vv. 16–17.

<sup>342</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by W. Clarkson; Ecclesiastes 3:18–21.

<sup>343</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by D. Thomas; Ecclesiastes 3:18–21.

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

I believe that Solomon is facing a conundrum here. On the one hand, there is a great desire to see justice done; and that few things are more wounding to the human spirit than is the application of injustice to life. On the other hand, is man not just an advanced animal, but an animal just the same?

How many times have we viewed the repugnant behavior of Charley Brown, and wished to enjoy the fellowship of a dog or a cat (or even a bird) over Charley's? If you were required to share your domicile with another human being or with an animal, how many of us would choose the animal instead?

**I said, [even] I, in my heart, upon a manner, the sons of the Adam, regarding their separation [to] the Elohim and to see that beast they [are] to themselves. For an accident, sons of the Adam and an accident the beast and an accident one to them as a death here this one so a death this one. And a breath of one to the all; and an advantage of the Adam more than the beast [is] none, for the all [is] vanity.**

Ecclesiastes  
3:18–19

**I, [even] I, said in my heart, on account of the manner of the sons of man, regarding their separation to Elohim [or, *their proving (by) the Elohim*]: to see that they [are] animals with regards to one another [lit., *them*]. For [what] happens [to] the sons of man happens [to] the animals, that one [thing] happens to them, as death befalls this one so death befalls that one. They all [have] the same breath. [There is] no advantage to men over the animal kingdom, for all is empty.**

**I determined this emphatic truth, considering mankind, who believe that they are separated unto God; point in fact, they are just like the animals. What happens to man also happens to every animal; the same death comes to all, man or beast. They have the same breath. So there is no advantage that man has over the animal kingdom, for all life is truly empty and meaningless.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

## Ancient texts:

## Masoretic Text (Hebrew)

I said, [even] I, in my heart, upon a manner, the sons of the Adam, regarding their separation [to] the Elohim and to see that beast they [are] to themselves. For an accident, sons of the Adam and an accident the beast and an accident one to them as a death here this one so a death this one. And a breath of one to the all; and an advantage of the Adam more than the beast [is] none, for the all [is] vanity.

## Dead Sea Scrolls

.

## Jerusalem targum

.

## Targum (Onkelos)

.

## Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan)

.

## Aramaic Targum

I said in my heart concerning the children of men, as to the chastisements and evil events which come upon them, God sends these to try and to prove them, to see whether they will return in repentance and be forgiven and healed; but the wicked who are like beasts do not repent, therefore they are reprov'd thereby to their own condemnation. For as to the destiny of the wicked, and the destiny of the unclean beast, it is one destiny for both of them; and as the unclean beast dies so he dies who does not return in repentance before his death; and the breath of life over both is judged alike in every manner, and the advantage of a sinner over the unclean beast is nothing but the burial place; for all is vanity.

Revised Douay-Rheims	I said in my heart concerning the sons of men, that God would prove them, and show them to be like beasts. Therefore the death of man, and of beasts is one, and the condition of them both is equal: as man dies, so they also die: all things breathe alike, and man has nothing more than beast: all things are subject to vanity.
Douay-Rheims 1899 (Amer.)	.
Aramaic ESV of Peshitta	.
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	.
Plain English Aramaic Bible	.
Lamsa's Peshitta (Syriac)	I meditated in my heart concerning the estate of the sons of men whom God had created, and saw that they are like beasts. For the same misfortune which befalls the sons of men befalls beasts; even one misfortune befalls them: as the one dies, so dies the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that man has no preeminence over the beast; for all is vanity.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	I said in my heart, concerning the speech of the sons of men, God will judge them, and that to show that they are beasts. Also to them is the event of the sons of men, and the event of the brute; one event befalls them. As is the death of the one, so also the death of the other; and there is one breath to all; and what has the man more than the brute? Nothing; for all is vanity.

Significant differences:

#### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	I said in my heart, It is because of the sons of men, so that God may put them to the test and that they may see themselves as beasts. Because the fate of the sons of men and the fate of the beasts is the same. As is the death of one so is the death of the other, and all have one spirit. Man is not higher than the beasts; because all is to no purpose.
Easy English	'Perhaps God wants us to know that we are like animals,' I thought. Like animals, we live and then we die. We really are the same as animals. So our life means nothing for us or for them.
Easy-to-Read Version--2001	I thought about the things people do to each other. And I said to myself, "God wants people to see that they are like animals. Is a man better than an animal? {No!} Why? Because everything is useless. The same thing happens to animals and to people--they die. People and animals have the same "breath." Is a dead animal different from a dead person?
Easy-to-Read Version--2006	<b>Are People Like Animals?</b> I thought about what people do to each other. And I said to myself, "God wants people to see that they are like animals. The same thing happens to animals and to people--they die. People and animals have the same 'breath.' [Or "spirit."] Is a dead animal different from a dead person? It is all so senseless!
God's Word™	.
Good News Bible (TEV)	I decided that God is testing us, to show us that we are no better than animals. After all, the same fate awaits human beings and animals alike. One dies just like the other. They are the same kind of creature. A human being is no better off than an animal, because life has no meaning for either.
The Message	I said to myself regarding the human race, "God's testing the lot of us, showing us up as nothing but animals." Humans and animals come to the same end—humans die, animals die. We all breathe the same air. So there's really no advantage in being human. None. Everything's smoke.
Names of God Bible	I thought to myself, " <b>Elohim</b> is going to test humans in order to show them that they are like animals." Humans and animals have the same destiny. One dies just like

the other. All of them have the same breath of life. Humans have no advantage over animals. All of life is pointless.

NIRV I also said to myself, "God tests human beings. He does this so they can see that in certain ways they are like animals. Surely what happens to animals happens to people too. Death waits for people and animals alike. People die, just as animals do. All of them have the same breath. People don't have any advantage over animals. Nothing has any meaning.

New Simplified Bible .

### Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

Casual English Bible .

College Press paraphrase I said to myself, "God lets things happen so he can purify the sons of men. In God's time, the true issues will be clearly seen, and men's real attitudes will be revealed. God permits men to see, that in themselves, they are only animals." Man really has no advantage over the animals. They both are subject to chance. They both suffer the same event: death comes to both. Both have the same breath. They are both subject to futility.

Contemporary English V. I know that God is testing us to show us that we are merely animals. Like animals we breathe and die, and we are no better off than they are. It just doesn't make sense.

The Living Bible And then I realized that God is letting the world go on its sinful way so that he can test mankind, and so that men themselves will see that they are no better than beasts. For men and animals both breathe the same air, and both die. So mankind has no real advantage over the beasts; what an absurdity!

New Berkeley Version .

New Life Version I said to myself about the sons of men, "God is testing them to show them that they are like animals." For the same thing is to happen to both the sons of men and animals. As one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and to be a man is no better than to be an animal.

New Living Translation I also thought about the human condition—how God proves to people that they are like animals. For people and animals share the same fate—both breathe [Or *both have the same spirit.*] and both must die. So people have no real advantage over the animals. How meaningless!

Unlocked Dynamic Bible And regarding humans, I also said to myself, "God is testing us, to show us that in one way people are no different than animals." What happens to people happens to animals. Animals die, and people die. We all must breathe to remain alive. People have no advantage over animals in that way. Everything disappears so quickly.

Unfolding Bible Simplified .

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible I said in my heart what sons of men say...  
That God views us like we are cattle.  
For, man's outcome is the same as his herds...  
As this one dies, so dies the other,  
Since we all share the very same breath.  
So, how are men better than cattle... they aren't,  
And it is all just a joke!

Beck's American Translation .

Common English Bible I also thought, Where human beings are concerned, God tests them to show them that they are but animals because human beings and animals share the same fate.



New Advent (Knox) Bible	<p>One dies just like the other—both have the same life-breath. Humans are no better off than animals because everything is pointless.</p> <p>I told myself that God's purpose with the sons of men was to test them ...</p> <p>... And that they might see they were only like the beasts ...[4] After all, man comes to the same ending as the beasts; there is nothing to choose between his lot and theirs; both alike are doomed to die. They have but one principle of life; what has man that the beasts have not? Frustration everywhere; we are all making for the same goal; of earth we were made, and to earth we must return. V. 20 is included for context. [I do not know what is indicated by the "...". Most of the time, that would indicate missing text, but that does not seem to be Knox's point here.]</p> <p>[4] The end of this verse, in the Hebrew text, is commonly suspected of corruption. But it seems doubtful whether there has not been some wider dislocation; the want of logical connexion between the two halves of this verse is unmistakable. Those editors who would strike out verse 18 as an insertion do not mend matters; it leaves a hopeless gap between the thought of verse 17 and that of verse 19.</p>
Translation for Translators	<p>And regarding humans, I also said to myself, "God is testing us, to show us that <i>in one way</i> people are no different than animals, because what happens to people happens to animals. Animals die, and people die. We all must breathe <i>to remain alive</i>. <i>With regard to that</i>, people have no advantage over animals, so I have a difficult time understanding that.</p>

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Conservapedia Translation	<p>I realized that where the material trappings of men were concerned, that God might expose them for what they are, so man would realize that when they are taken away they are as the other animals of His creation. I revised this, because it seems like the original point is that God occasionally needs to humble us, so we see our proper place as one of His living creations. For that which happens to man happens to all His living creations; the same fate falls to them: as one dies, so does the other; yes, they all carry the breath of life; in that a man is no different that any of the animals created by God. For all is vanity.</p>
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	<p>I reflected in my mind about the affairs of the sons of Adam;—which are that God intends to try them, to show they are, by themselves, mere animals. For one event is for the sons of Adam, and one event for the animals;—and the one event that is to them is;—as these die, so those die; and the same breath is to all; —and man dies the same as the cattle! Is not the whole vanity?</p>
God's Truth (Tyndale)	<p>I communed with mine own heart also concerning the children of men: how that God has chosen them, and yet lets them appear as though they were beasts: For it happens unto men as it does unto beasts, and as one dies, so dies the other: yes they have both one manner of *birth, (kjb =breath) so that (in this) a man has no preeminence above a beast, but all are subdued unto vanity.</p>
HCSB International Standard V	<p>.</p> <p>"As for human beings," I told myself, "God puts them to the test, that they might see themselves as mere animals." For what happens to people also happens to animals—a single event happens to them: just as someone dies, so does the other. In fact, they all breathe the same way, so that a human being has no superiority over an animal. All of this is pointless.</p>
Jubilee Bible 2000	<p>I said in my heart concerning the estate of the sons of men that God might manifest them and that they might see that they themselves are beasts one to another. For that which befalls the sons of men befalls beasts; even one thing befalls them: as the one dies, so dies the other; and they all have one <i>breath</i>; so that a man has no more breath than a beast: for all <i>is</i> vanity.</p>
H. C. Leupold	<p>.</p>

Lexham English Bible	I said to myself concerning humans, "God sifts them in order to show them that they are like beasts." For the fate of humans and the fate of the beast is the same. The death of the one is like the death of the other, for both are mortal. Man has no advantage over the beast, for both are fleeting.
NIV, ©2011	I also said to myself, 'As for humans, God tests them so that they may see that they are like the animals. Surely the fate of human beings is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: as one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath [Or <i>spirit</i> ]; humans have no advantage over animals. Everything is meaningless.
Peter Pett's translation	'I said in my heart, "Because of the sons of men, that God may put them to the test, and that they may see that they themselves are but as beasts, for that which befalls the sons of men, befalls beasts, even one thing befalls them. As the one dies so does the other die. Yes they all have one breath, and man has no pre-eminence over the beasts. For all is vanity." '
Unfolding Bible Literal Text Unlocked Literal Bible	. I said in my heart, "God tests human beings to show them that they are like animals." For the fate of the children of mankind and the fate of animals is the same fate for them. The death of one is like the death of the other. The breath is the same for all of them. There is no advantage for mankind over the animals. For is not everything just a breath?
Urim-Thummim Version	I said in my heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that Elohim might purify them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. Because what befalls the sons of men befalls beasts; even one thing befalls them: as the one dies, so dies the other; yes, they have all one breath; so that a man has no preeminence above a beast: for all is but a vapor.
Wikipedia Bible Project	I said to myself-- God will sort out over the happenings of man, and see that they are beasts, they are. Because the events of men and the events of beasts, they to them are one and the same. As one dies, so the other dies, and one spirit for all. And there is no man who is elevated from the beast, because all is mirage.

### Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)	I also thought about men, how God wants to test them and let them see that they themselves are animals. For the destiny of man and animal is identical: death for one as for the other.
The Heritage Bible	I said in my heart concerning the state of the sons of men, that God might distinguish them, and that they might see <i>that</i> they themselves <i>are</i> animals, Because what happens to the sons of men happens to animals, and one thing happens to them; as this one dies, so that one dies, and to all <i>is</i> one breath; and the superiority of man above a animal does not exist, because all <i>is</i> vanity.
New American Bible (2002)	.
New American Bible (2011)	I said in my heart: As for human beings, it is God's way of testing them and of showing that they are in themselves like beasts. For the lot of mortals and the lot of beasts is the same lot: The one dies as well as the other. Both have the same life breath. Human beings have no advantage over beasts, but all is vanity.
New English Bible--1970	I said to myself, 'In dealing with men it is God's purpose <small>it is God's purpose: prob. rdg, Heb obscure</small> to test them and to see what they truly are <small>prob. rdg, Heb adds they to them.</small> , for man is a creature of chance and the beasts are creatures of chance, and one mischance awaits them all: death comes to both alike. They all draw the same breath. Men have no advantage over beasts; for everything is emptiness.
New Jerusalem Bible	I think to myself: where human beings are concerned, this is so that God can test them and show them that they are animals. For the fate of human and the fate of animal is the same: as the one dies, so the other dies; both have the selfsame breath. Human is in no way better off than animal -- since all is futile.

New RSV	I said in my heart with regard to human beings that God is testing them to show that they are but animals. For the fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and humans have no advantage over the animals; for all is vanity.
Revised English Bible—1989	I said to myself, “In dealing with human beings it is God's purpose to test them and to see what they truly are. Human beings and beasts share one and the same fate: death comes to both alike. They all draw the same breath. Man has no advantage over beast, for everything is futility.

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	Concerning people, I said to myself, “God is testing them, so that they will see that by themselves they are just animals. After all, the same things that happen to people happen to animals, the very same thing — just as the one dies, so does the other. Yes, their breath is the same; so that humans are no better than animals; since nothing matters, anyway.
exeGeses companion Bible	I said in my heart concerning the word of the sons of humanity, that Elohim purify them - that they see that they themselves are animals. For what happens to the sons of humanity happens to animals - even this happens to them; as this dies, thus that dies; yes, they all have one spirit; so that humanity has no advantage over an animal; for all is vanity.
Hebraic Roots Bible The Israel Bible	. So I decided, as regards men, to dissociate them [from] the divine beings and to face the fact that they are beasts. For in respect of the fate of man and the fate of beast, they have one and the same fate: as the one dies so dies the other, and both have the same lifebreath; man has no superiority over beast, since both amount to nothing.
Israeli Authorized Version	I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that Elohim might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity.
Kaplan Translation <i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	. I said in my heart, “Concerning the matter of the sons of men, Elohim selects them, so as to see that they themselves are beasts.” For the event of the sons of men is also the event of beasts – one event befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Indeed, they all have one breath – man has no advantage over beasts. For all is futile.
Tree of Life Version	<b>Humans Same As Beasts?</b> I also said in my heart, “As for the sons of man, God tests them so that they may see that they are but animals.” For the destiny of humankind and the destiny of animals are one and the same. As one dies, so dies the other. Both have the same breath—a human has no advantage over an animal—both are fleeting.

### Weird English, Old English, Anachronistic English Translations:

Alpha & Omega Bible	I SAID IN MY HEART, CONCERNING THE SPEECH OF THE SONS OF MAN, THEOS ( <i>The Alpha &amp; Omega</i> ) WILL JUDGE THEM, AND THAT TO SHOW THAT THEY ARE BEASTS. ALSO TO THEM IS THE EVENT OF THE SONS OF MAN, AND THE EVENT OF THE ANIMALS; ONE EVENT BEFALLS THEM: AS IS THE DEATH OF THE ONE, SO ALSO THE DEATH OF THE OTHER; AND THERE IS ONE BREATH TO ALL: AND WHAT HAS THE MAN MORE THAN THE ANIMALS? NOTHING; FOR ALL IS VANITY.
Awful Scroll Bible	Even am I to have ventured in the sensibility of my heart, "That concerning the sons of mankind, He of mighty ones is to purge them, even is He to perceive whether they are to be as the dumb beasts." For the befalls of the sons of mankind, are the befalls of the dumb beasts; to each of them there is to befall death, even are their deaths in like manner. There is to be one breath to them - is he of mankind to be of excellence over the dumb beast? - It is to be vapor!
Charles Thompson OT Concordant Literal Version	. I said in my heart: It is on account of the sons of humanity That the One, Elohim, seeks to manifest them And to show them that they themselves are beasts." For the destiny of the sons of humanity And the destiny of the beast, It is one destiny for them; As death is for this one, so is death for that one, And one spirit is for all; There is no advantage for the human over the beast, For the whole is vanity."
Darby Translation	.
exeGeses companion Bible	.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	I said in mine lev, As for bnei haAdam, HaElohim tests them, that they might see that they themselves are like beheimah. For bnei haAdam and beheimah share one and same mikreh (fortune); as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that the adam hath no advantage above the beheimah; for all is hevel.
Rotherham's <i>Emphasized B.</i>	Said, I, in my heart, as concerning the sons of men, That God was minded to prove them,—and that they might see, that they were beasts, of themselves. For, as regardeth the destiny of the sons of men and the destiny of beasts, one fate, have they, as dieth the one, so, dieth the other, and, one spirit, have they all,—and, the pre-eminence of man over beast, is nothing, for, all, were vanity:...
Third Millennium Bible	.

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	I said to myself regarding the sons of men, "God is surely testing them in order for them to see that [by themselves, without God] they are [only] animals." For the [earthly] fate of the sons of men and the fate of animals is the same. As one dies, so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no preeminence or advantage for man [in and of himself] over an animal, for all is vanity.
The Expanded Bible	I ·decided [ <sup>L</sup> said in my heart concerning the human race] that God ·leaves it the way it is to test people and [ <sup>L</sup> tests them] to show them they are just like animals. The ·same thing happens to animals and to people [ <sup>L</sup> fate of people and the fate of animals are the same/one fate]; they both have the same breath, so they both die. People ·are no better off than [have no advantage over] the animals, because everything is useless [1:2].
Kretzmann's Commentary	I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, fallen mankind in general, that God might manifest them, that is, sift, test, prove them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts, so far as their physical life and its end is concerned, they are on a level with brutes, that being the curse of vanity, the result of sin.

For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one, according to their bodily, physical nature only, dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath, their physical life is of the same kind; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast, so far as his outward, physical life comes into consideration; for all is vanity.

Syndein/Thieme

I thought in my 'right lobe'/heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are like being beasts. Man's fate is like that of animals the same fate awaits them both. As the one dies so dies the other. Yes, they have all the same 'life breath'/spirit {ruwach} man has no superiority over animal since both amount to nothing.

The Voice

I thought about how people act: “God *often* puts them to the test to show them how much they are like the animals.” The fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same. As one dies, so does the other, for we have the same breath within us. *In the end*, we have no advantage over the animals. For as I have said, it’s all fleeting.

### Bible Translations with Many Footnotes:

College Press Bible Study  
The Complete Tanach

.  
I said to myself, [that this is] because of the children of men, so that God should clarify for them, so that they may see that they are [like] beasts to themselves.

**I said to myself:** when I saw all this.

**[that this is] because of the children of men:** who adopted the trait of haughtiness, to exert rulership and superiority over those smaller than they.

**[so that God] should clarify for them:** The Holy One, blessed be He [judges them], to let them know that their rulership is naught, and to show them and also the princes and the kings.

**that they are like beasts to themselves:** like other cattle and beasts they are to themselves.

For there is a happening for the children of men, and there is a happening for the beasts-and they have one happening-like the death of this one is the death of that one, and all have one spirit, and the superiority of man over beast is nought, for all is vanity.

**For the happening of the children of men, etc.:** This is the reason for the matter, that the Holy One, blessed be He, gave a fate and a mishap to the children of men, and there is a fate and a mishap to the beasts, and He gave one fate to them both, for just as this one dies, so does that one die.

**and the superiority of man over beast:** And the superiority and success of man over the beasts is not apparent after he dies, for everything is converted to become vanity, to return to the dust.

The Geneva Bible  
Kaplan Translation  
NET Bible®

.  
I also thought to myself, “It is<sup>32</sup> for the sake of people,<sup>33</sup> so God can clearly<sup>34</sup> show<sup>35</sup> them that they are like animals. For the fate of humans<sup>36</sup> and the fate of animals are the same: As one dies, so dies the other; both have the same breath. There is no advantage for humans over animals, for both are fleeting.

<sup>32tn</sup> The phrase “it is” does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

<sup>33tn</sup> Heb “the sons of man.” The phrase יִבְּ תְּרַבְּדִלַע (‘al-divrat bÿne ha’adam) is handled variously: (1) introduction to the direct discourse: “I said to myself concerning the sons of men” (NASB), (2) direct discourse: “I thought, ‘As for men, God tests them’” (NIV), (3) indirect



discourse: “I said in my heart concerning the estate of the sons of men” (KJV), and (4) causal conjunction: “I said, [It is] for the sake of the sons of men.” Since the phrase “sons of men” is contrasted with “animals” the translation “humans” has been adopted.

<sup>34tn</sup> The meaning of סָרַבָּל (lǝvaram, preposition + Qal infinitive construct from סָרַב, *barar*, + 3rd person masculine plural suffix) is debated because the root has a broad range of meanings: (1) “to test; to prove; to sift; to sort out” (e.g., Dan 11:35; 12:10); (2) “to choose; to select” (e.g., 1 Chr 7:40; 9:22; 16:41; Neh 5:18); (3) “to purge out; to purify” (e.g., Ezek 20:38; Zeph 3:9; Job 33:3); and (4) “to cleanse; to polish” (Isa 49:2; 52:11); see HALOT 163 s.v. סָרַב; BDB 141 s.v. סָרַב. The meanings “to prove” (Qal), as well as “to cleanse; to polish” (Qal), “to keep clean” (Niphal), and “to cleanse” (Hiphil) might suggest the meaning “to make clear” (M. A. Eaton, *Ecclesiastes* [TOTC], 85-86). The meaning “to make clear; to prove” is well attested in postbiblical Mishnaic Hebrew (Jastrow 197-98 s.v. סָרַב). For example, “they make the fact as clear (bright) as a new garment” (b. Ketubbot 46a) and “the claimant must offer clear evidence” (b. Sanhedrin 23b). The point would be that God allows human injustice to exist in the world in order to make it clear to mankind that they are essentially no better than the beasts. On the other hand, the LXX adopts the nuance “to judge,” while Targum and Vulgate take the nuance “to purge; to purify.” BDB 141 s.v. סָרַב 4 suggests “to test, prove,” while HALOT 163 s.v. סָרַב 2 prefers “to select, choose.”

<sup>35tn</sup> The two infinitives סָרַבָּל (lǝvaram, “to make it clear to them”) and תּוֹאֲרָלוּ (vǝlir’ot, “and to show”) function as a verbal hendiadys (the two verbs are associated with one another to communicate a single idea). The first verb functions adverbially and the second retains its full verbal force: “to clearly show them.”

<sup>36tn</sup> Heb “of the sons of man.”

New American Bible (2011) .

### **Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

Brenner’s Mechanical Trans. ....

Charles Thompson OT .

C. Thompson (updated) OT I communed with my heart concerning a saying of the sons of men, ?That God distinguishes them.? Now in order to show that they themselves are beasts, that at least which befalls man, befalls them; and that which befalls the beast befalls man. The same event happenes to both. As the one dies, so does the other. And they have all one breath. What advantage then has man over the beast? None: for all are vanity.

Context Group Version I said in my heart, [It is] because of the sons of man, that God may prove them, and that they may see that they themselves are [but as] beasts. For that which befalls the sons of man befalls beasts; even one thing befalls them: as the one dies, so dies the other; yes, they all have one breath; and man has no preeminence above the beasts: for all is emptiness.

English Standard Version .

Green’s Literal Translation .

Modern English Version Then I thought in my heart: Regarding the account of sons of men, God is making clear to them to show that they are but animals. For what befalls the sons of men befalls animals; as one dies, so dies the other. There is one breath for all of them; there is no advantage for man any more than animals, for all is vanity.

Modern Literal Version .

Modern KJV .

New American Standard B. I said to myself [Lit *in my heart*] concerning the sons of men, “God has surely tested them in order for them to see that they are but beasts.” For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same [Lit *and they have one fate*]. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity [Or *futility*].

New European Version .

New King James Version .

Niobi Study Bible .

Owen’s Translation .

Restored Holy Bible 6.0  
 Updated Bible Version 2.17  
 A Voice in the Wilderness  
 Webster's Bible Translation  
 World English Bible  
 Young's Literal Translation  
 Young's Updated LT

I said in my heart concerning the matter of the sons of man that God might cleanse them, so as to see that they themselves *are* beasts. For an event *is* to the sons of man, and an event *is* to the beasts, even one event is to them; as the death of this, so *is* the death of that; and one spirit *is* to all, and the advantage of man above the beast *is* nothing, for the whole *is* vanity.

**The gist of this passage:**  
18-19

Ecclesiastes 3:18a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
'amar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
'anîy (אֲנִי) [pronounced aw-NEE]	<i>I, me; in answer to a question, it means I am, it is I</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #589 BDB #58
b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
lêb (לֵב) [pronounced lay <sup>b</sup> ]	<i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking; midst</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix	Strong's #3820 BDB #524
See v. 17a.			
'al (עַל) [pronounced gah]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside; because of, on account of</i>	preposition of relative proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
dib <sup>e</sup> râh (דִּבְרֵהּ) [pronounced di <sup>b</sup> v <sup>e</sup> -RAW]	<i>manner, mode; cause, reason</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #1700 (and #1701) BDB #184
Together, 'al dib <sup>e</sup> râh mean <i>to the intent that, in order that, so that; for the sake of; concerning the matter of, concerning the condition of; according to the manner of, according to the order of.</i>			
bânîym (בְּנֵי) [pronounced baw-NEEM]	<i>sons, descendants; children; people; sometimes rendered men; young men, youths</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
'âdâm (אָדָם) [pronounced aw-DAWM]	<i>a man, a human being, mankind; transliterated Adam</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #120 & #121 BDB #9
The word <i>the Adam</i> can mean <i>man, mankind, humankind, men, human beings.</i>			

**Translation:** I, [even] I, said in my heart, on account of the manner of the sons of man,...

Solomon, for a second time, says in his heart—meaning this is something which he is thinking.

So far, one might be able to accept what Solomon has said. However, at this point, he seems to have gone off the rails. Perhaps we could understand that his astute observations, even if taken from the human viewpoint, eventually lead to making false statements.

The Pulpit Commentary: *The comfort derived from the thought of the future judgment is clouded by the reflection that man is as powerless as the beast to control his destiny. Concerning the estate of the sons of men; rather, it happens on account of the sons of men. God allows events to take place, disorders to continue, etc; for the ultimate profit of men, though the idea that follows is humiliating and dispiriting. The LXX. has *περὶ λαλιᾶς*, "concerning the speech of the sons of men." So the Syriac. The word *dibrah* may indeed bear that meaning, as it is also used for "word" or "matter;" but we cannot conceive that the clause refers solely to words, and the expression in the text signifies merely "for the sake, on account of," as in Ecclesiastes 8:2.*<sup>344</sup>

Ecclesiastes 3:18b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>ə</sup> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
bârar (רָדַד) [pronounced baw-RAHR]	<i>to separate, to sever, to choose, to select, to separate and remove [i.e., to cleanse], to explore, to search out, to prove</i>	Qal infinitive construct with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #1305 BDB #140
ʿĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	<i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #430 BDB #43

**Translation:** ...regarding their separation to Elohim [or, their proving (by) the Elohim]:...

There are two possible ways of looking at this: being separated unto God, as believers certainly are. We are distinguished from all else in this world. However, the word *unto* is not found in this verse. Could this mean, *their separation from God*? Possibly, *their cleansing by God, their searching out by God, or their proving by God*?

The Pulpit Commentary: *That God might manifest them; rather, that God might test them; Ut probaret eos Deus (Vulgate). God allows these things, endures them patiently, and does not at once redress them, for two reasons. The first of these is that they may serve for the probation of men, giving them opportunity of making good or bad use of them. We see the effect of this forbearance on the wicked in Ecclesiastes 8:11; it hardens them in impenitence; while it nourishes the faith of the righteous, and helps them to persevere (see Dan. 11:35 and Rev. 22:11).*<sup>345</sup>

This gives us a great many options at this point:

<sup>344</sup> The Pulpit Commentary; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:18.

<sup>345</sup> The Pulpit Commentary; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:18.

Ecclesiastes 3:18a-b I, [even] I, said in my heart, on account of the manner of the sons of man, regarding their separation to Elohim [or, their separation from Elohim, their cleansing by Elohim, their searching out by Elohim, their proving (by) the Elohim]:...

This is almost a dizzying array of options.

Ecclesiastes 3:18c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
râ'âh (רָאָה) [pronounced raw-AWH]	<i>to see, to look, to look at, to view, to gaze; to behold; to observe; to perceive, to understand, to learn, to know</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #7200 BDB #906
she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced sheh] or shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced shehl]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
b <sup>e</sup> hêmâh (הַמָּה) [pronounced b <sup>e</sup> hay-MAW]	<i>beasts [a collective of all animals]; mammal (s), beast, animal, cattle, livestock [domesticated animals]; wild beasts</i>	feminine singular noun often used in the collective sense	Strong's #929 BDB #96
hêmmâh (הֵמָּה) [pronounced haym-mawh]	<i>they, those; them, themselves; these [with the definite article]</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural personal pronoun	Strong's #1992 BDB #241
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

**Translation:** ...to see that they [are] animals with regards to one another [lit., them].

Solomon appears to be drawing the conclusion that men and animals are just the same, which is not true. Man is made in the image of God; animals are given to man for his pleasure (food, hunting, helping, companionship).

This brings us to a fundamental difference between human and divine viewpoint: human viewpoint sees man as simply an advanced animal, a evolved animal—but an animal, nevertheless. Divine viewpoint sees man as having been made in God's shadow image, distinguishing him from all animals; and possessing complete authority over the animal kingdom.

We believe animals to be created by God, specifically inferior to man because the Bible teaches this. Divine revelation. Without divine revelation, a person sees animals and people as quite similar.

## Ecclesiastes 3:18c Men are just animals (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *And that they might see that they themselves are beasts.* The pronoun is repeated emphatically, "*that they themselves are [like] beasts, they in themselves.*" This is the second reason. Thus they learn their own powerlessness, if they regard merely their own animal life; apart from their relation to God and hope of the future, they are no better than the lower creatures. Septuagint. "And to show (τοῦ δεῖξαι) that they are beasts." So the Vulgate and Syriac. The Masoretic reading adopted in the Anglican Version seems best.<sup>346</sup>

Chuck Smith: *Moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work. And I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts (Ecclesiastes 3:16-18)...* Now this is life under the sun, that man might see himself that he's an animal. But this is not true. Man is more than an animal. Man is made in the image and likeness of God. He's looking at man from the purely humanistic standpoint.<sup>347</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 3:18 I, [even] I, said in my heart, on account of the manner of the sons of man, regarding their separation to Elohim [or, their proving (by) the Elohim]: to see that they [are] animals with regards to one another [lit., them].

Do God's tests prove that men are no better than animals in their lives?

V. 18 is somewhat confusing because God is mentioned, but man and animals are compared without a thought given to divine revelation about man.

Gary H. Everett: *[With] (Ecclesiastes 1:12-18), King Solomon realizes that he cannot affect the timing of one's birth, nor of one's death. It is a time that God alone has determined. Neither can he change the seasons of the earth. There is a planting season and a harvest season determined by God, which no man can change (Gen. 8:22).*<sup>348</sup>

Then the Pulpit Commentary writes: *Ecclesiastes 3:19-21 are best regarded as a parenthesis explanatory of Ecclesiastes 3:16-18, elucidating man's impotence in the presence of the anomalies of life. The conclusion in Ecclesiastes 3:22 is connected with Ecclesiastes 3:16-18. We must acknowledge that there are disorders in the world which we cannot remedy, and which God allows in order to demonstrate our powerlessness; therefore the wisest course is to make the best of present cir-cumstances.*<sup>349</sup>

<sup>346</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:18.

<sup>347</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1-22.

<sup>348</sup> Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:2.

<sup>349</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:19-21.



## Ecclesiastes 3:19a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
kîy (כי) [pronounced kee]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
mîq <sup>e</sup> reh (מִקְרֵה) [pronounced mik <sup>e</sup> -REH]	<i>an accident, a chance event, fortune, an unforeseen incident, a random occurrence, a fortunate or unfortunate incident; fate</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4745 BDB #899
From the verb qârâh (קָרָה) [pronounced kaw-RAWH] which means <i>to encounter, to meet, to befall</i> .			
bânîym (בְּנִיִּם) [pronounced baw-NEEM]	<i>sons, descendants; children; people; sometimes rendered men; young men, youths</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
'âdâm (אָדָם) [pronounced aw-DAWM]	<i>a man, a human being, mankind; transliterated Adam</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #120 & #121 BDB #9
The word <i>the Adam</i> can mean <i>man, mankind, humankind, men, human beings</i> .			
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
mîq <sup>e</sup> reh (מִקְרֵה) [pronounced mik <sup>e</sup> -REH]	<i>an accident, a chance event, fortune, an unforeseen incident, a random occurrence, a fortunate or unfortunate incident; fate</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4745 BDB #899
b <sup>e</sup> hêmâh (בְּהֵמָה) [pronounced b <sup>e</sup> hay-MAW]	<i>beasts [a collective of all animals]; mammal (s), beast, animal, cattle, livestock [domesticated animals]; wild beasts</i>	feminine singular noun often used in the collective sense; with the definite article	Strong's #929 BDB #96
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
mîq <sup>e</sup> reh (מִקְרֵה) [pronounced mik <sup>e</sup> -REH]	<i>an accident, a chance event, fortune, an unforeseen incident, a random occurrence, a fortunate or unfortunate incident; fate</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4745 BDB #899
'echâd (אֶחָד) [pronounced eh-KHAWD]	<i>one, first, certain, only; each, every; but it can also mean a composite unity; possibly particular; anyone; same</i>	numeral adjective	Strong's #259 BDB #25
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

**Translation:** For [what] happens [to] the sons of man happens [to] the animals, that one [thing] happens to them,...

Solomon's viewpoint appears to rest upon the fact that all men and all animals take breath and that they all have the same eventual end. So Solomon, despite mentioning God, is going by empirical evidence.

### Ecclesiastes 3:19a What befalls man happens also to animals (commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *For that which befalls the sons of men befalls beasts; literally, chance are the sons of men, and chance are beasts (see on Ecclesiastes 2:14); Septuagint, "Yea, and to them cometh the event (συνάντημα) of the sons of men, and the event of the beast." Koheleth explains in what respect man is on a level with the brute creation. Neither are able to rise superior to the law that controls their natural life. So Solon says to Croesus (Herod; 1:32),... "Man is naught but chance;" and Artabanns reminds Xerxes that chances rule men, not men chances (ibid; 7:49). Even one thing befalls them.*

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *A third time is the ominous word repeated, "One chance is to both of them." Free-thinkers perverted this dictum into the materialistic language quoted in the Book of Wisdom (2. 2): "We are born at haphazard, by chance (αὐ' τοσχεδιῶς\Language:English}); etc. But Koheleth's contention is, not that there is no law or order in what happens to man, but that neither man nor beast can dispose events at their own will and pleasure; they are conditioned by a force superior to them, which dominates their actions, sufferings, and circumstances of life.<sup>350</sup>*

Chuck Smith: *For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth the beasts; even one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other...Not true.<sup>351</sup>*

Bear in mind, most of what we read in Ecclesiastes 3:2–8 applies to man only and not to animals.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

### Ecclesiastes 3:19b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
kaph or k <sup>e</sup> (כ) [pronounced k <sup>e</sup> ]	<i>like, as, just as; according to, after; about, approximately</i>	preposition of comparison, resemblance or approximation	No Strong's # BDB #453
The infinitive construct with the kaph preposition is very similar to its use with the bēyth preposition. Generally, this is seen as a temporal clause, where the preposition is translated <i>when, as, just as, as soon as</i> . <sup>352</sup>			
māvēth (מָוֶת) [pronounced MAW-veth]	<i>death, death [as opposed to life], death by violence, a state of death, a place of death</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4194 BDB #560
Owens calls this the Qal infinitive construct of the verb. Most everyone else said that it is the noun.			
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced zeh]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another (sometimes the verb to be is implied)</i>	masculine singular demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260

<sup>350</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:19 (slightly edited).

<sup>351</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

<sup>352</sup> *Biblical Hebrew*; by Page Kelley; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., ©1992, p. 182.

## Ecclesiastes 3:19b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
kên (כֵּן) [pronounced kane]	<i>so, therefore, thus; then, afterwards; upright, honest; rightly, well; [it is] so, such, so constituted</i>	properly, an active participle; used primarily as an adverb	Strong's #3651 BDB #485
mâveth (מָוֶת) [pronounced MAW-veth]	<i>death, death [as opposed to life], death by violence, a state of death, a place of death</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4194 BDB #560
Owens calls this the Qal infinitive construct of the verb. Most everyone else said that it is the noun.			
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced zeh]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another (sometimes the verb to be is implied)</i>	masculine singular demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260

**Translation:** ...as death befalls this one so death befalls that one.

Death comes to them all. I think the idea is, death comes to all men and death comes to all animals. Men have a terminal point in this life and so do animals.

## Ecclesiastes 3:19b Death befalls man and animals alike (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *As the one dies, so dies the other. In the matter of succumbing to the law of death man has no superiority over other creatures. This is an inference drawn from common observation of exterior facts, and touches not any higher question (comp. Ecclesiastes 2:14, Ecclesiastes 2:15; Ecclesiastes 9:2, Ecclesiastes 9:3). Something similar is found in Psalm 49:20, "Man that is in honor, and understands not, is like the beasts that perish."*<sup>353</sup>

Plants also die and return to the earth—would one make the same argument that man and plants are the same?

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

## Ecclesiastes 3:19c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
rûwach (רוּחַ) [pronounced ROO-ahkh]	<i>wind, breath, spirit, apparition</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #7307 BDB #924

<sup>353</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:19 (slightly edited).

## Ecclesiastes 3:19c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
'echâd (אֶחָד) [pronounced eh-KHAWD]	one, first, certain, only; each, every; but it can also mean a composite unity; possibly particular; anyone; same	numeral adjective	Strong's #259 BDB #25
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]	to, for, towards, in regards to; belonging to	directional/relational/possessive preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
kôl (כָּל) [pronounced kohl]; also kol (כֹּל) [pronounced kol]	all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481

**Translation:** They all [have] the same breath.

Both men and animals take the same breath. God breathing life into man is not seen by Solomon as a distinguishing factor, as most animals breathe air as well.

## Ecclesiastes 3:19c Man and animals all have the same breath (commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *Yea, they have all one breath (ruach). This is the word used in verse 23 for the vital principle, "the breath of life," as it is called in Gen. 6:17, where the same word is found. In the earlier record (Gen. 2:7) the term is nishma. Life in all animals is regarded as the gift of God. Says the psalmist, "You send forth your spirit (ruach), they are created" (Psalm 104:30). This lower principle presents the same phenomena in men and in brutes.*<sup>354</sup>

Chuck Smith: *The word breath in Hebrew is ruwach which is also translated spirit. There are some who say that man and animals have one spirit.*<sup>355</sup>

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

## Ecclesiastes 3:19d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
môwthâr (מִוְתָר) [pronounced moh-THAWR]	literally gain; figuratively superiority; advantage; abundance, plenty, plenteousness, preeminence, profit, superiority	masculine singular construct	Strong's #4195 BDB #560

<sup>354</sup> The Pulpit Commentary; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:19 (slightly edited).

<sup>355</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1-22.

### Ecclesiastes 3:19d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
'âdâm (אָדָם) [pronounced aw-DAWM]	<i>a man, a human being, mankind;</i> transliterated <i>Adam</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #120 & #121 BDB #9
min (מִן) [pronounced mihn]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of</i> <i>from, off, on account of, since,</i> <i>above, than, so that not, beyond,</i> <i>more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
b <sup>e</sup> hêmâh (בְּהֵמָה) [pronounced b <sup>e</sup> hay- MAW]	<i>beasts [a collective of all</i> <i>animals]; mammal (s), beast,</i> <i>animal, cattle, livestock</i> <i>[domesticated animals]; wild</i> <i>beasts</i>	feminine singular noun often used in the collective sense; with the definite article	Strong's #929 BDB #96
'êyn (אֵין) [pronounced ān]	<i>nothing, not, [is] not; not present,</i> <i>not ready; expresses non-</i> <i>existence, absence or non-</i> <i>possession; [there is] no [none,</i> <i>not one, no one, not]</i>	particle of negation; substantive of negation	Strong's #369 BDB #34

**Translation:** [There is] no advantage to men over the animal kingdom,...

Given that both animals and men take breath and given that they will all die, there seems to be no reason to suppose an advantage of one over the other.

Could this be Solomon's PETA phase?

### Ecclesiastes 3:19d Does man have an advantage of animals? (commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *Man has no pre-eminence above a beast; i.e. in regard to suffering and death. This is not bare materialism, or a gloomy deduction from Greek teaching, but must be explained from the writer's standpoint, which is to emphasize the impotence of man to effect his own happiness. Taking only a limited and phenomenal view of man's circumstances and destiny, he speaks a general truth which all must acknowledge. Septuagint, "And what has the man more than the beast? Nothing."* <sup>356</sup>

Chuck Smith: *man has no preeminence above the beast: for all is vanity...That is not true. That is looking at man from a humanistic standpoint. Man under the sun. That is not looking at man as God looks at man as a divine creation with eternity in his heart. The animal, of what animal can you say God has put eternity in his heart?* <sup>357</sup>

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

<sup>356</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:19 (slightly edited).

<sup>357</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.



Ecclesiastes 3:19e			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced koh/]; also kol (כָּל) [pronounced kol]	<i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
hebel (הֶבֶל) [pronounced HEH <sup>B</sup> -vel]	<i>vapor, breath; mist, darkness; unsubstantial, emptiness, empty, vanity, meaningless, vacuous; vain, vainly; idol</i>	masculine singular noun; pausal form	Strong's #1892 BDB #210

**Translation:** ...for all is empty.

Solomon again goes to the refrain, *all is empty, all is meaningless; everything is but a vapor; it is just breath.*

Did Solomon come to a conclusion which seemed ridiculous to him (the fate of man is no different than the fate of animals), and so he says, *It is all meaningless, life is just empty?*

The Pulpit Commentary: *For all is vanity. The distinction between man and beast is annulled by death; the former's boasted superiority, his power of conceiving and planning, his greatness, skill, strength, cunning, all come under the category of vanity, as they cannot ward off the inevitable blow.*<sup>358</sup>

Ecclesiastes 3:19 For [what] happens [to] the sons of man happens [to] the animals, that one [thing] happens to them, as death befalls this one so death befalls that one. They all [have] the same breath. [There is] no advantage to men over the animal kingdom, for all is empty.

Ecclesiastes 3:18–19 I determined this emphatic truth, considering mankind, who believe that they are separated unto God; point in fact, they are just like the animals. What happens to man also happens to every animal; the same death comes to all, man or beast. They have the same breath. So there is no advantage that man has over the animal kingdom, for all life is truly empty and meaningless.

Most of us have been taught to reason by stating the premise (s) first, and afterwards stating the conclusion. I do not know that this is Solomon's sort of reasoning. It may be that Solomon observes that animals and men both draw breath, and when they stop breathing, they die, and then their bodies decompose. Does this not indicate that, before God, there is no difference?

I am assuming that Solomon reasons like a very brilliant unbeliever; sometimes coming to reasonable conclusions and sometimes not. The conclusions which Solomon draws are based upon little or no divine revelation. God's Word produces different understandings that much of Solomon's thinking.

---

Many translations continue with v. 20 as an integral part of vv. 18–19:

---

<sup>358</sup> The Pulpit Commentary; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:19.

**The all is going unto a place one; the all was from the dust and the all is returning unto the dust.** Ecclesiastes 3:20 **Everything goes to one place; everything came from dust and everything returns to the dust.**

**All living matter goes to the same place—everything comes from the dust and everything will return to the dust.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	The all is going unto a place one; the all was from the dust and the all is returning unto the dust.
Dead Sea Scrolls	.
Jerusalem targum	.
Targum (Onkelos)	.
Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan)	.
Aramaic Targum	All go to one place; all the inhabitants of the earth are made of dust, and when they die, all return to the dust..
Revised Douay-Rheims	.
Douay-Rheims 1899 (Amer.)	And all things go to one place: of earth they were made, and into earth they return together.
Aramaic ESV of Peshitta	.
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	.
Plain English Aramaic Bible	.
Lamsa's Peshitta (Syriac)	All go to one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	All go to one place; all were formed of the dust, and all will return to dust.

Significant differences:

#### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	.
Easy English	People and animals go to the same place. God made animals and people from the same dry material on the ground. And when they die, they both become dry material on the ground again.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	The bodies of people and animals end the same way. They came from the earth, and, in the end, they will go back to the earth.
God's Word™	All life goes to the same place. All life comes from the ground, and all of it goes back to the ground.
Good News Bible (TEV)	They are both going to the same place—the dust. They both came from it; they will both go back to it.
The Message	We all end up in the same place—we all came from dust, we all end up as dust.
Names of God Bible	.
NIRV	People and animals go to the same place. All of them come from dust. And all of them return to dust.
New Simplified Bible	.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

Casual English Bible	.
College Press paraphrase	Both go to the same place. Both come from the ground, and both are returning to the ground.

Contemporary English V.	All living creatures go to the same place. We are made from earth, and we return to the earth.
The Living Bible	.
New Berkeley Version	.
New Life Version	.
New Living Translation	Both go to the same place—they came from dust and they return to dust.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	People and animals all die and are buried. We are all made of soil, and when we die, our corpses become soil again.
Unfolding Bible Simplified	.

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	For we all return to the very same place... We come from the dust and return to the dust.
Beck's American Translation	.
Common English Bible	.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	.
Translation for Translators	<i>People and animals</i> all die and are buried. We are all made of soil, and <i>when we die</i> , our corpses become soil again.

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Conservapedia Translation	All of them go to the same place; all of them are made from dust, and all of them will become dust again.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	The whole go to one place; the whole come from dust; and the whole return to the dust.
God's Truth (Tyndale)	They go all unto one place, for as they all be of dust, so shall they all turn unto dust again.
HCSB	.
International Standard V	All of them go to one place: all of them originate from dust, and all of them return to dust.
Jubilee Bible 2000	.
H. C. Leupold	.
Lexham English Bible	Both go to one place—both came from dust and both return to dust.
NIV, ©2011	.
Peter Pett's translation	.
Unfolding Bible Literal Text	.
Unlocked Literal Bible	Everything is going to the same place. Everything comes from the dust, and everything returns to the dust.
Urim-Thummim Version	All go to one place; all are of the dust and all turn to dust again.
Wikipedia Bible Project	All things to one place are going, all came from the dust, and all returns to dust.

### Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)	Both have the same spirit; man has no superiority over animals for all pass away like wind. Both go to the same place, both come from dust and return to dust. [The CC Bible takes a portion of v. 19 and places it with v. 20.]
The Heritage Bible	All walk to one place; all are of the dust, and all turn back to dust.
New American Bible (2002)	.
New American Bible (2011)	Both go to the same place; both were made from the dust, and to the dust they both return. Eccl 12:7; Gn 3:19; Sir 17:2.
New English Bible—1970	.
New Jerusalem Bible	Everything goes to the same place, everything comes from the dust, everything returns to the dust.

New RSV

Revised English Bible—1989 All go to the same place: all came from the dust, and to the dust all return.

**Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:**

Complete Jewish Bible

exeGeses companion Bible All go to one place;  
all became of dust; all return to dust.

Hebraic Roots Bible

Israeli Authorized Version

Kaplan Translation

*The Scriptures* 1998

Tree of Life Version

Both go to one place. Both were taken from the dust, and both return to the dust.

**Weird English, Old English, Anachronistic English Translations:**

Alpha &amp; Omega Bible

ALL GO TO ONE PLACE; ALL WERE FORMED OF THE DUST, AND ALL WILL RETURN TO DUST. †(All living mankind &amp; animals all eventually die &amp; go to the grave, not Heaven &amp; Hell. Only after the resurrections will anyone be able to enter Heaven or the fullness of the Kingdom)

Awful Scroll Bible

They each are to be proceeding to one place; they are to have turned back to dust a turning back to dust.

Charles Thompson OT

Concordant Literal Version

Darby Translation

exeGeses companion Bible

Orthodox Jewish Bible

All are going to one place; All have come from the soil, and all return to the soil."

Rotherham's *Emphasized B.*

Third Millennium Bible

All go unto mekom echad; all are of the afahr (dust), and all return to the afahr again.

**Expanded/Embellished Bibles:***The Amplified Bible*

The Expanded Bible

Both end up the same way [All go to the same place]; both came from dust and both will go back to dust.

Kretzmann's Commentary

All go unto one place, to the realm of death; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again, Gen. 3:19.

Syndein/Thieme

{Universalism}

The Voice

All go into the same place. All come from the dust and to the dust return.

Humans and animals alike go to one place; all are *formed* from dust, and all return to the dust *once more*.**Bible Translations with Many Footnotes:**

College Press Bible Study

The Complete Tanach

The Geneva Bible

Kaplan Translation

NET Bible®

New American Bible (2011)

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

Brenner's Mechanical Trans.	.....
Charles Thompson OT	They are all for one place. They were all from dust: and to dust they shall all return.
C. Thompson (updated) OT	.
Context Group Version	All go to one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.
English Standard Version	.
Green's Literal Translation	.
Modern English Version	.
Modern Literal Version	.
Modern KJV	.
New American Standard B.	All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust.
New European Version	.
New King James Version	.
Niobi Study Bible	.
Owen's Translation	.
Restored Holy Bible 6.0	.
Updated Bible Version 2.17	.
A Voice in the Wilderness	.
Webster's Bible Translation	.
World English Bible	All go to one place. All are from the dust, and all turn to dust again.
Young's Literal Translation	The whole are going unto one place, the whole have been from the dust, and the whole are turning back unto the dust.
Young's Updated LT	.

### The gist of this passage:

Ecclesiastes 3:20a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
kôl (כָּל) [pronounced koh/]; also kol (כֹּל) [pronounced ko/]	<i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
hâlak <sup>e</sup> (הָלַךְ) [pronounced haw-LAHK <sup>e</sup> ]	<i>is walking, is going, is departing, is advancing, is traveling</i>	Qal active participle	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229
'el (אֶל) [pronounced eh/]	<i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
mâqôwm (מִקוֹם) [pronounced maw-KOHM]	<i>place, situated; for a soldier, it may mean where he is stationed; for people in general, it would be their place of abode (which could be their house or their town)</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4725 BDB #879
'echâd (אֶחָד) [pronounced eh-KHAWD]	<i>one, first, certain, only; each, every; but it can also mean a composite unity; possibly particular; anyone; same</i>	numeral adjective	Strong's #259 BDB #25

**Translation:** Everything goes to one place;...

Solomon has clearly gone to a place of human viewpoint. There is the same end for all things.



### Ecclesiastes 3:20a Men and animals all go to one place (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *All go unto one place. All, men and brutes, are buried in the earth (Ecclesiastes 12:7). The author is not thinking of Sheol, the abode of departed spirits, but merely regarding earth as the universal tomb of all creatures.*<sup>359</sup>

Chuck Smith: *All go to one place...False.*<sup>360</sup>

#### Chapter Outline

#### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

### Ecclesiastes 3:20b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
kôl (לֹכ) [pronounced koh/]; also kol (לֵכ) [pronounced ko/]	<i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
min (מִן) [pronounced mihn]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of, from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
‘âphâr (אֶפְרָת) [pronounced gaw-FAWR]	<i>dry earth, dust, powder, ashes, earth, ground, mortar, rubbish; dry or loose earth; debris; mortar; ore</i>	masculine singular substantive; with the definite article	Strong's #6083 BDB #779
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
kôl (לֹכ) [pronounced koh/]; also kol (לֵכ) [pronounced ko/]	<i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
shûwb (שׁוּב) [pronounced shoo <sup>b</sup> v]	<i>returning, turning [back, away, aside]; reminiscing; restoring something, bringing back something, reviving, recovering something, making restitution</i>	Qal active participle	Strong's #7725 BDB #996

<sup>359</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:20.

<sup>360</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

Ecclesiastes 3:20b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
'el (לָא) [pronounced eh]	unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
'âphâr (אֶפֶס) [pronounced gaw-FAWR]	dry earth, dust, powder, ashes, earth, ground, mortar, rubbish; dry or loose earth; debris; mortar; ore	masculine singular substantive; with the definite article	Strong's #6083 BDB #779

**Translation:** ...everything came from dust and everything returns to the dust.

Everything came from the dust (remember that we are built out of the chemicals in the ground); and our bodies will decay back into those same chemicals.

### Ecclesiastes 3:20b Everything came from dust and returns to dust (commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *All are of the dust* (Gen. 3:19; Psalm 104:29; Psalm 146:4). So Ecclesiasticus 41:10, *"All things that are of earth shall turn to earth again."* This is true of the material part of men and brutes alike; the question of the destiny of the immaterial part is touched in the next verse.<sup>361</sup>

Chuck Smith: *all are of the dust...Our bodies, yes.*<sup>362</sup>

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 3:20 Everything goes to one place; everything came from dust and everything returns to the dust.

The conclusions of D. Thomas: *If we look upon one side of our humanity, it appears that we are to be reckoned among the brutes that perish. The similarity is obvious in:*

1. *The corporeal, fleshly constitution with which man and brute are alike endowed.*
2. *The brevity of the earthly life appointed for both without distinction.*
3. *The resolution of the body into dust.*<sup>363</sup>

Ecclesiastes 3:20 All living matter goes to the same place—everything comes from the dust and everything will return to the dust.

<sup>361</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:20.

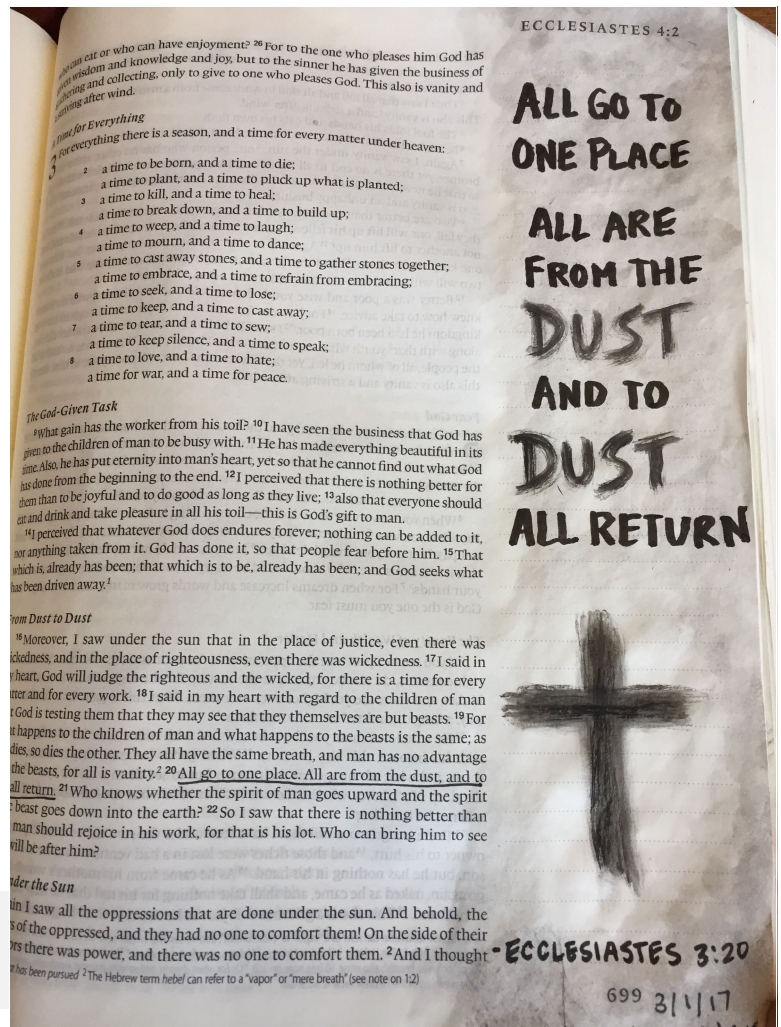
<sup>362</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

<sup>363</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by D. Thomas; Ecclesiastes 3:18–21.

**Ecclesiastes 3:20 All things go to one place—dust** (Bible journaling); from [Pinterest](#); accessed March 22, 2020.

**Ecclesiastes 3:20 All living matter goes to the same place—everything comes from the dust and everything will return to the dust.**

Solomon is suggesting that people and animals are essentially the same, because when they die, their bodies simply decay into earthly matter.



## Chapter Outline

### Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

#### Ecclesiastes 3:18–20 Comparing animals to people (various commentators)

Deane: *The distinction between man and beast is annulled by death; the former's boasted superiority, his power of conceiving and planning, his greatness, skill, strength, cunning, all come under the category of vanity, as they cannot ward off the inevitable blow.*<sup>364</sup>

David Guzik: *Concerning the condition of the sons of men . . . they themselves are like animals: Solomon compared life between humans and animals, and also compared their deaths — doing so in under the sun, absent eternity terms. On this basis, he could say that there is little difference in the life and destiny between humans and animals.*

Guzik continues: *The Preacher thought of an animal dying and its body decomposing. Then he thought that by all outward appearance, the same happens to a human body. Therefore, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity.*

<sup>364</sup> David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

## Ecclesiastes 3:18–20 Comparing animals to people (various commentators)

Guzik concludes: *This is no argument for the doctrine of annihilationism, the idea that the unrighteous dead simply cease to exist, either immediately or after some time of punishment. It is no argument for two reasons. First, Solomon spoke here as a man unconvinced of eternity and the meaning it brings to life. Second, we believe what 2Tim. 1:10 says: that Jesus brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. The understanding of the afterlife is cloudy and uncertain in the Old Testament, but not nearly as so in the New Testament.*<sup>365</sup>

J. Willcock: *In these words our author reaches the very lowest depth of misery and despair. His observation of the facts of human life leads him to the humiliating conclusion that it is almost hopeless to assign to man a higher nature and a more noble destiny than those which belong to the beasts that perish. The moral inequalities of the world, the injustice that goes unpunished, the hopes by which men are deluded, the uncertainty of life, the doubtfulness of immortality, seem to justify the assertion "that a man has no pre-eminence over a beast."*

Willcock continues: *The special point of comparison on which he dwells is the common mortality of both. Man and beast are possessed of bodies composed of the same elements, nourished by the same food, liable to the same accidents, and destined to return to the kindred dust from which they sprang. Both are ignorant of the period of life assigned to them; a moment before the stroke of death falls on them they may be unconscious that evil is at hand, and when they realize the fact they are equally powerless to avert it.*

J. Willcock concludes: *What there is in common between them is manifest to all, while the evidence to be adduced in favor of the superiority of man is, from its very nature, less convincing. The spiritually minded will attach great weight to arguments against which the natural reason may draw up plausible objections. Let us, then, see the case stated at its very worst, and consider if there are any redeeming circumstances which are calculated to relieve the gloom which a cursory reading of the words calls up.*<sup>366</sup>

Wright: *In their context these verses say that God makes all sensible people realize that they are as much subject to death as is the animal world.*<sup>367</sup>

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

## Ecclesiastes 3:18–20 How men and beasts are alike (by J. Willcock)

- I. The first statement is that MEN, LIKE BEASTS, ARE CREATURES OF ACCIDENT. (Verse 19a.) Not that they are both the results of blind chance; but that, "being conditioned by circumstances over which there can be no control, they are subject, in respect to their whole being, actions, and sufferings, as far as mere human observation can extend, to the law of chance, and are alike destined to undergo the same fate, i.e. death" (Wright). A parallel to the thought of this verse is to be found in the very striking words of Solon to Croesus (Herodotus, 1:32), "Man is altogether a chance;" and in Psalm 49:14, Psalm 49:20, "Like sheep they are laid in the grave Man that is in honor, and understands not, is like the beasts that perish."
- II. The second statement is that AS IS THE DEATH OF THE ONE, SO IS THE DEATH OF THE OTHER (Psalm 49:19), for in both is the breath of life, and this departs from them in like manner. So that any superiority on the part of man over the beast is incredible in the face of this fact, that death annuls distinctions between them. One resting-place receives them all at last—the earth from which they sprang

<sup>365</sup> David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

<sup>366</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by J. Willcock; Ecclesiastes 3:18–22 (slightly edited).

<sup>367</sup> David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.



### Ecclesiastes 3:18–20 How men and beasts are alike (by J. Willcock)

(Psalm 49:20). A belief in the immortality of the soul of man would at once have relieved the gloom, and convinced the Preacher that the humiliating comparison he institutes only reaches to a certain point, and is based upon the external accidents of human life, and that the true dignity and value of human nature remain unaffected by the mortality of the corporeal part of our being. "Put aside the belief in the prolongation of existence after death, that what has been begun here may be completed, and what has gone wrong here may be set right, and man is but a more highly organized animal, the 'cunningest of nature's clocks,' and the high words which men speak as to his greatness are found hollow. They too are 'vanity.' He differs from the brutes around him only, or chiefly, in having, what they have not, the burden of unsatisfied desires, the longing after an eternity which after all is denied him" (Plumptre).

- III. The third statement is the saddest of all—that of THE UNCERTAINTY OF KNOWLEDGE AS TO WHETHER, AFTER ALL, THERE IS THIS HIGHER ELEMENT IN HUMAN NATURE—"a spirit that at death goes upward"—or whether the living principles of both man and beast perish when their bodies are laid in the dust (verse 21). It is quite fruitless to deny that it is a skeptical question that is asked—If the spirit of the beast goeth downward to the earth, who knows that that of man goeth upward? Attempts have been made to obliterate the skepticism of the passage, as may be seen in the Massoretic punctuation followed in the Authorized Version of our English Bible, but departed from in the Revised Version, "Who knoweth the spirit of man that. goeth upward," etc.? as though an ascent of the spirit to a higher life were affirmed. The rendering of the four principal versions, and of all the best critics, convinces us that it is indeed a skeptical question as to the immortality of the soul that is here asked. A very similar passage is found in the great poem of Lucretius—

"We know not what the nature of the soul,  
Or born or entering into men at birth,  
Or whether with our frame it perisheth,  
Or treads the gloom and regions vast of death."

It is to be noted, however, about both the question of the Preacher and the words of the heathen poet, that they do not contain a denial of immortality, but a longing after more knowledge resting on sufficient grounds. Sad and depressing as uncertainty on such a point is to a sensitive mind, a denial of immortality would be infinitely worse; it would mean the death of all hope. The very suggestion of a higher life for man, after "this mortal coil has been shuffled off," than for the beast implies that, far from denying the immortality of the soul, the writer seeks for adequate ground on which to hold it. Arguments in favor of the doctrine of immortality were not wanting to the Preacher. He has just spoken of the desiderium aeternitatis implanted in the heart of man (Psalm 49:11), which, like the instincts of the lower creation, is given by the Creator for our guidance, and not to tantalize and deceive us. The inequalities and evils of the present life render a final judgment in a world beyond the grave a moral necessity (Ecclesiastes 12:14). But still these are, after all, but indirect arguments, which have not the weight of positive demonstration. It is only faith that can return any certain reply to his doubting question; its weight, thrown into the balance, inclines it to the hopeful side. And this happy conclusion is reached at last, as he distinctly affirms in Ecclesiastes 12:7, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God, who gave it." That the Preacher should ever have doubted this great truth, and spoken as though no certainty concerning it were within the reach of man, need not surprise us. In the revelation given to the Jewish people, the doctrine of rewards and punishments in a future state was not set forth. The rewards and punishments for obedience to the Law, and for transgressions against it, were all temporal. Almost nothing was communicated touching the existence of the soul after death. In the passage quoted by Christ in the Gospels, for the confutation of the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, the doctrine of immortality is implied rather than stated (Matt. 22:23-32). And in a matter so far beyond the power of the human intellect to search out, the absence of a word of revelation rendered the darkness doubly obscure. It is, however, utterly monstrous for any of us now who believe in Christ to ask the question, "Who knoweth the spirit of man, whether it goeth upward?" The revelation given us by him is full of light on this point. "He hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2Tim. 1:10). His own resurrection from the dead, and ascension to heaven is the proof of a life beyond the grave, and a pledge to all who believe in him of a future and an everlasting life. It was not wonderful that the Preacher, in the then stage of religious knowledge, should have spoken as he does here; but



## Ecclesiastes 3:18–20 How men and beasts are alike (by J. Willcock)

nothing could justify us, to whom so much fresh light has been given, in using his words, as though we were in the same condition with him.

- IV. The fourth and concluding statement is, strangely enough, that since we know not what will come after death, A CHEERFUL ENJOYMENT OF THE PRESENT is the best course one can take. This is the third time he has given this counsel (Ecclesiastes 2:24; Ecclesiastes 3:12, Ecclesiastes 3:13). A calm and happy life, healthy labor, and tranquil enjoyment, are to be valued and token advantage of to the full. It is an Epicureanism of a spiritual cast that he commends, and not the coarse and degraded animalism of those who say, "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die." He recognizes the good gifts of the present as a "portion" given by God, and says—Rejoice in them, though the future be all unknown. The very gloom out of which his words spring give a dignity to them. "We feel that we are in the presence of one who has the germ given him of some courage, equanimity, and calmness, which may grow into other and better things. His spirit is torn by, suffers with, all the pangs that beset the inquiring human heart. He feels for all the woes of humanity; cannot put them by, and fly to the wine-cup and crown himself with garlands. He has hated life, yet he will not lose his courage. 'Be of good cheer,' he says, even in his dark hour; 'work on, and enjoy the fruits of work; it is thy portion. Do not curse God and die'" (Bradley). His words are not, as they might seem. at first, frivolous and heartless. It is a calm and peaceful happiness, a life of honest endeavor and of single-hearted enjoyment of innocent pleasures, that he commends; and, after all, it is only by genuine faith in God that such a life is possible—a faith that enables one to rise above all that is dark and mysterious and perplexing in the world about us.

*The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by J. Willcock; Ecclesiastes 3:18–22 (slightly edited).

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

W. Clarkson's conclusions for the unregenerate man: *Man's unenlightened conception of himself. It is evidently possible that, under certain conditions, men may judge themselves to be of no nobler nature than that of "the beasts that perish." It may be*

*(1) bodily suffering or weakness; or*

*(2) untoward and disappointing circumstances; or*

*(3) bewilderment of mind after vain endeavors to solve great spiritual problems; or*

*(4) the distracted and unnatural state of the society in which we are placed (see Cox's 'Quest of the Chief Good'); but, owing to some one of many possible causes, men may be driven to take the lowest view of human nature; so much so that they may lose all respect for themselves—may shut the future life entirely out of view, and live in the narrow circle of the present; may confine their ambition and aspiration to bodily enjoyment and the excitements of present occupation; may practically own themselves to be defeated, and go blindly on, 'hoping nothing, believing nothing, and fearing nothing.'"* <sup>368</sup>

People who deny the Revealed God, often deny the existence of their souls, the reality of free will, personal responsibility and they often equate themselves with animals (as Solomon has done in this passage).

Whereas seemed confused before, assigning the same end to both men and animals, here he seems to redeem himself. The life/spirit/soul of man goes upward to God; and the life of an animal goes into the earth.

Or is Solomon saying, *who really knows where the life of a man goes?*

<sup>368</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by W. Clarkson; Ecclesiastes 3:18–21.

**Who knows a spirit of sons of the Adam, the one going up upwards and a spirit of the animal the one going down downwards to the earth?**

Ecclesiastes  
3:21

**Who [fully] knows the spirit of the sons of man, the one which goes upwards; and the spirit of the animal, the one going downwards to the earth?**

**Who fully knows the spirit of man, the spirit which goes upwards when a man dies; or about the spirit of the animal, the one who goes down to the earth?**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	Who knows a spirit of sons of the Adam, the one going up upwards and a spirit of the animal the one going down downwards to the earth?
Dead Sea Scrolls	.
Jerusalem targum	.
Targum (Onkelos)	.
Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan)	.
Aramaic Targum	Who is wise to know the breathing spirit of the children of men, whether it goes upward to heaven, and the breathing spirit of cattle, whether it goes down to the earth?
Revised Douay-Rheims	Who knows if the spirit of the children of Adam ascend upward, and if the spirit of the beasts descend downward?
Douay-Rheims 1899 (Amer.)	.
Aramaic ESV of Peshitta	.
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	.
Plain English Aramaic Bible	.
Lamsa's Peshitta (Syriac)	Who knows whether the spirit of men goes upward and the spirit of the beasts goes downward under the earth?
Updated Brenton (Greek)	And who <u>has seen</u> the spirit of the sons of men, whether it goes upward? And the spirit of the beast, whether it goes downward to the earth?

Significant differences:

#### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	.
Easy English	We need to know what happens after our death. We think that the spirit of a man goes up. And we think that the spirit of an animal goes down towards the ground. But nobody really knows.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	Who knows what happens to a person's spirit? Who knows if a human's spirit goes up to God while an animal's spirit goes down into the ground?"
God's Word™	.
Good News Bible (TEV)	How can anyone be sure that the human spirit goes upward while an animal's spirit goes down into the ground?
The Message	Nobody knows for sure that the human spirit rises to heaven or that the animal spirit sinks into the earth.
Names of God Bible	.
NIRV	Who can know whether the spirit of a person goes up? Who can tell whether the spirit of an animal goes down into the earth?"
New Simplified Bible	Who knows the breath of man that goes upward, and the breath of the animal that goes downward to the earth?

**Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:**

Casual English Bible	.
College Press paraphrase	Who among you can say that you know the spirit of man which ascends on high, or the spirit of the beast, which goes downward to the earth?
Contemporary English V.	Who really knows if our spirits go up and the spirits of animals go down into the earth?
The Living Bible	For who can prove that the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of animals goes downward into dust?
New Berkeley Version	.
New Life Version	.
New Living Translation	For who can prove that the human spirit goes up and the spirit of animals goes down into the earth?
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	No one knows if people go up and animals go down to the place where the dead are.
Unfolding Bible Simplified	.

**Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:**

American English Bible	So, who knows if man's breath goes upward, Or the breath of his cattle goes into the ground?
Beck's American Translation	.
Common English Bible	Who knows if a human being's life-breath rises upward while an animal's life-breath descends into the earth?
New Advent (Knox) Bible	Who has a right to tell us that the spirit of man mounts upwards, and the spirit of a beast sinks down to the depth?
Translation for Translators	No one knows [RHQ] for sure that when we die, our souls/spirits go up to heaven and the souls/spirits of animals go down to the place where the dead are."

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

Conservapedia Translation	Who understands that the spirit of man returns to God while the spirit of God's animals goes down to the earth?
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	Who knows that the breath of the sons of Adam, when it goes, ascends? and that the breath of the cattle, when it goes down, departs to the earth?—
God's Truth (Tyndale)	.
HCSB	.
International Standard V	Who knows whether [So LXX. The Heb. lacks whether] the spirit of human beings ascends, and whether [So LXX. The Heb. lacks whether] the spirit of animals descends to the earth?
Jubilee Bible 2000	.
H. C. Leupold	.
Lexham English Bible	For no one knows <i>whether</i> the spirit of a human ascends <i>to heaven</i> and <i>whether</i> the spirit of the beast descends to the ground!
NIV, ©2011	.
Peter Pett's translation	.
Unfolding Bible Literal Text	.
Unlocked Literal Bible	Who knows whether the spirit of mankind goes upward and the spirit of animals goes downward into the earth?
Urim-Thummim Version	.
Wikipedia Bible Project	Who knows whether the spirit of man, if up above it goes, and the spirit of the beast, if down to the ground it goes?

**Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):**

Christian Community (1988)	Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and if the spirit of the beast descends earthward?
The Heritage Bible	Who knows by seeing the spirit of the sons of man that ascends upward, and the spirit of the animal that descends downward to the earth?
New American Bible (2002)	Who knows if the life-breath of the children of men goes upward and the life-breath of beasts goes earthward?
New American Bible (2011)	.
New English Bible—1970	Who knows whether the spirit Or breath of man goes upward or whether the spirit Or breath of the beast goes downward to the earth?'
New Jerusalem Bible	Who knows if the human spirit mounts upward or if the animal spirit goes downward to the earth?
Revised English Bible—1989	.

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	.
exeGeses companion Bible	Who knows the spirit of the son of humanity that ascends; and the spirit of the animal that descends to the earth?
Hebraic Roots Bible	.
The Israel Bible	Who knows if a man's lifebreath does rise upward and if a beast's breath does sink down into the earth?
Israeli Authorized Version	.
Kaplan Translation	.
<i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	.
Tree of Life Version	.

### Weird English, Old English, Anachronistic English Translations:

Alpha & Omega Bible	.
Awful Scroll Bible	Is there to be he knowing the breath of the sons of mankind, that they are being brought up to the higher parts? - either the breath of the dumb beasts - are they being brought down into the solid grounds?
Charles Thompson OT	.
Concordant Literal Version	Who is knowing about the spirit of the sons of humanity, Whether it is ascending above, And the spirit of the beast, whether it is descending below to the earth?
Darby Translation	.
exeGeses companion Bible	.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	Who hath da'as of the ruach bnei haAdam that goeth upward, and the ruach habeheimah that goeth downward to ha'aretz [see 12:7]?
Rotherham's <i>Emphasized B.</i>	Who knoweth the spirit of the sons of men, whether it, ascendeth, above,—or the spirit of the beast, whether it, descendeth, below, to the earth?
Third Millennium Bible	.

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	.
The Expanded Bible	Who ·can be sure [knows] that the human spirit goes up above and that the spirit of an animal goes down into the ground?
Kretzmann's Commentary	Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth? How can we expect the ordinary person, without the illumination of the Word, to distinguish between the death of a human being and an

	animal? For it certainly seems as though there is no difference, death ensuing as soon as the breath stops.
Syndein/Thieme	{Agnosticism} Who knows if the spirit {ruwach} of man rises upward and the spirit {ruwach} of the animal goes down into the earth?
The Voice	Who really knows whether the spirits of human beings go up and the spirits of animals go down into the earth?

### Bible Translations with Many Footnotes:

College Press Bible Study The Complete Tanach	. Who knows that the spirit of the children of men is that which ascends on high and the spirit of the beast is that which descends below to the earth?
	<b>Who knows:</b> Like (Joel 2: 14): "Whoever knows shall repent." Who is it who understands and puts his heart to [the fact] that the spirit of the children of men ascends above and stands in judgment, and the spirit of the beast descends below to the earth, and does not have to give an accounting. Therefore, one must not behave like a beast, which does not care about its deeds.
The Geneva Bible Kaplan Translation NET Bible®	. Who really knows if the human spirit <sup>37</sup> ascends upward, and the animal's spirit descends into the earth?
	<sup>37th</sup> Heb "the spirit of the sons of man."
New American Bible (2011)	Who knows* if the life breath of mortals goes upward and the life breath of beasts goes earthward? * [3:21] <b>Who knows:</b> the author presumes a negative answer: "No one knows." In place of speculation on impossible questions, the author counsels enjoyment of what is possible (cf. v. 22; but see also 2:10–11).

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Brenner's Mechanical Trans.	.....
Charles Thompson OT	.
C. Thompson (updated) OT	And who has seen the breath of the sons of men whether it ascends upwards; and the breath of the beast, whether it descends downwards into the earth?
Context Group Version	.
English Standard Version	.
Green's Literal Translation	Who knows the spirit of the sons of man, <i>whether</i> it goes upward; and the spirit of the beast, <i>whether</i> it goes downward to the earth?
Modern English Version	.
Modern Literal Version	.
Modern KJV	.
New American Standard B.	.
New European Version	.
New King James Version	.
Niobi Study Bible	.
Owen's Translation	.
Restored Holy Bible 6.0	.
Updated Bible Version 2.17	.
A Voice in the Wilderness	Who knows the spirit of man that goes upward, and the spirit of the beast that goes downward to the earth?
Webster's Bible Translation	.
World English Bible	.
Young's Literal Translation	.



Young's Updated LT

Who knows the spirit of the sons of man that is going up on high, and the spirit of the beast that is going down below to the earth?

The gist of this passage:

Ecclesiastes 3:21a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
mîy (מִי) [pronounced mee]	<i>who, whom; whose, whomever; what; occasionally rendered how, in what way</i>	pronominal interrogative; the verb <i>to be</i> may be implied	Strong's #4310 BDB #566
yâda' (עָדָה) [pronounced yaw-DAHG]	<i>knowing, knowing by experience [or practice]; skilled; seeing; recognizing, admitting, acknowledging</i>	Qal active participle	Strong's #3045 BDB #393
rûwach (רוּחַ) [pronounced ROO-ahkh]	<i>wind, breath, spirit, apparition</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #7307 BDB #924
bânîym (בָּנִים) [pronounced baw-NEEM]	<i>sons, descendants; children; people; sometimes rendered men; young men, youths</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
'âdâm (אָדָם) [pronounced aw-DAWM]	<i>a man, a human being, mankind; transliterated Adam</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #120 & #121 BDB #9
The word <i>the Adam</i> can mean <i>man, mankind, humankind, men, human beings</i> .			
'âlâh (אֵלָה) [pronounced gaw-LAWH]	<i>going up, ascending, coming up, climbing</i>	feminine singular, Qal active participle with the definite article	Strong's #5927 BDB #748
hîy' (הִיא) [pronounced hee]	<i>she, it; also used as a demonstrative pronoun: that, this (one)</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>is</i> , <i>is</i> implied	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ma'âlâh (מֵעַל) [pronounced mawg <sup>e</sup> -LAW]	<i>higher, higher part, above, upon, forward</i>	adverb with the hê local	Strong's #4605 BDB #751

With the lâmed preposition this means *upwards, over the head; beyond; over [anything]; in a higher degree, exceedingly*. With the hê local, it can mean *upwards, on high; farther; more*.

**Translation:** Who [fully] knows the spirit of the sons of man, the one which goes upwards;...

Whereas, in the previous verse, Solomon spoke of everything going to dust, he acknowledges here the immaterial part of man and that it goes upwards, presumably to be with God.

Many interpret this passage by inserting the word *whether*, asking, presumably, do we really know *whether* the spirit of man goes into the heavens up to God? Do we really know *whether* the spirit of animals simply goes into the ground with its body? As you can see, the addition of the word can make quite a bit of difference.

## Ecclesiastes 3:21b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
rûwach (רוּחַ) [pronounced <i>ROO-ahkh</i> ]	<i>wind, breath, spirit, apparition</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #7307 BDB #924
b <sup>e</sup> hêmâh (בְּהֵמָה) [pronounced <i>b<sup>e</sup>hay-MAW</i> ]	<i>beasts [a collective of all animals]; mammal (s), beast, animal, cattle, livestock [domesticated animals]; wild beasts</i>	feminine singular noun often used in the collective sense; with the definite article	Strong's #929 BDB #96
yârad (יָרַד) [pronounced <i>yaw-RAHD</i> ]	<i>descending, coming down, going down</i>	feminine singular, Qal active participle with the definite article	Strong's #3381 BDB #432
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
maṭṭâh (מַתַּחַת) [pronounced <i>MAHT-taw</i> ]	<i>downward (s), below, beneath; under [an age]</i>	adverb of location with the hê local	Strong's #4295 BDB #641
With the lâmed preposition and the hê local, this appears to mean <i>downwards</i> .			
I will add additional definitions when I add in the translations.			
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
'erets (אֶרֶץ) [pronounced <i>EH-rets</i> ]	<i>earth (all or a portion thereof), land, territory, country, continent; ground, soil; under the ground [Sheol]</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #776 BDB #75

**Translation:** ...and the spirit of the animal, the one going downwards to the earth?

The spirit of the animal does not go to God, but goes into the earth, presumably with the animal's decaying body.

Ecclesiastes 3:21 Who [fully] knows the spirit of the sons of man, the one which goes upwards; and the spirit of the animal, the one going downwards to the earth?

Is Solomon saying, there is no real proof of what happens to men when they die. Could they not simply not just die as animals do? We do not have, apart from revelation, a definitive answer here.

## Ecclesiastes 3:21 The life of man and the life of animals (various commentators)

W. Clarkson: [Jesus] asks us to think how *"much a man is better than a sheep,"* and reminds us that we are *"of more value than many sparrows."* He bids us realize that one human soul is worth more than *"the whole world,"* and that there is nothing so costly that it will represent its value. He reveals to us the supreme and most blessed fact that each human spirit is the object of Divine solicitude, and may find a home in the Father's heart of love at once, and in His nearer presence soon.

Clarkson continues: He [Jesus] assures us that there is a glorious future before every man that becomes the subject of his kingdom, and serves faithfully to the end. Under His teaching, instead of seeing that *"they themselves are beasts,"* His disciples find themselves *"children of their Father who is in heaven," "kings and priests unto God," "heirs of eternal life."* Coming after Christ, and learning of Him, we see that we are capable of a noble heritage now, and move toward a still nobler estate a little further on.<sup>369</sup>

David Guzik: We sense that the Preacher hoped there was a different destiny between people and animals. Yet in his under the sun thinking, there was no real reason to believe it — so, *"Who knows?"*<sup>370</sup>

The Pulpit Commentary: *Who knows the spirit of man that goes upward, and the spirit of the beast that goes downward to the earth?...* Wright and others point out, the analogy of two other passages (Ecclesiastes 2:19 and Ecclesiastes 6:12), where "who knows" occurs, intimates that the phrases which follow are interrogative. So the translation should be, *"Who knows as regards the spirit (ruach) of the sons of men whether it goes upward, and as regards the spirit (ruach) of the beast whether it goes downward under the earth?"* ...Septuagint... *"Who ever saw the spirit of the sons of man, whether it goes upward?"*

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *The Authorized Version...is supposed to harmonize better with the assertion at the end of the book (Ecclesiastes 12:7), that the spirit returns to the God who gave it. But there is no formal denial of the immortality of the soul in the present passage as we render it. The question, indeed, is not touched. The author is confirming his previous assertion that, in one point of view, man is not superior to brute. Now he says, looking at the matter merely externally, and taking not into consideration any higher notion, no one knows the destiny of the living powers, whether God deals differently with the spirit of man and of beast. Phenomenally, the principle of life in both is identical, and its cessation is identical; and what becomes of the spirit in either case neither eye [all] nor mind can discover.*

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *The distinction which reason or religion assumes, viz. that man's spirit goes upward and the brute's downward, is incapable of proof, is quite beyond experience. What is meant by "upward" and "downward" may be seen by reference to the gnome in Prov. 15:24, "To the wise the way of life goes upward, that he may depart from Sheol beneath." The contrast shows that Sheol is regarded as a place of punishment or annihilation; this is further confirmed by Psalm 49:14, Psalm 49:15, "They are appointed as a flock for Sheol: death will be their shepherd ... their beauty will be for Sheol to consume But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol; for he will receive me." Koheleth neither denies nor affirms in this passage the immortality of the soul; that he believed in it we learn from other expressions; but he is not concerned with parading it here.*

The Pulpit Commentary concludes: *But Koheleth's inquiry suggests the possibility of a different destiny for the spirits of man and brute, though he does not at this moment make any definite assertion on the subject. Later on he explains the view taken by the believer in Divine revelation (Ecclesiastes 12:7).*<sup>371</sup>

Chuck Smith: *But who knows if the spirit of man goes upward, and the spirit of the beast goes downward to the earth?... Well, the Lord Jesus Christ knows, and He declares it to be true.*<sup>372</sup>

<sup>369</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by W. Clarkson; Ecclesiastes 3:18–21.

<sup>370</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

<sup>371</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:21 (slightly edited).

<sup>372</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

## Ecclesiastes 3:21 The life of man and the life of animals (various commentators)

Wright: *The Teacher is speaking phenomenologically, i.e., as things appear to the senses.*<sup>373</sup>

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

### Are men no better than beasts? (The Pulpit Commentary)

- I. BOTH ALIKE EMANATE FROM THE SOIL. "All are of the dust" (verse 20). This the first argument in support of the monstrous proposition that man hath no pre-eminence above a beast.
  1. The measure of truth it contains. In so far as it asserts that man, considered as to his material part, possesses a common origin with the beasts that perish, that both were at first formed from the ground, and are so allied to the soil that, besides emerging from it, they are every day supported by it and will eventually return to it, being both resolved into indistinguishable dust, it accords exactly with the teaching of Scripture (Gen. 1:24; Gen. 2:7), science, and experience. Compare the language of Arnobius, "Wherein do we differ from them? Our bones are of the same materials; our origin is not more noble than theirs" ('Ad Genies,' Ecclesiastes 2:16).
  2. The amount of error it conceals. It overlooks the facts that, again according to Scripture (Gen. 1:27; Gen. 2:7; Gen. 9:6), man was created in the Divine image, which is never said of the lower creatures; was endowed with intelligence far surpassing that of the creatures (Job 32:8); and so far from being placed on a level with the lower animals, was expressly constituted their lord (Gen. 1:28). Read in this connection Shakespeare's "What a piece of work is man" etc. ('Hamlet,' act 2. sc. 2). Moreover, it ignores what is patent on every page of Scripture as well as testified by every chapter in human experience, viz. that God deals with man as he does not deal with the beasts, subjecting him as not them to moral discipline, and accepting of him what is never asked of them, the tribute of freely rendered service, inviting him as they are never invited to enter into conscious fellowship with himself, punishing him as never them for disobedience, and making of him an object of love and grace to the extent of devising and completing on his behalf a scheme of salvation, as is never done or proposed to be done for them. Unless, therefore, Scripture be set aside as worthless, it will be impossible to hold that in respect of origin and nature man hath no pre-eminence over the beasts.
- II. BOTH ALIKE ARE THE SPORT OF CHANCE. "That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them;" or, "Chance are the sons of men, chance is the beast, and one chance is to them both" (verse 19).
  1. The assertion under limitations may be admitted as correct. Certainly no ground exists for the allegation that the course of providence, whether as it relates to man or as it bears upon the lower animals, is a chance, a peradventure, a haphazard. Yet events, which in the program of the Supreme have their fixed places and appointed times, may seem to man to be fortuitous, as lying altogether beyond his calculation and not within his expectation; and what the present argument amounts to is that man is as helpless before these events as the unthinking creatures of the field are—that they deal with him precisely as with the beasts, sweeping down upon him with resistless force, falling upon him at unexpected moments, and tossing him about with as much indifference as they do them.
  2. The assertion, however, must be qualified. It follows not from the above concessions that man is as helpless before unforeseen occurrences as the beasts are. Not only can he to some extent by foresight anticipate their coming, which the lower creatures cannot do, but, unlike them also, he can protect himself against them when they have come. To man belongs a power not (consciously at least) possessed by the animals, of not merely accommodating himself to circumstances—a

<sup>373</sup> David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

## Are men no better than beasts? (The Pulpit Commentary)

capability they to some extent share with him—but of rising above circumstances and compelling them to bend to him. If to this be added that if time and chance happen to man as to the beasts he knows it, which they do not, and can extract good from it, which they cannot, it will once more appear that ground exists for disputing the degrading proposition that man hath no pre-eminence over the beasts.

- III. BOTH ALIKE ARE THE PREY OF DEATH. "As the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath" (verse 19).
1. Seeming correspondences between the two in the matter of dying.
    - (1) In both death means the extinction of physical life and the dissolution of the material frame.
    - (2) In both the mode of dying is frequently the same,
    - (3) The same grave receives both when the vital spark has departed.
    - (4) The only difference between the two is that man commonly gets a coffin and a funeral, a mausoleum and a monument, whereas the beast gets none of these luxuries.
  2. Obvious discrepancies between the two in respect of dying.
    - (1) Man living knows that he must die (Ecc\_9:5), which the beast does not.
    - (2) Man has the choice and power, if he accepts the provisions of grace, of meeting death without a fear.
    - (3) Even if he does not, there is something nobler in the spectacle of a man going forth with eyes open to the dread conflict with the king of terrors, than in that of a brute expiring in unconscious stupidity.
    - (4) If one thinks of him dying, as he often does die, like a Christian, it will be seen more absurd than ever to assert that a man hath no pre-eminence over a 'beast.
- IV. BOTH, DYING, PASS BEYOND THE SPHERE OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE, "Who knoweth the spirit of man, whether it goeth upward? and the spirit of the beast, whether it goeth downward to the earth?" (verse 21).
1. Admitted so far as scientific knowledge is concerned. The agnostics of the Preacher's day, like those of modern times, could not say what became of a man's spirit, if he had one (of which they were not sure), after it had escaped from his body, any more than they could tell where a beast's—and the beast was as likely to have a spirit as the man—went to after its carcass sank into the soil. Whether it was the man's that went upward and the beast's downward, or vice versa, lay outside their ken. Their scientific apparatus did not enable them to report, as the scientific apparatus of the nineteenth century does not enable it to report, upon the post-mundane career of either beast or man; and so they assumed the position from which the agnostics of to-day have not departed, that it is all one with the man and the beast when the grave hides them, and that a man hath no preeminence over a beast.
  2. Denied so far as religious knowledge is concerned. Refusing to hold that the anatomist's scalpel, or chemist's retort, or astronomer's telescope, or analyst's microscope are the ultimate tests of truth, and that nothing is to be credited which cannot be detected by one or other of these instruments, we are not so hopelessly in the dark about man's spirit when it leaves its earthly tabernacle as are agnostics whether ancient or modern. On the high testimony of this Preacher (Ecclesiastes 12:7), on the higher witness of Paul (2Cor. 5:1; Php. 1:23), and on the highest evidence attainable on the subject (2Tim. 1:10), we know that when the spirit of a child of God forsakes the body it does not disperse into thin air, but passes up into the Father's hand (Luke 23:46), and that when a good man disappears from earth he forthwith appears in heaven (Luke 23:43; Php. 1:23), amid the spirits of the just made perfect (Heb. 12:23); so that another time we decline to endorse the sentiment that man hath no pre-eminence over a beast.
- V. BOTH ALIKE, PASSING FROM THE EARTH, NEVER MORE RETURN. "Who shall bring him back to see that which shall be after him?" (verse 29). Accepting this as the correct rendering of the words (for other interpretations consult the Exposition):
1. It may be granted that no human power can recall man from the grave any more than it can reanimate the beast; that the realm beyond the tomb, so far as the senses are con-corned, is "an undiscovered country, from whose borne no traveler returns."



## Are men no better than beasts? (The Pulpit Commentary)

2. It is contended that nevertheless there is a power which can and ultimately will despoil the grave of its human victims, and that man will eventually come back to dwell, if not upon the old soil and beneath the old sky, at least beneath a new heavens and upon a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

I am not sure that we need this much detail on this point, but it does give us an idea as to Solomon's possible reasoning. Because man is clearly much different from beasts, these points do not prove otherwise; they merely provide insight into Solomon's reasoning. Bear in mind that, perhaps a third of the world (maybe more) believe that we are no different from animals and that we have descended from animals via evolution.

*The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, homiletics; Ecclesiastes 3:19–22.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

## The Superiority of Men over Beasts (D. Thomas)

The superiority of men over beasts in the possession of a spiritual and imperishable nature and life. It is difficult for us to treat this subject without; bringing to bear upon it the knowledge which we have derived from the fuller and more glorious revelation of the new covenant. "Christ has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light by the gospel." We cannot possibly think of such themes without taking to their consideration the convictions and the hopes which we have derived from the incarnate Son of God. Nor can we forget the sublime speculations of philosophers of both ancient and modern times.

1. In his spiritual nature man is akin to God. Physical life the Creator imparted to the animal Organisms with which the world was peopled. But a life of quite another order was conferred upon man, who participates in the ...Divine reason, who is able? think the thoughts of God himself, and who has intuitions of moral goodness of which the brute creation is for ever incapable. Instead of man's mind being a function of organized matter, as a base sensationalism and empiricism is wont to affirm, the truth is that it is only as an expression and vehicle of thought, of reason, that matter has a dependent existence.
2. In his consequent immortality man is distinguished from the inferior animals. The life possessed by these latter is a life of sensation and of movement; the organism is resolved into its constituents, and there is no reason to believe that the sensation and movement are perpetuated. But "the spirit of man goeth upward;" it has used its instrument, the body, and the time comes—appointed by God's inscrutable providence—when the connection, local and temporary, which the spirit has maintained with earth, is sundered. In what other scenes and pursuits the conscious being is continued, we cannot tell. But there is not the slightest reason for conceiving the spiritual life to be dependent upon the organism which it uses as its instrument. The spiritual life is the life of God; and the life of God is perishable.

"The sun is but a spark of fire,  
A transient meteor in the sky;  
The soul, immortal as its Sire,  
Can never die.

*The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by D. Thomas; Ecclesiastes 3:18–21.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 3:21 Who fully knows the spirit of man, the spirit which goes upwards when a man dies; or about the spirit of the animal, the one who goes down to the earth?

D. Thomas: *When a man is, perhaps suddenly, awakened to a sense of the transitoriness of life and the vanity of human pursuits, what more natural than that, under the influence of novel conceptions and convictions, he should rush from a career of self-indulgence into the opposite extreme? Life is brief: why concern one's self with its affairs? Sense-experiences are changeable and perishable: why not neglect and despise them? Earth will soon vanish: why endeavor to accommodate ourselves to its conditions? But subsequent reflection convinces us that such practical inferences are unjust. Because this earth and this life are not everything, it does not follow that they are nothing. Because they cannot satisfy us, it does not follow that we should not use them.*<sup>374</sup>

Based upon all that Solomon has observed in life, he comes to this conclusion:

**And I have seen that nothing [is] good from which rejoices the Adam in his works, for that [is] his portion. For who brings him to see in what, who will be after him?**

Ecclesiastes  
3:22

**I have observed that [there is] nothing better than [for] a man to rejoice in his works, for that [is] his portion [on earth]. For who brings him to see what [or] who will come [lit., will be] after him?**

**I have observed in my life that there is nothing better for a man than to rejoice in his works, for that is his allotted portion in this life. Who can bring him into the future to see who or what will come after him?**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	And I have seen that nothing [is] good from which rejoices the Adam in his works, for that [is] his portion. For who brings him to see in what, who will be after him?
Dead Sea Scrolls	.
Jerusalem targum	.
Targum (Onkelos)	.
Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan)	.
Aramaic Targum	I saw, therefore, that there is no good in this world, but that man should rejoice in his good works, and eat and drink, and do good to his heart; because this is his good part in this world, to acquire thereby the world to come, so that no man should say in his heart, "Why am I distributing money to do charity? I had better leave it to my son after me, or be nursed for it in my old age;" because who can bring him to see what will be after him?
Revised Douay-Rheims	.
Douay-Rheims 1899 (Amer.)	And I have found that nothing is better than for a man to rejoice in his work, and that this is his portion. For who shall bring him to know the things that shall be after him?
Aramaic ESV of Peshitta	.
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	.
Plain English Aramaic Bible	.
Lamsa's Peshitta (Syriac)	Wherefore I saw that there is nothing better in them but that man should rejoice in his works; for that is his portion; for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?
Updated Brenton (Greek)	And I saw that there was no good, but that wherein a man shall rejoice in his works, for it is his portion, for who shall bring him to see anything of that which shall be after him?

#### Significant differences:

<sup>374</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by D. Thomas; Ecclesiastes 3:22.

**Limited Vocabulary Translations:**

Bible in Basic English  
Easy English

.  
So we should enjoy our work. That is the best thing that we can do. That is what God wants us to do. But we do not know what there is after death.

The Teacher tells us what happens after our death. In verse 20, he repeats what is in Genesis 3:19. When animals and people die, their dead bodies become like the dry material on the ground. So we should enjoy what God has given to us now. God sees all that we do. But the Teacher believes that we have a different 'spirit' (verse 21). It is different from an animal's 'spirit'. The Teacher wrote this book in the Hebrew language (the language that the readers spoke at that time). The Hebrew word for 'spirit' can mean several things. It can mean 'breath'. (Breath is the air that goes into the nose. And then it goes out of it.) Or it can mean 'spirit'. It can also mean 'our thoughts'. The Teacher says more about this in 12:7.

Easy-to-Read Version—2001

So I saw that the best thing a person can do is to enjoy what he does. That is all he has. {Also a person should not worry about the future.} Why? Because no one can help that person see what will happen in the future.

Easy-to-Read Version—2006

So I saw that the best thing people can do is to enjoy what they do, because that is all they have. Besides, no one can help another person see what will happen in the future.

*God's Word™*

I saw that there's nothing better for people to do than to enjoy their work because that is their lot in life. Who will allow them to see what will happen after them?

Good News Bible (TEV)

So I realized then that the best thing we can do is enjoy what we have worked for. There is nothing else we can do.[b] There is no way for us to know what will happen after we die.

*The Message*

So I made up my mind that there's nothing better for us men and women than to have a good time in whatever we do—that's our lot. Who knows if there's anything else to life?

Names of God Bible  
NIRV

.  
So a person should enjoy their work. That's what God made them for. I saw that there's nothing better for them to do than that. After all, who can show them what will happen after they are gone?

New Simplified Bible

.

**Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:**

Casual English Bible  
College Press paraphrase

.  
I am now more convinced than ever that man can do nothing better than rejoice in his works, do good in his lifetime, and make the most of each day. This is man's lot. No man can see what will occur in the future. Who can enable man to see what even tomorrow will bring?

Contemporary English V.

We were meant to enjoy our work, and that's the best thing we can do. We can never know the future.

The Living Bible

So I saw that there is nothing better for men than that they should be happy in their work, for that is what they are here for, and no one can bring them back to life to enjoy what will be in the future, so let them enjoy it now.

New Berkeley Version  
New Life Version

.  
So I have seen that nothing is better than that man should be happy in his work, for that is all he can do. Who can bring him to see what will happen after him?

New Living Translation

So I saw that there is nothing better for people than to be happy in their work. That is our lot in life. And no one can bring us back to see what happens after we die.

Unlocked Dynamic Bible

So I think that the best thing for us people to do is to be happy about the work that we do, because that is what God has given to us. I say this because no one of us knows what happens to us after we die.

Unfolding Bible Simplified

.

**Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:**

American English Bible	In all of this, I saw [little] that's good, Except to find joy in the things that we do... Yes, this is all we've been given. For, who will lead us to see The things that will happen after [we're gone]?
Beck's American Translation	.
Common English Bible	So I perceived that there was nothing better for human beings but to enjoy what they do because that's what they're allotted in life. Who, really, is able to see what will happen in the future?
New Advent (Knox) Bible	So I became aware that it is best for man to busy himself here to his own content; this and nothing else is his allotted portion; who can show him what the future will bring?
Translation for Translators	So I concluded that the best thing for <i>us</i> people to do is to be happy about the work that we do, because that is what God has given to us. I say that because no one of us [RHQ] knows what happens to us after we die.

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

Conservapedia Translation	At this I realized that there is nothing better than for a man to rejoice in his own works, for that is his time to make a difference: for who could bring him to the future to see what would follow his life?
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	Then I perceived there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his works,—for that is his reward; for who can bring him to examine as to what may be after him?
God's Truth (Tyndale)	Wherefore I perceive, that there is nothing better for a man, than to be joyful in his labor, for that is his portion. But who will bring him to see the thing that shall come after him?
HCSB	I have seen that there is nothing better than for a person to enjoy his activities because that is his reward. For who can enable him to see what will happen after he dies [Lit <i>after him</i> ]?
International Standard V	I concluded that it is worthwhile for people to find joy in their accomplishments, because that is their inheritance, since who can see what will exist after them?
Jubilee Bible 2000	.
H. C. Leupold	.
Lexham English Bible	So I concluded that there is nothing better for a person than to enjoy <i>the fruit of</i> his labor, for this is his lot in life. For no one knows what will happen in the future.
NIV, ©2011	.
Peter Pett's translation	.
Unfolding Bible Literal Text	.
Unlocked Literal Bible	So again I realized that there is nothing better for anyone than to take pleasure in his work, for that is his assignment. Who can bring him back to see what happens after him?
Urim-Thummim Version	.
Wikipedia Bible Project	And I saw that there is nothing better than that a man will be happy in what he does, because this is his allotment. Because who will bring us to see of what will come after him?

**Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):**

Christian Community (1988)	I understood that the best man can do is to be happy in what he does, for that is his lot. For who will take him to see the beyond?
The Heritage Bible	.

New American Bible (2002)	.
New American Bible (2011)	<sup>h</sup> And I saw that there is nothing better for mortals than to rejoice in their work; for this is their lot. Who will let them see what is to come after them? <sup>i</sup>
	h. [3:22] Eccl 3:12–13; 5:17–18.
	i. [3:22] Eccl 8:7; 10:14.
New English Bible—1970	So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should enjoy his work, since that is his lot. for who can bring him through to see what will happen next?
New Jerusalem Bible	I see there is no contentment for a human being except happiness in achievement; such is the lot of a human beings. No one can tell us what will happen after we are gone.
New RSV	.
Revised English Bible—1989	So I saw that there is nothing better than that all should enjoy their work, since that is their lot. For who will put them in a position to see what will happen afterwards?

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	So I concluded that there is nothing better for a person to do than take joy in his activities, that that is his allotted portion; for who can enable him to see what will happen after him?
exeGesés companion Bible	I see there is naught better, than for a human to cheer in his own works; for that is his allotment; for who brings him to see what becomes after him?
Hebraic Roots Bible	.
The Israel Bible	I saw that there is nothing better for man than to enjoy his possessions, since that is his portion. For who can enable him to see what will happen afterward?
Israeli Authorized Version	.
Kaplan Translation	.
<i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	So I saw that man could do no better but to rejoice in his own works, for that is his portion. For who would bring him to see what shall be after him?
Tree of Life Version	So I perceived that nothing is better than for man to enjoy his works, because that is his portion. For who can bring him back to see what will be in the future?

### Weird English, Old English, Anachronistic English Translations:

Alpha & Omega Bible	AND I SAW THAT THERE WAS NO GOOD, BUT THAT WHEREIN A MAN SHALL REJOICE IN HIS WORKS, FOR IT IS HIS PORTION, FOR WHO SHALL BRING HIM TO SEE ANY THING OF THAT WHICH SHALL BE AFTER HIM?
Awful Scroll Bible	I have perceived that it is to be beneficial to mankind, that he remains to rejoice in his works; it is to be his portion - for persists there he made to bring him to consider that after him?
Charles Thompson OT	.
Concordant Literal Version	So I saw that there is nothing better for a man than that he rejoices in his works Since that is his portion; For who can bring him to see what shall come after him?
Darby Translation	.
exeGesés companion Bible	.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better than that the adam find simchah in his ma'asim; for that is his chelek; for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?
Rotherham's <i>Emphasized B.</i>	So I saw, that there was nothing better than that a man should be glad in his works, for, that, is his portion,—for who can bring him in, to look upon that which shall be after him?
Third Millennium Bible	.



**Expanded/Embellished Bibles:**

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	So I have seen that there is nothing better than that a man should be happy in his own works and activities, for that is his portion (share). For who will bring him [back] to see what will happen after he is gone?
The Expanded Bible	So I saw that ·the best thing people can do is [ <sup>L</sup> there is nothing better for people than] to ·enjoy [rejoice in] their work, because that is ·all they have [ <sup>L</sup> their reward; 2:24–26; 3:12–14; 5:18–20; 8:15; 9:7–10; <sup>C</sup> the little pleasures are distractions from the meaningless world]. ·No one can help another person [ <sup>L</sup> Who can bring them to...?] see what will happen in the future.
Kretzmann's Commentary	Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, take pleasure and delight in the labor which falls to his lot in life; for that is his portion, so much is allotted to him in this life; for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him? The lesson for the believers is this, that they do not chase after shadows, thereby losing the reality, but that they enjoy the blessings of God with a carefree heart, leaving the future in the hands of their heavenly Father.
Syndein/Thieme	{Humanism} So I saw there was nothing better for a man than to enjoy his works because that is his lot. For who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?
The Voice	So I realized there is nothing better for us than to find joy in the work we do, for work is its own reward. For who will bring us back to see what will be after we are gone?

**Bible Translations with Many Footnotes:**

College Press Bible Study The Complete Tanach	. And I saw that there is nothing better than that man rejoice in his deeds, for that is his portion, for who will bring him to see what will be after him?
	<p><b>And I saw:</b> in all of these.</p> <p><b>that there is nothing better:</b> for man.</p> <p><b>than that man rejoice in his deeds:</b> in the toil of his hands he should rejoice and eat, but not to widen his desire like the grave, to covet riches, to accumulate that which is not his.</p> <p><b>for that is his portion:</b> The toil of his hands-that is his portion given him from Heaven, and with it he will rejoice.</p> <p><b>for who will bring him to see:</b> after he dies, what his sons will have; if they too will prosper with the riches that he gathered and left over for them or whether they will not prosper.</p>
The Geneva Bible Kaplan Translation NET Bible®	. . So I perceived there is nothing better than for people <sup>38</sup> to enjoy their work, <sup>39</sup> because that is their <sup>40</sup> reward; for who can show them what the future holds? <sup>41</sup>
	<p><sup>38</sup>tn Heb "man."</p> <p><sup>39</sup>tn Heb "his works."</p> <p><sup>40</sup>tn Heb "his."</p> <p><sup>41</sup>tn Heb "what will be after him" (cf. KJV, NASB, NIV) or "afterward" (cf. NJPS).</p>
New American Bible (2011)	.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

American Revised V. (2005)	Wherefore I saw that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him <i>back</i> to see what shall be after him?
Charles Thompson OT	So I saw that there is nothing good in the works of man, but that by which he can be made glad; for that is his portion, for who will bring him to see what will be after him?
C. Thompson (updated) OT	.
Context Group Version	.
English Standard Version	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?
Green's Literal Translation	.
Modern English Version	So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his labor, for that is his reward. For who will bring him to see what will happen after his life?
Modern Literal Version	.
Modern KJV	.
New American Standard B.	I have seen that nothing is better than that man should be happy in his activities, for that is his lot. For who will bring him to see what will occur after him?
New European Version	.
New King James Version	So I perceived that nothing is better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his heritage [ <i>portion</i> or <i>lot</i> ]. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?
Niobi Study Bible	.
Owen's Translation	.
Restored Holy Bible 6.0	.
Updated Bible Version 2.17	.
A Voice in the Wilderness	.
Webster's Bible Translation	.
World English Bible	.
Young's Literal Translation	.
Young's Updated LT	And I have seen that there is nothing better than that man rejoice in his works, for it is his portion; for who does bring him in to look on that which is after him?

### The gist of this passage:

Ecclesiastes 3:22a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
râ'âh (רָאָה) [pronounced <i>raw-AWH</i> ]	<i>to see, to look, to look at, to view, to gaze; to behold; to observe; to perceive, to understand, to learn, to know</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #7200 BDB #906
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
'êyn (אֵין) [pronounced <i>ân</i> ]	<i>nothing, not, [is] not; not present, not ready; expresses non-existence, absence or non-possession; [there is] no [none, not one, no one, not]</i>	particle of negation; substantive of negation	Strong's #369 BDB #34

Ecclesiastes 3:22a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
ṭôwb (טוֹב) [pronounced toh <sup>b</sup> v]	<i>pleasant, pleasing, agreeable, good, better; approved</i>	masculine singular adjective which can act like a substantive	Strong's #2896 BDB #373
min (מִן) [pronounced mihn]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of, from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced ash-ER]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
sâmach (שָׂמַח) [pronounced saw-MAHKH]	<i>to rejoice, to be glad, to be joyful, to be merry</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #8055 BDB #970
ʾādām (אָדָם) [pronounced aw-DAWM]	<i>a man, a human being, mankind; transliterated Adam</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #120 & #121 BDB #9
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
ma'ăšîym (מַעֲשֵׂי) [pronounced mah-ġuh-SEEM]	<i>deeds, works, production, that which is produced or done [crops, property, goods]; profession, occupation</i>	masculine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4639 BDB #795

**Translation:** I have observed that [there is] nothing better than [for] a man to rejoice in his works,...

From what Solomon has observed in this life, man has his works to rejoice about. He can look at his production and take pride and pleasure in that.

The way that I read this is, the rejoicing should be in the work which one does, not in the remuneration received for the work. Solomon understands that he has been in a place where he could spend money like crazy to purchase whatever his eyes desired (Ecclesiastes 2:10); but it is clear that most men do not have this. Most men barely cover their necessities with their work (Ecclesiastes 3:9–10).

Ecclesiastes 2:10 *And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil.*

Ecclesiastes 3:9–10 *What gain has the worker from his toil? I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with.* (ESV)

**Application:** I fully understand this. I buy houses and recondition them. I do some of the work, I hire out some of the work, but the vision of what they were and what they are is mine. I take many before and after photographs and I am quite proud of the work that I have done. I take great pleasure and satisfaction from this.

## Ecclesiastes 3:22a Nothing better for a man than to rejoice in his work (comments)

David Guzik: *It is true that Solomon perceived this, but he did so on the faulty assumptions of under the sun thinking.*

Then Guzik writes: *Nothing is better than that a man should rejoice in his own works . . . who can bring him to see what will happen after him? After briefly flirting with a confidence in eternity (Ecclesiastes 3:9-15), the Preacher has returned to his under the sun thinking. Under that premise, nothing is better than for a man to accomplish what he can in this world and try — the best he can — to not trouble himself about what will happen after him.*<sup>375</sup>

Guzik's explanation is, Solomon, for awhile, had a pretty good handle on his philosophical understanding of the world, as long as he considered the eternity of God. However, he has gone back to his *under the sun* way of thinking.

The Pulpit Commentary: *After all, the writer arrives at the conclusion intimated in Ecclesiastes 3:12; only here the result is gathered from the acknowledgment of man's impotence (Ecclesiastes 3:16-18), as there from the experience of life. Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, that a man should rejoice in his work.*

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *As man is not master of his own lot, cannot order events as he would like, is powerless to control the forces of nature and the providential arrangements of the world, his duty and his happiness consist in enjoying the present, in making the best of life, and availing himself of the bounties which the mercy of God places before him. Thus he will free himself from anxieties and cares, perform present labors, attend to present duties, content himself with the daily round, and not vex his heart with solicitude for the future. There is no Epicureanism here, no recommendation of sensual enjoyment; the author simply advises men to make a thankful use of the blessings which God provides for them.*<sup>376</sup>

Chuck Smith: *Therefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion [in life] ( Ecclesiastes 3:22a-b )...So just live for now, rejoice in your works now. This is the purely human view of life. And God has recorded it in His Word, inspired by the Holy Spirit that you might see the view of life from the human standpoint, that it is empty and frustrating, because you don't see man any more than just an animal. And that's why the world around you is so filled with frustration and emptiness today, because it views man as an animal.*<sup>377</sup>

**Application:** Does this not mimic the philosopher, who, from time to time, comes very close to understanding the truth; but then, this little thing here or there causes him to veer off into complete wrong-headed, human viewpoint.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Guzik's conclusion about Solomon: *In his under the sun thinking, Solomon has an answer for the question, "What will happen after him?" The answer is, nothing — because death ends it all, and therefore ultimately his life has no more significance or meaning than the life of an animal.*<sup>378</sup>

<sup>375</sup> David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

<sup>376</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:22 (slightly edited).

<sup>377</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

<sup>378</sup> David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Ecclesiastes 3:1–22.

## Ecclesiastes 3:22b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
kîy (כי) [pronounced kee]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
hûw' (אוּה) [pronounced hoo]	<i>he, it; him, himself as a demonstrative pronoun: that, this (one); same</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> , is implied	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
chêleq (חֶלֶק) [pronounced KHAY-lek]	<i>portion, tract, territory, share, allotment; smoothness</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #2506 (and #2511) BDB #324

**Translation:** ...for that [is] his portion [on earth].

For the man under the sun, for the man

## Ecclesiastes 3:22c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
kîy (כי) [pronounced kee]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
mîy (מי) [pronounced mee]	<i>who, whom; whose, whomever; what; occasionally rendered how, in what way</i>	pronominal interrogative; the verb <i>to be</i> may be implied	Strong's #4310 BDB #566
bôw' (אוּב) [pronounced boh]	<i>to take in, to bring [near, against, upon], to come in with, to carry, to cause to come [in], to gather, to bring to pass</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect with there 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #935 BDB #97
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
râ'âh (רָאָה) [pronounced raw-AWH]	<i>to see, to look, to look at, to view, to gaze; to behold; to observe; to perceive, to understand, to learn, to know</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #7200 BDB #906
b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
mâh (מַה) [pronounced maw]	<i>what, how, why</i>	interrogative; exclamatory particle (with the definite article)	Strong's #4100 BDB #552

Bammâh (בַּמַּה) [pronounced bahm-MAW] means *wherein, wherewith, by what means*. This combination of particles is often used for indirect questions and can be rendered *in what?, in what thing?, on what account?, why?, how?, in what way?, by what means?*



Ecclesiastes 3:22c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB & Strong #'s
she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced sheh] or shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced shehl]	who, which, that	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]	to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
'achărêy (אַחֲרָי) [pronounced ah-kuh-RAY]	behind, after; following; after that, afterwards; hinder parts	preposition; plural form with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #310 BDB #29

**Translation:** For who brings him to see what [or] who will come [lit., will be] after him?

The idea here is, no one knows the future, no one knows what is going to happen afterwards. No one knows who will come along later; who will remove this or that; who will change this thing or that thing which man has done. We only know what we see in our lifetimes, and what we do in this life is what we should take pleasure and pride in.

Quite obviously, this point of view completely discounts the spiritual aspect of life and it sets aside divine revelation.

Nevertheless, which of us has received any sort of proof, apart from the Word of God, of a life after death?

### Ecclesiastes 3:22c Who will bring a man back to see what happens after him?

The Pulpit Commentary: *For who shall bring him to see what shall be after him? The Revised Version...—Who shall bring him back to see?—...[This] is, indeed, commonly interpreted to signify that man knows and can know nothing that happens to him after death—whether he will exist or not, whether he will have cognizance of what passes on earth, or be insensible to all that befalls here.*

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *But Koheleth has completed that thought already; his argument now turns to the future in this life. Use the present, for you cannot be sure of the future;—this is his exhortation. So he says (Ecclesiastes 6:12), "Who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?" where the expression, "under the sun," shows that earthly life is meant, not existence after death. Ignorance of the future is a very common topic throughout the book, but it is the terrestrial prospect that is in view. There would be little force in urging the impotence of men's efforts towards their own happiness by the consideration of their ignorance of what may happen when they are no more; but one may reasonably exhort men to cease to torment themselves with hopes and fears, with labors that may be useless and preparations that may never be needed, by the reflection that they cannot foresee the future, and that, for all they know, the pains which they take may be utterly wasted (cf. Ecclesiastes 7:14; Ecclesiastes 9:3).*

## Ecclesiastes 3:22c Who will bring a man back to see what happens after him?

The Pulpit Commentary concludes: *Thus in this section there is neither skepticism nor Epicureanism. In brief, the sentiment is this—There are injustices and anomalies in the life of men and in the course of this world's events which man cannot control or alter; these may be righted and compensated hereafter. Meantime, man's happiness is to make the best of the present, and cheerfully to enjoy what Providence offers, without anxious care for the future.*<sup>379</sup>

Chuck Smith: *for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him? ( Ecclesiastes 3:22c ) Who knows what's going to happen after him?*<sup>380</sup>

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 3:22 I have observed that [there is] nothing better than [for] a man to rejoice in his works, for that [is] his portion [on earth]. For who brings him to see what [or] who will come [lit., will be] after him?

It is as if Solomon is saying, "Look at what is in front of you and all around you—that much I can guarantee you in life. *What you see is what you get.* I cannot give you any guarantees for what comes after one's life has ended."

Ecclesiastes 3:22 I have observed in my life that there is nothing better for a man than to rejoice in his works, for that is his allotted portion in this life. Who can bring him into the future to see who or what will come after him?

## Conclusions Drawn in Ecclesiastes 3:22 (by D. Thomas)

- I. It is possible to limit our view of this earthly life until it loses its interest for us.
  1. Man's works, to the observant and reflecting mind, are perishable and poor.
  2. Man's joys are often both superficial and transitory.
  3. The future of human existence and progress upon earth is utterly uncertain, and, if it could be foreseen, would probably occasion bitter disappointment.
- II. It is unwise and unsatisfactory so to limit our view of life. There is true wisdom in the wise man's declaration, "There is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his works; for that is his portion." The epicurean is wrong who makes pleasure his one aim. The cynic is wrong who despises pleasure as something beneath the dignity of his nature. Neither work nor enjoyment is the whole of life; for life is not to be understood save in relation to spiritual and disciplinary purposes. Man has for a season a bodily nature; let him use that nature with discretion, and it may prove organic to his moral welfare. Man is for a season stationed upon earth; let him fulfill earth's duties, and taste earth's delights. Earthly experience may be a stage towards heavenly service and bliss.

*The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by D. Thomas; Ecclesiastes 3:22.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

<sup>379</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:22.

<sup>380</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1-22.

### Summarizing Ecclesiastes 3:17–22 (by Ray Stedman)

The Searcher...[considers the unrighteousness in the courts] and says there are three things he wants to show us about it. First,

**I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for he has appointed a time for every matter, and for every work.** (Ecclesiastes 3:17 RSV)

Though there is injustice, that is not the end of the story. God may correct it even within time, and if he does not do so "in time," still he has appointed a time when it all will be brought out. The Scriptures speak of a time appointed by God when all the hidden motives of the heart will be examined, when "that which is spoken in secret shall be shouted from the housetops" (Matt. 10:27, Luke 12:3), and justice will ultimately prevail. That is what this Searcher says. Injustice is limited in its scope.

**Second, I said in my heart with regard to the sons of men that God is testing them to show them that they are but beasts.** (Ecclesiastes 3:18 RSV)

In other words, there is a beastly quality about all of us which injustice will bring out. What is it about a man that makes him prey upon even his friends or neighbors?

On the TV program, The People's Court, the other night, one case concerned a young woman who had gotten angry at her friend and roommate, whom she had known for years. and in her anger had poured sugar into the woman's car's gas tank, absolutely destroying the engine. The judge was appalled at the vindictive spirit of this attractive looking young woman who had acted in such a vicious way. There is a beastliness about us all. Put in a situation where we are suffering injury we react with viciousness. God allows certain circumstances to show us that we all have that quality about us.

We are like animals in other ways, too, the Searcher says. Verse 19:

**For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of 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; [not Hell; he is talking about the grave] all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again.** (Ecclesiastes 3:19-20 RSV)

Man is frail, his existence temporary. Like the animals, we do not have very long to live on this earth. Injustice sharpens the realization that we do not have long to live rightly, honestly and truly before God. We die like an animal and our bodies dissolve like a beast's. From the human standpoint one cannot detect any difference. That is what the Searcher says in Verse 21:

**Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down to the earth?** (Ecclesiastes 3:21 RSV)

That really should not be a question, as it is stated here in this text. It should read this way: "Who knows that the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down to the earth."

That is something which only revelation tells us. Experience does not offer any help at all here. From a human standpoint, a dead man and a dead dog look as if the same thing happened to both of them. But from the divine point of view that is not the case. Though we die like beasts, the spirit of man goes upward while the spirit of the beast goes downward. Later on the Searcher states very positively that at death the spirit of man returns to God who gave it, but the spirit of the beast ends in nothingness. Injustice stems from our beastliness, and God's plan for life will uncover it.

Finally, he concludes in Verse 22:

**So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should enjoy his work, for that is his lot; [But remember, enjoyment comes only from God. Then he adds the question] who can bring him to see what will be after him?** (Ecclesiastes 3:22 RSV)

### Summarizing Ecclesiastes 3:17–22 (by Ray Stedman)

He does not answer that question here; he leaves it hanging. The answer, of course, is that only God can help us to understand what lies beyond life.

The wonderful thing to extract from this passage is the great truth that God wants us to learn how to handle life in such a way that we can rejoice in any and every circumstance, as the Scriptures exhorts us. Recognize that all comes from a wise Father. Though circumstances bring us pain as well as pleasure, it is his choice for us. Rejoice that in the midst of the pain there is the possibility of pleasure.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

[Beginning of Document](#)

[Verse Navigation](#)

[Introduction and Text](#)

[First Verse](#)

[Chapter Summary](#)

[Addendum](#)

[www.kukis.org](http://www.kukis.org)

[Exegetical Studies in Ecclesiastes](#)

### A Set of Summary Doctrines and Commentary

When I study a chapter of the Bible, one of the questions which I nearly always have is, *why is this chapter in the Word of God?*

#### Why Ecclesiastes 3 is in the Word of God

- 1.
- 2.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

When studying a chapter in the Bible, there are a number of topics which that study leads to.

#### What We Learn from Ecclesiastes 3

- 1.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Many chapters of the Bible look forward to Jesus Christ in some way or another. A person or situation might foreshadow the Lord or His work on the cross (or His reign over Israel in the Millennium). The chapter may contain a prophecy about the Lord or it may, in some way, lead us toward the Lord (for instance, by means of genealogy).

## Jesus Christ in Ecclesiastes 3

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

I thought that this set of points was worth repeating.

### All things beautiful; or, God, man, and the world (from The Pulpit Commentary)

- I. THE BEAUTIFUL RELATION OF THE WORLD TO GOD. Expressed by four words.
  1. **Dependence:** no such thing as independence, self-subsistence, self-origination, self-regulation, in mundane affairs. The universe, out to its circumference and in to its center, from its mightiest Structure down to its smallest detail, is the handiwork of God. Whatever philosophers may say or think upon the subject, it is simple absurdity to teach that the universe made itself, or that the incidents composing the sum of human life and experience have come to pass of themselves. It will be time enough to believe things are their own makers when effects can be discovered that have no causes. Persons of advanced (?) intelligence and culture may regard the Scriptures as behind the age in respect of philosophic insight and scientific attainment; it is to their credit that their writers never talk such unphilosophic and unscientific nonsense as that mundane things are their own creators. Their common sense—if not permissible to say their inspiration—appears to have been strong and clear enough to save them from being befooled by such vagaries as have led astray many modern savants, and to have taught them that the First Cause of all things is God (Gen. 1:1; Exodus 20:11; Neh. 9:6; Job 38:4; Psalm 19:1; Isa. 40:28; Acts 14:15; Acts 17:24; Rom. 11:36; Eph. 3:9; Heb. 3:4; Rev. 4:11).
  2. **Variety** no monotony in mundane affairs. Obvious as regards both the universe as a whole and its individual parts. The supreme Artificer of the former had no idea of fashioning all things after one model, however excellent, but sought to introduce variety into the works of his hands; and just this is the principle upon which he has proceeded in arranging the program of man's experiences upon the earth. To this diversity in man's experience the twenty-eight instances of events and purposes given by the Preacher (Ecclesiastes 3:2-8) allude; and this same diversity is a mark at once of wisdom and of kindness on the part of the Supreme. As the material globe would be monotonous were it all mountain and no valley, so would human life be uninteresting were it an unchanging round of the same few incidents. But it is not. If there are funerals and deaths, there are as well marriages and births; if nights of weeping, days of laughing; if times of war, periods of peace.
  3. **Order:** no chance or accident in mundane affairs. To short-sighted and feeble man, human life is full of accidents or chances; but not so when viewed from the standpoint of God, Not only does no event happen without his permission (Matt. 10:29; Luke 12:6), but each event occurs at the time and falls into the place appointed for it by infinite wisdom. Nor is this true merely of such events as are wholly and exclusively in his power, like births and deaths (Ecclesiastes 3:2), but of such also as to some extent at least are within man's control, as e.g. the planting of a field and the plucking up of that which is planted (Ecclesiastes 3:2), killing and healing, breaking down and building up (Ecclesiastes 3:3), weeping and laughing (Ecclesiastes 3:4), etc. Men may flatter themselves that of these latter actions they are the sole originators, have both the choosing of their times and the fixing of their forms; but according to the Preacher, God's supremacy is as little to be disputed in them as in the matter of man's coming into or going out from the world. We express this thought by citing the well-known proverb, "Man proposes, but God disposes," or the familiar words of Shakespeare—  

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
 Rough-hew them how we will."  
 ('Hamlet,' act 5. so. 2.)
  4. **Beauty:** no defect or deformity in mundane affairs. This cannot signify that in such events and



## All things beautiful; or, God, man, and the world (from The Pulpit Commentary)

actions as "killing," "hating," "warring," there is never anything wrong; that God regards them only as good in the making, and generally that sin is a necessary stage in the development of human nature. The Preacher is not pronouncing judgment upon the moral qualities of the actions he enumerates, but merely calling attention to their fitness for the times and seasons to which they have been assigned by God. Going back in thought to the "Very good!" of the Creator when he rested from his labors at the close of the sixth day (Gen. 1:31), the Preacher cannot think of saying less of the work God is still carrying on in evolving the plan and program of his purpose. "God hath made everything beautiful in its time" (cf. Ecclesiastes 3:11): beautiful in itself, so far as it is a work of his; but beautiful not less in its time, even when the work, as not being entirely his, is not beautiful in itself, or in its inward essence. Cf. Shakespeare's—

"How many things by season seasoned are  
To their right praise and true perfection!"  
(*'Merchant of Venice,'* act 5. sc. 1.)

Beautiful in themselves and their times are the seasons of the year, the ages of man, and the changing experiences through which he passes; beautiful, at least in their times, are numerous human actions which God cannot be regarded as approving, but which nevertheless he permits to occur because he sees the hour has struck for their occurring. As it were, the glowing wheels of Divine providence never fail to keep time with the great clock of eternity.

### II. THE BEAUTIFUL RELATION OF MAN TO THE WORLD. Also expressed in four words.

1. **Weariness:** no perfect rest in the midst of mundane affairs. Not only is man tossed about continually by the multitudinous vicissitudes of which he is the subject, but he derives almost no satisfaction from the thought that in all these changes there is a beautiful because divinely appointed harmony, and a beneficent because Heaven-ordained purpose. The order pervading the universe is something outside of and beyond him. The fixing of the right times is a work in which he cannot, even in a small degree, co-operate. As a wise man, he may wish to have every action in which he bears a part performed at the set time marked out for it on the clock of eternity; but the very attempt to find out for each action the right time only aggravates the fatigue of his labor, and increases the sense of weariness under which he groans. "What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboreth?" Not, certainly, "no profit," but not enough to give him rest or even free him from weariness. And this, when viewed from a moral and religious standpoint, is beautiful inasmuch as it prevents (or ought to prevent) man from seeking happiness in mundane affairs.
2. **Ignorance:** no perfect knowledge of mundane affairs. "No man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end." One more proof of the vanity of human life—that no man, however wise and far-seeing, patient and laborious, can discover the plan of God either in the universe as a whole or in his own life; and what renders this a special sorrow is the fact that God hath set "the world [or, 'eternity'] in his heart." If the "world" be accepted as the true rendering (Jerome, Luther, Ewald), then probably the meaning is that, though each individual carries about within his bosom in his own personality an image of the world—is, in fact, a microcosmos in which the macrocosmos or great world is mirrored—nevertheless the problem of the universe eludes his grasp. If, however, the translation "eternity" be adopted (Delitzsch, Wright, Plumptre), then the import of the clause will be that God hath planted in the heart of man "a longing after immortality," given him an idea of the infinite and eternal which lies beyond the veil of outward things, and inspired him with a desire to know that which is above and beyond him, yet he cannot find out the secret of the universe in the sense of discovering its plan. With an infinite behind and before him, he can grasp neither the beginning of the work of God in its purpose or plan, nor the end of it in its issues and results, whether to the individual or to the whole. What his eye looks upon is the middle portion passing before him here and now—in comparison with the whole but an infinitesimal speck—and so he remains with reference to the whole like a person walking in the dark.
3. **Submission:** no ground for complaining as to mundane affairs. Rather in the view presented is much to comfort man had the ordering of the universe, or even of his own lot, been left to man, man himself would have been the first to regret it. As Laplace is credited with having said that, if only the Almighty had called him into counsel at the making of the universe, he could have given the

## All things beautiful; or, God, man, and the world (from The Pulpit Commentary)

Almighty some valuable hints, so are there equally foolish persons who believe they could have drafted for themselves a better life-program than has been done for them by the supreme Disposer of events. A wise man, however, will always feel grateful that the Almighty has retained the ordering of events in his own hand, and will meekly submit to the same, believing that God's times are the best times, and that his ways are ever "mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies" (Psalm 25:10).

4. **Fear:** no justification for impiety or irreverence in mundane affairs. A proper study of the constitution and course of nature, a due recognition of the order pervading all its parts, with a just consideration both of the perfection and permanence (Ecclesiastes 3:14) of the Divine working, ought to inspire men with "fear"—of such sort as both to repress within them irreligion and impiety, and to excite within them humility and awe.

*The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, homiletics; Ecclesiastes 3:11–14. Throughout this set of points, the book Esther was listed when Ecclesiastes was meant. I tried to catch this and change it when appropriate.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

## The Mystery and the Meaning of Life (by D. Thomas)

- I. IN LIFE THERE IS MYSTERY TO SOLVE. The works and the ways of God are too great for our feeble, finite nature to comprehend. We may learn much, and yet may leave much unlearned and probably unlearnable, at all events in the conditions of this present state of being.
  1. There are speculative difficulties regarding the order and constitution of things, which the thoughtful man cannot avoid inquiring into, which yet often baffle and sometimes distress him. "Man cannot find out the work that God hath done from the beginning even to the end."
  2. There are practical difficulties which every man has to encounter in the conduct of life, fraught as it is with disappointment and sorrow. "What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboreth?"
- II. IN LIFE THERE IS BEAUTY TO ADMIRE. The mind that is not absorbed in providing for material wants can scarcely fail to be open to the adaptations and the manifold charms of nature. The language of creation is as harmonious music, which is soothing or inspiring to the ear of the soul. What a revelation is here of the very nature and benevolent purposes of the Almighty Maker! "He hath made everything beautiful in its time." And beauty needs the aesthetic faculty in order to its appreciation and enjoyment. The development of this faculty in advanced states of civilization is familiar to every student of human nature. Standards of beauty vary; but the true standard is that which is offered by the works of God, who "hath made everything beautiful in its time." There is a beauty special to every season of the year, to every hour of the day, to every state of the atmosphere; there is a beauty in every several kind of landscape, a beauty of the sea, a beauty of the heavens; there is a beauty of childhood, another beauty of youth, of healthful manhood and radiant womanhood, and even a certain beauty peculiar to age. The pious observer of the works of God, who rids himself of conventional and traditional prejudices, will not fail to recognize the justice of this remarkable assertion of the Hebrew sage.
- III. IN LIFE THERE IS WORK TO DO. Labor and travail are very frequently mentioned in this book, whose author was evidently deeply impressed by the corresponding facts—first, that God is the almighty Worker in the universe; and, secondly, that man is made by the Creator like unto himself, in that he is called upon by his nature and his circumstances to effort and to toil. Forms of labor vary, and the progress of applied science in our own time seems to relieve the toiler of some of the severer, more exhausting kinds of bodily effort. But it must ever remain true that the human frame was not intended for indolence; that work is a condition of welfare, a means of moral discipline and development. It is a factor that cannot be left out of human life; the Christian is bound, like his Master, to finish the work which the Father has given him to do.

## The Mystery and the Meaning of Life (by D. Thomas)

- IV. IN LIFE THERE IS GOOD TO PARTICIPATE, There is no asceticism in the teaching of this Book of Ecclesiastes. The writer was one who had no doubt that man was constituted to enjoy. He speaks of eating and drinking as not merely necessary in order to maintain life, but as affording gratification. He dwells appreciatingly upon the happiness of married life. He even commends mirth and festivity. In all these he shows himself superior to the pettiness which carps at the pleasures connected with this earthly existence, and which tries to pass for sanctity. Of course, there are lawful and unlawful gratifications; there is a measure of indulgence which ought not to be exceeded. But if Divine intention is traceable in the constitution and condition of man, he was made to partake with gratitude of the bounties of God's providence.
- V. ALL THE PROVISIONS WHICH DIVINE WISDOM ATTACHES TO HUMAN LIFE ARE TO BE ACCEPTED WITH GRATITUDE AND USED WITH FAITHFULNESS, AND WITH A CONSTANT SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY. In receiving and enjoying every gift, the devout mind will exclaim, "It is the gift of God." In taking advantage of every opportunity, the Christian will bear in mind that wisdom and goodness arrange human life so that it shall afford repeated occasion for fidelity and diligence. In his daily work he will make it his aim to "serve the Lord Christ."

### APPLICATION.

1. There is much in the provisions and conditions of our earthly life which baffles our endeavors to understand it; and when perplexed by mystery, we are summoned to submit with all humility and patience to the limitations of our intellect, and to rest assured that God's wisdom will, in the end, be made apparent to all.
2. There is a practical life to be lived, even when speculative difficulties are insurmountable; and it is in the conscientious fulfillment of daily duty, and the moderate use of ordinary enjoyments, that as Christians we may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

*The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Homilies by D. Thomas; Ecclesiastes 3:9–13.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

## Addendum

This is a fascinating read, given our study of Ecclesiastes 3. This book is about Stoicism.

Marcus Aurelius was a Roman emperor from 161 to 180 and a Stoic philosopher. He was the last of the rulers known as the Five Good Emperors, and the last emperor of the Pax Romana, an age of relative peace and stability for the Roman Empire.<sup>381</sup>

## Marcus Aurelius Meditations Book IV (translation by Gregory Hays)

1. Our inward power, when it obeys nature, reacts to events by accommodating itself to what it faces—to what is possible. It needs no specific material. It pursues its own aims as circumstances allow; it turns obstacles into fuel. As a fire overwhelms what would have quenched a lamp. What's thrown on top of the conflagration is absorbed, consumed by it—and makes it burn still higher.
2. No random actions, none not based on underlying principles.
3. People try to get away from it all—to the country, to the beach, to the mountains. You always wish that you could too. Which is idiotic: you can get away from it anytime you like. By going within. Nowhere you can go is more peaceful—more free of interruptions—than your own soul. Especially if you have other things to rely on. An instant's recollection and there it is: complete tranquillity. And by tranquillity I mean

<sup>381</sup> From [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcus\\_Aurelius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcus_Aurelius) accessed March 12, 2020.

## Marcus Aurelius Meditations Book IV (translation by Gregory Hays)

a kind of harmony.

So keep getting away from it all—like that. Renew yourself. But keep it brief and basic. A quick visit should be enough to ward off all < . . . > and send you back ready to face what awaits you.

What's there to complain about? People's misbehavior?

But take into consideration:

- that rational beings exist for one another;
- that doing what's right sometimes requires patience;
- that no one does the wrong thing deliberately;
- and the number of people who have feuded and envied and hated and fought and died and been buried.

. . . and keep your mouth shut.

Or are you complaining about the things the world assigns you? But consider the two options: Providence or atoms. And all the arguments for seeing the world as a city. Or is it your body? Keep in mind that when the mind detaches itself and realizes its own nature, it no longer has anything to do with ordinary life—the rough and the smooth, either one. And remember all you've been taught—and accepted—about pain and pleasure. Or is it your reputation that's bothering you? But look at how soon we're all forgotten. The abyss of endless time that swallows it all. The emptiness of all those applauding hands. The people who praise us—how capricious they are, how arbitrary. And the tiny region in which it all takes place. The whole earth a point in space—and most of it uninhabited. How many people there will be to admire you, and who they are.

So keep this refuge in mind: the back roads of your self. Above all, no strain and no stress. Be straightforward. Look at things like a man, like a human being, like a citizen, like a mortal. And among the things you turn to, these two:

- i. That things have no hold on the soul. They stand there unmoving, outside it. Disturbance comes only from within—from our own perceptions.
- ii. That everything you see will soon alter and cease to exist. Think of how many changes you've already seen. "The world is nothing but change. Our life is only perception."

4. If thought is something we share, then so is reason—what makes us reasoning beings.

If so, then the reason that tells us what to do and what not to do is also shared.

And if so, we share a common law.

And thus, are fellow citizens.

And fellow citizens of something.

And in that case, our state must be the world. What other entity could all of humanity belong to? And from it—from this state that we share—come thought and reason and law. Where else could they come from? The earth that composes me derives from earth, the water from some other element, the air from its own source, the heat and fire from theirs—since nothing comes from nothing, or returns to it. So thought must derive from somewhere else as well.

5. Death: something like birth, a natural mystery, elements that split and recombine. Not an embarrassing thing. Not an offense to reason, or our nature.

6. That sort of person is bound to do that. You might as well resent a fig tree for secreting juice. (Anyway, before very long you'll both be dead—dead and soon forgotten.)

7. Choose not to be harmed—and you won't feel harmed. Don't feel harmed—and you haven't been.

8. It can ruin your life only if it ruins your character. Otherwise it cannot harm you—inside or out.

9. It was for the best. So Nature had no choice but to do it.

10. That every event is the right one. Look closely and you'll see.

Not just the right one overall, but right. As if someone had weighed it out with scales.

Keep looking closely like that, and embody it in your actions: goodness—what defines a good person. Keep to it in everything you do.

11. Not what your enemy sees and hopes that you will, but what's really there.

12. Two kinds of readiness are constantly needed: (i) to do only what the logos of authority and law directs, with the good of human beings in mind; (ii) to reconsider your position, when someone can set you straight or convert you to his. But your conversion should always rest on a conviction that it's right, or benefits others—nothing else. Not because it's more appealing or more popular.

## Marcus Aurelius Meditations Book IV (translation by Gregory Hays)

13. You have a mind?

—Yes.

Well, why not use it? Isn't that all you want—for it to do its job?

14. You have functioned as a part of something; you will vanish into what produced you.

Or be restored, rather.

To the logos from which all things spring.

By being changed.

15. Many lumps of incense on the same altar. One crumbles now, one later, but it makes no difference.

16. Now they see you as a beast, a monkey. But in a week they'll think you're a god—if you rediscover your beliefs and honor the logos.

17. Not to live as if you had endless years ahead of you. Death overshadows you. While you're alive and able—be good.

18. The tranquillity that comes when you stop caring what they say. Or think, or do. Only what you do. (Is this fair? Is this the right thing to do?) < . . . > not to be distracted by their darkness. To run straight for the finish line, unswerving.

19. People who are excited by posthumous fame forget that the people who remember them will soon die too. And those after them in turn. Until their memory, passed from one to another like a candle flame, gutters and goes out. But suppose that those who remembered you were immortal and your memory undying. What good would it do you? And I don't just mean when you're dead, but in your own lifetime. What use is praise, except to make your lifestyle a little more comfortable?

“You're out of step—neglecting the gifts of nature to hand on someone's words in the future.”

20. Beautiful things of any kind are beautiful in themselves and sufficient to themselves. Praise is extraneous. The object of praise remains what it was—no better and no worse. This applies, I think, even to “beautiful” things in ordinary life—physical objects, artworks.

Does anything genuinely beautiful need supplementing? No more than justice does—or truth, or kindness, or humility. Are any of those improved by being praised? Or damaged by contempt? Is an emerald suddenly flawed if no one admires it? Or gold, or ivory, or purple? Lyres? Knives? Flowers? Bushes?

21. If our souls survive, how does the air find room for them—all of them—since the beginning of time? How does the earth find room for all the bodies buried in it since the beginning of time? They linger for whatever length of time, and then, through change and decomposition, make room for others. So too with the souls that inhabit the air. They linger a little, and then are changed—diffused and kindled into fire, absorbed into the logos from which all things spring, and so make room for new arrivals.

One possible answer.

But we shouldn't think only of the mass of buried bodies. There are the ones consumed, on a daily basis, by us and by other animals. How many are swallowed up like that, entombed in the bodies of those nourished by them, and yet there is room for them all—converted into flesh and blood, transformed to air and fire. How is the truth of this determined? Through analysis: material and cause.

22. Not to be driven this way and that, but always to behave with justice and see things as they are.

23. To the world: Your harmony is mine. Whatever time you choose is the right time. Not late, not early.

To nature: What the turn of your seasons brings me falls like ripe fruit. All things are born from you, exist in you, return to you. The poet says “dear city of Cecrops . . .” Can't you bring yourself to say “of Zeus”?

24. “If you seek tranquillity, do less.” Or (more accurately) do what's essential—what the logos of a social being requires, and in the requisite way. Which brings a double satisfaction: to do less, better. Because most of what we say and do is not essential. If you can eliminate it, you'll have more time, and more tranquillity. Ask yourself at every moment, “Is this necessary?” But we need to eliminate unnecessary assumptions as well. To eliminate the unnecessary actions that follow.

25. And then you might see what the life of the good man is like—someone content with what nature assigns him, and satisfied with being just and kind himself.

26. You've seen that. Now look at this. Don't be disturbed. Uncomplicate yourself. Someone has done wrong . . . to himself. Something happens to you. Good. It was meant for you by nature, woven into the pattern from the beginning. Life is short. That's all there is to say. Get what you can from the present—thoughtfully, justly. Unrestrained moderation.



## Marcus Aurelius Meditations Book IV (translation by Gregory Hays)

27. An ordered world or a mishmash. But still an order. Can there be order within you and not in everything else? In things so different, so dispersed, so intertwined?
28. Character: dark, womanish, obstinate. Wolf, sheep, child, fool, cheat, buffoon, salesman, tyrant.
29. Alien: (n.) one who doesn't know what the world contains. Or how it operates.
- Fugitive: (n.) one who evades his obligations to others.
- Blind: (adj.) one who keeps the eyes of his mind shut tight.
- Poor: (adj.) requiring others; not having the necessities of life in one's own possession.
- Rebel: (n.) one who is rebellious, one who withdraws from the logos of Nature because he resents its workings. (It produced you; now it produces this.)
- Schismatic: (n.) one who separates his own soul from others with the logos. They should be one.
30. A philosopher without clothes and one without books. "I have nothing to eat," says he, as he stands there half-naked, "but I subsist on the logos." And with nothing to read, I subsist on it too.
31. Love the discipline you know, and let it support you. Entrust everything willingly to the gods, and then make your way through life—no one's master and no one's slave.
32. The age of Vespasian, for example. People doing the exact same things: marrying, raising children, getting sick, dying, waging war, throwing parties, doing business, farming, flattering, boasting, distrusting, plotting, hoping others will die, complaining about their own lives, falling in love, putting away money, seeking high office and power. And that life they led is nowhere to be found. Or the age of Trajan. The exact same things. And that life too—gone.
- Survey the records of other eras. And see how many others gave their all and soon died and decomposed into the elements that formed them.
- But most of all, run through the list of those you knew yourself. Those who worked in vain, who failed to do what they should have—what they should have remained fixed on and found satisfaction in.
- A key point to bear in mind: The value of attentiveness varies in proportion to its object. You're better off not giving the small things more time than they deserve.
33. Words once in common use now sound archaic. And the names of the famous dead as well: Camillus, Caeso, Voles us, Dentatus . . . Scipio and Cato . . . Augustus . . . Hadrian and Antoninus, and . . . Everything fades so quickly, turns into legend, and soon oblivion covers it. And those are the ones who shone. The rest—"unknown, unasked-for" a minute after death. What is "eternal" fame?
- Emptiness.
- Then what should we work for?
- Only this: proper understanding; unselfish action; truthful speech. A resolve to accept whatever happens as necessary and familiar, flowing like water from that same source and spring.
34. Hand yourself over to Clotho voluntarily, and let her spin you into whatever she pleases.
35. Everything transitory—the knower and the known.
36. Constant awareness that everything is born from change. The knowledge that there is nothing nature loves more than to alter what exists and make new things like it. All that exists is the seed of what will emerge from it. You think the only seeds are the ones that make plants or children? Go deeper.
37. On the verge of dying and still weighed down, still turbulent, still convinced external things can harm you, still rude to other people, still not acknowledging the truth: that wisdom is justice.
38. Look into their minds, at what the wise do and what they don't.
39. Nothing that goes on in anyone else's mind can harm you. Nor can the shifts and changes in the world around you.
- Then where is harm to be found?
- In your capacity to see it. Stop doing that and everything will be fine. Let the part of you that makes that judgment keep quiet even if the body it's attached to is stabbed or burnt, or stinking with pus, or consumed by cancer. Or to put it another way: It needs to realize that what happens to everyone—bad and good alike—is neither good nor bad. That what happens in every life—lived naturally or not—is neither natural nor unnatural.
40. The world as a living being—one nature, one soul. Keep that in mind. And how everything feeds into that single experience, moves with a single motion. And how everything helps produce everything else. Spun and woven together.
41. "A little wisp of soul carrying a corpse."—Epictetus.

## Marcus Aurelius Meditations Book IV (translation by Gregory Hays)

42. There is nothing bad in undergoing change—or good in emerging from it.

43. Time is a river, a violent current of events, glimpsed once and already carried past us, and another follows and is gone.

44. Everything that happens is as simple and familiar as the rose in spring, the fruit in summer: disease, death, blasphemy, conspiracy . . . everything that makes stupid people happy or angry.

45. What follows coheres with what went before. Not like a random catalogue whose order is imposed upon it arbitrarily, but logically connected. And just as what exists is ordered and harmonious, what comes into being betrays an order too. Not a mere sequence, but an astonishing concordance.

46. Remember Heraclitus: “When earth dies, it becomes water; water, air; air, fire; and back to the beginning.” “Those who have forgotten where the road leads.” “They are at odds with what is all around them”—the all directing logos. And “they find alien what they meet with every day.”

“Our words and actions should not be like those of sleepers” (for we act and speak in dreams as well) “or of children copying their parents”—doing and saying only what we have been told.

47. Suppose that a god announced that you were going to die tomorrow “or the day after.” Unless you were a complete coward you wouldn’t kick up a fuss about which day it was —what difference could it make? Now recognize that the difference between years from now and tomorrow is just as small.

48. Don’t let yourself forget how many doctors have died, after furrowing their brows over how many deathbeds. How many astrologers, after pompous forecasts about others’ ends. How many philosophers, after endless disquisitions on death and immortality. How many warriors, after inflicting thousands of casualties themselves. How many tyrants, after abusing the power of life and death atrociously, as if they were themselves immortal. How many whole cities have met their end: Helike, Pompeii, Herculaneum, and countless others. And all the ones you know yourself, one after another. One who laid out another for burial, and was buried himself, and then the man who buried him—all in the same short space of time.

In short, know this: Human lives are brief and trivial. Yesterday a blob of semen; tomorrow embalming fluid, ash. To pass through this brief life as nature demands. To give it up without complaint. Like an olive that ripens and falls. Praising its mother, thanking the tree it grew on.

49. To be like the rock that the waves keep crashing over. It stands unmoved and the raging of the sea falls still around it.

49a. —It’s unfortunate that this has happened. No. It’s fortunate that this has happened and I’ve remained unharmed by it—not shattered by the present or frightened of the future. It could have happened to anyone. But not everyone could have remained unharmed by it. Why treat the one as a misfortune rather than the other as fortunate? Can you really call something a misfortune that doesn’t violate human nature? Or do you think something that’s not against nature’s will can violate it? But you know what its will is. Does what’s happened keep you from acting with justice, generosity, self-control, sanity, prudence, honesty, humility, straightforwardness, and all the other qualities that allow a person’s nature to fulfill itself? So remember this principle when something threatens to cause you pain: the thing itself was no misfortune at all; to endure it and prevail is great good fortune.

50. A trite but effective tactic against the fear of death: think of the list of people who had to be pried away from life. What did they gain by dying old? In the end, they all sleep six feet under—Caedicianus, Fabius, Julian, Lepidus, and all the rest. They buried their contemporaries, and were buried in turn.

Our lifetime is so brief. And to live it out in these circumstances, among these people, in this body? Nothing to get excited about. Consider the abyss of time past, the infinite future. Three days of life or three generations: what’s the difference?

51. Take the shortest route, the one that nature planned—to speak and act in the healthiest way. Do that, and be free of pain and stress, free of all calculation and pretension.

From <http://seinfeld.co/library/meditations.pdf> accessed March 12, 2020. This sounds very much as if he was acquainted with the book of Ecclesiastes.

The Bible's authority is attacked from all angles:

In Ecclesiastes 3:1, we have the Hebrew word *z<sup>e</sup>mân* (רָמַן) [pronounced *zehm-AWN*], and because this word is used, it is suggested the Ecclesiastes was written much later (long after Solomon's death). E. W. Bullinger answers this objection.

### Does the use of the word *z<sup>e</sup>mân* mean Ecclesiastes is a later book? (Bullinger)

#### SUPPOSED "LATER" HEBREW WORDS IN ECCLESIASTES.

It is alleged by some modern critics that the Book of Ecclesiastes belongs to a much later date, and was written by a later hand, because certain words are alleged to belong to a later period of Hebrew literature. Several of these words are noted in the margin, but it may be useful to the student to find them together in one list.

- i. *kanas* , "gathered", ch. Ecclesiastes 2:8. But it occurs in Psalm 33:7; Psalm 147:2. Ezek. 22:21; Ezek. 39:28.
- ii. *medinah* , "provinces", ch. 2:8; 5:8. But it is found in 1Kings 20:14; 1Kings 20:15; 1Kings 20:17; 1Kings 20:19. Lam. 1:1. Ezek. 19:8.
- iii. *mikreh* , "event", or happening, ch. Ecclesiastes 2:14; Ecclesiastes 2:15; Ecclesiastes 3:19 (that which befalleth), and Ecclesiastes 9:2; Ecclesiastes 9:3. But it is found in Ruth 2:3; and 1Sam. 6:9; 1Sam. 20:26.
- iv. *shalat* , "have rule", ch. Ecclesiastes 2:19. But the word is found in Psalm 119:133, and a derivative of it even in Gen. 42:6.
- v. *hephez* , "purpose", ch. Ecclesiastes 3:1; Ecclesiastes 3:17; Ecclesiastes 5:4; Ecclesiastes 5:8; Ecclesiastes 8:6; Ecclesiastes 12:1; Ecclesiastes 12:10. But it is found in 1Sam. 15:22, where it is rendered "delight"; also 1Sam. 15:25. 2Sam. 22:20 (the verb). 1Kings 5:8; 1Kings 5:9; 1Kings 5:10; 1Kings 9:11; 1Kings 10:13; where it is rendered "desire". Even in Job 21:21; Job 22:3; where it is rendered "pleasure". In Isa. 53:10 "pleasure" evidently means what Jehovah has been pleased to purpose. Cp. Isa. 44:28; Isa. 46:10.
- vi. *soph* , "the end", ch. Ecclesiastes 3:11; Ecclesiastes 7:2; Ecclesiastes 12:13 (conclusion). This is found in 2Chron. 20:16. Joe. 2:20, where it is rendered "hinder part". The verb is found in Num. 22:30; Num. 22:30, and repeatedly in Job.
- vii. *takaph* , "prevail", ch. Ecclesiastes 4:12; but the only two other places where it occurs are Job 14:20; Job 15:24.
- viii. *miskén* , "poor", ch. Ecclesiastes 4:13; Ecclesiastes 9:15; Ecclesiastes 9:15; Ecclesiastes 9:16; but the derivative of it is found in Deut. 8:9.
- ix. *nekasim* , "wealth", ch. Ecclesiastes 5:19; Ecclesiastes 6:2. This is found as early as Joshua 22:8. 2Chron. 1:11; 2Chron. 1:12.
- x. *'amad* , "stand", "appear", ch. Ecclesiastes 8:3. This occurs in Gen. 18:8; Gen. 18:22; Gen. 19:27; Gen. 24:30; Gen. 41:1; Gen. 41:17; Gen. 43:15. Exodus 9:10; Exodus 14:19; Exodus 18:13; Exodus 20:18; Exodus 20:21, &c.; Lev. 19:16.
- xi. *kasher* , "prosper", ch. Ecclesiastes 10:10 (profitable); Ecclesiastes 11:6 (prosper). But it is found in Psalm 68:6, where "with chains" should perhaps be rendered "into prosperity".
- xii. *zua'* , "tremble", ch. Ecclesiastes 12:3. But we find it in Hab. 2:7 ("vex"), and its derivative *zeva'ah* , Isa. 28:19. Jer. 15:4; Jer. 24:9.

These examples will be sufficient to show how slender is the argument on which an objection so grave, and a conclusion so premature, is based. Some of the references given above may be later, of course, than the true date of Ecclesiastes; nevertheless, they are all much earlier than the alleged date, which is about 200 B.C. or less.

From E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1 (App-76).

## God's Divine Control (Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary)

- I. **The Divine Control is exerted throughout all time.** Human history is inserted between the two eternities. In the infinite solitudes of the past, before the birth of time, the mind has not whereon to rest, nor can the eye pierce beyond the present order of things into the immense future. Between these there is a range of time, forming the platform upon which human history is erected. Here the mind can rest, and survey the rule of the Supreme.
  1. God made time for us by giving a peculiar direction to His power. Before time was, or ever any creature was made, He dwelt in that eternity which knows no periods. No voice could be heard in that vast solitude but His own. Yet He was not content to remain thus solitary, but surrounded Himself with those intelligencies upon whom He might pour the illustrations of His wisdom and benevolence. Thus the Divine power directed by goodness has created time for us wherein all the circumstances and issues of all creatures are displayed.
  2. God rules over the whole course of time which He has made. Origination gives a natural title to possession. God has exerted His power and wisdom both in time and space, and therefore has an undisputed claim to reign supreme over each realm.
  3. God's Supreme Control is to be observed chiefly in the events of time. Events take place at certain seasons, and a season is a portion cut off from time. They are its joints, or articulations—critical periods of time. What has been ripening slowly through long years comes to the birth at a moment in the grand decisive events of history. Thus the Deluge, the giving of the Law, the establishment of Judaism, the founding of Christianity, the invention of Printing, the Reformation, are some of the great births of time. They are seasons when it is most of all observed that there is a wise and Infinite Power above, directing the great issues of time. These are the joints that connect and strengthen the whole frame of human history. The smooth course of affairs often fails to excite attention, but great events startle men into surprise, and invite contemplation. The thoughtless world is thus roused to behold the mighty hand of the great Ruler of all.
- II. **The Divine control is marked by an unchangeable order.** The times and seasons in which every purpose comes to full ripeness are predetermined by God. With Him there is no disordered mixture of things—no wild confusion. Infinite wisdom cannot be taken by surprise, or plunged of a sudden into perplexity. All the events of time arise from a fixed order of things. They are determined by a plan, dimly seen by us, but traced in stern and clear lines by a steady hand, and with the precision and confidence of infinite skill. We call this regular order of things law, for so it is as seen from our point of view; but on God's side it is the exercise of will; not indeed of an uncertain and capricious nature, but following method—the will of the Father of Lights—a clear and illumined will. This is unchangeable by us, or by any other power.
  1. Infinite wisdom and power lead to such a result. God has no need to make experiments to try some doubtful issue. He has no mistakes to repair, nor can any reason arise to oblige Him to retouch and modify His plan. In His vast design no element, however small, is omitted or overlooked. He has power to carry all His purposes into effect; hence such a Being has no cause or reason to oblige Him to depart from a fixed order.
  2. The study of nature teaches us that there must be such an order in human events. There is such a fixed order in the physical world, in the great orbs that roll above us. The laws of nature are regular, severe, exact. We can depend upon them in their inflexible constancy. All things in the universe are ordered by number, weight, and measure. Are we to suppose that the regular plan of the Divine government is only concerned with lifeless matter, and does not also extend with equal accuracy and completeness to souls? Is man alone to be made the sport of blind chance, when all movements and changes of created things are governed by a rigid law? Man, with all the events of time that concern him, reveals an infinite complication, yet surely the boundless wisdom of God is equal to the task of governing him according to a regular plan? The most slippery elements of human affairs are held by the Divine hand.
  3. The Bible is full of this doctrine. What reason teaches us to expect, the Bible reveals as a fact. The added light of Revelation enlarges our prospect, and strengthens our sight of the wide realms over

## God's Divine Control (Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary)

which God rules. What is the Gospel itself but the kingdom of God, implying authority, law, and order? The more we look into God's latest Revelation, the more are we persuaded that there is nothing that concerns human nature which is left out by the Divine plan. The teaching of the Bible is that man, as an inhabitant of this world, and as a candidate for immortality, is completely under the control of the Supreme.

III. **The Divine control is illustrated by the whole course of human affairs.** The hand of God in history can be clearly perceived by every one whose attention is at all awake. The proudest is brought, sooner or later, to confess that God has "beset him, behind and before." The kings of the earth who have taken counsel together against the Lord and His Anointed "have either been tamed to submission, or in mad rebellion have broken themselves against the bars of destiny. History is but a revelation of the fixed principles of Providence. A survey of this scene of man will give abundant illustration of the completeness of the Divine control throughout the whole extent of human history.

1. It is illustrated in the individual life.

(1.) The boundaries of that life are determined. Birth and death are the extreme limits between which each single life receives a manifestation. Life is purely a gift. We sought it not: it was thrust upon us. Though flowing to us through human channels, it rises from the Fountain of Life. We were summoned into His presence. The time of our public appearance here was appointed by Providence, and we must accept it for good or evil. We are here, called from the abyss of nothing by the Almighty power. The time of our departure hence is also determined. Though that time is to us unknown, yet where our journey of life shall end is known fully to the Great Disposer of all things. He has already drawn the circle which we must fill, nor can we by all our skill and care enlarge it, nor enclose a greater area from the territory of life allotted to us.

(2.) The discipline of that life is determined. We pass through various changes of fortune, and these are employed by Divine Providence as a means of spiritual education. We are planted, and again plucked up—we enter upon new modes of life, and old scenes pass away from us, never to return. Structures which we had raised in confidence and hope are broken down, and with a sadder heart and dearly-bought experience we build again as best we may. We are stunned by disease, as if killed by the terrible blow; and then healed again to receive what awaits us in life. In the merchandise of life, we experience the excitement of loss and gain; and what we have secured by energy and kept with care we may be obliged, in the emergencies of fortune, to cast away.

(3.) The emotions of our life are determined. We have no command over our joys or our sorrows. They arise from the constitution of our nature, acted upon by the various changes in the world around us. There are times when sorrow lifts the sluices of our tears, and we cannot intercept their flow; again the season of joy comes and shakes our countenance into ripples of laughter. There are times too of excessive emotion, when to mourn or to dance seems to be the only fit expression of the great force with which both grief and pleasure possess our frame.

(4.) The seasons of special duty are also determined. War and peace, silence and speech, are here selected as the type of many. In a world of conflicting interests and passions, there are times when even the most peaceful disposition is dragged into a contest, and then the season comes when the conditions of peace ought to be cheerfully accepted. There are times when silence is the highest duty, lest we should pluck the unripe fruit of wisdom, or speak words out of season to some heavy heart. Then the moment comes when we should hold no longer from speaking, but give utterance to the thought within us to instruct, to comfort, and to bless. The seasons both of silence and speech are forced upon us, when the most sullen is compelled to utterance, and the most noisy tongue is silenced.

2. It is illustrated in the life of nations. The history of nations is analogous to that of individuals, but it is drawn to a larger scale. It is developed through greater measures of time. Nations, like individuals, have peculiarities of character, and special elements of strength and weakness. As the moral determinations of a man's early life change the whole course of his subsequent history, so



## God's Divine Control (Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary)

it is with nations. By great moral crises they rise to superior influence and grandeur, or date from them the first symptoms of decline. History shows that the Divine control over the life of nations is complete.

- (1.) They have their allotted span of life. For them, too, there is a "time to be born and a time to die." They rise, flourish, and decay, and run through a strange and eventful course between the cradle and the grave. One nation after another has passed away. We have but the poor remains of their glory embalmed in history. Rome and Carthage, and mighty Babylon—where are they? The mighty past is full of the graves of empires. Divine Providence calls a people to be a nation, and when their course is run they go down into the dust of time. They were "planted" and then "plucked up," they were gathered and then dispersed by weakness, and completely undone.
  - (2.) They have times of severe Providential visitations. They are wounded as by the thrusts and stabs of some terrible fortune; they are healed again, recover strength, and live to complete their history.
  - (3.) They pass through the varied changes of public feeling. In times of great public calamity they are constrained to weep and mourn; and in some great national excitement of joy they assume the proper circumstances of mirth and rapture.
  - (4.) They have the alternations both of prosperity and adversity. They have their times "to get," and "to lose," "to gather," and to "cast away."
  - (5.) They have times of special duty. Now, by the pressure of circumstances, or by a sense of propriety, they are forced to silence; and again, the time comes for self assertion. Hence, love and hatred, peace and war.
3. It is illustrated in the life of Churches. The life of the Church itself, as the Kingdom of God, survives the destruction of States and all the changes of the world; the seed of the Kingdom is imperishable. But separate Churches have histories as strange and eventful as those of the individual.
- (1.) They have a fixed period of existence. They are founded, endowed with spiritual life; and after flourishing, it may be through centuries, they die out. They are "planted" and "plucked up;" gathered as stones for a building, and, like the Temple at Jerusalem, they are scattered. Where are the Seven Churches of Asia now? Where those flourishing African Churches of the early centuries? Infidelity and superstition grow rank over the ruins of once famous Churches. Ecclesiastical systems change; they have no natural immortality. Each system will have its day. There is no miracle wrought to preserve the garments of religious thought and Church order from waxing old, and decaying through the wilderness of history.
  - (2.) They have seasons of manifest Divine Visitation. There are times when God, in His dealings with His Church, compels attention. There are manifest visitations of God to His people both of anger and love. By the corruption of doctrine, and the influence of the world, by neglecting her true mission, and by prosperity, the Church is corrupted, and Divine judgments threaten, and at length fall upon her. Then is the season to weep and mourn and to rend the garments. Providence often resorts to terrible means, as if the Lord would slay His people. Then there are times of blessed visitation, when the Church is increased and prosperous; the sharp wound is healed, the season of joy and exultation has come.
  - (3.) They have seasons of special duty. There are times when Churches can afford to be silent and regard the cavils and opposition of others with a lofty indifference. It is often best to maintain peace, and to allow the fury without to spend its own violence and utterly exhaust itself. But the fit time for self-assertion arrives, and the Church must carry the war into the enemies' camp. The Christian Religion itself has been the occasion of terrible conflicts, and men have kindled the flame of fierce passions upon the altar of God. The temper of the world towards the Churches of different periods varies. It is fickle and inconstant like human affection. There is for the Church, in regard to her relations with the world, a "time to love, and a time to hate." For the Church of every age there are "times and seasons which the Father hath put into His own power." They are all a portion of the eternal plan.

*The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

### **The Clock of Destiny (by Dr. J. Hamilton)**

MORTALITY is a huge time-piece wound up by the Almighty Maker; and after he has set it a-going nothing can stop it till the Angel swears that time shall be no longer. But here it ever vibrates and ever advances—ticking one child of Adam into existence, and ticking another out. Now it gives the whirr of warning, and the world may look out for some great event; and presently it fulfils its warning, and rings in a noisy revolution. But there! as its index travels on so resolute and tranquil, what tears and raptures attend its progress! It was only another wag of the sleepless pendulum: but it was fraught with destiny, and a fortune was made—a heart was broken—an empire fell. We cannot read the writing on the mystic cogs as they are coming slowly up; but each of them is coming on God's errand, and carries in its graven brass a Divine decree. Now, however—now, that the moment is past, we know; and in the fulfilment we can read the flat. This instant was to say to Solomon, "Be born!" this other was to say to Solomon in all his glory, "Die!" That instant was to "plant" Israel in Palestine; that other was to "pluck him up." And thus inevitable, inexorable, the great clock of human destiny moves on, till a mighty hand shall grasp its heart and hush for ever its pulse of iron.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

### **An Overview of Ecclesiastes 1:12-3:22 (from the Sermon Bible Commentary)**

Koheleth now mentions the unusual advantages which he had possessed for enjoying life and making the best of it. His opportunities could not have been greater, he considers, had he been Solomon himself. He henceforth speaks therefore under the personated character of the wise son of David. He speaks as one who represented the wisdom and prosperity of his age.

- I. "I have set myself," he says, "to the task of investigating scientifically the value of all human pursuits." This, he assures us, is no pleasant task. It is a sore travail that God has allotted to the sons of men, which they cannot altogether escape. Koheleth thought and thought till he was forced to the conclusion that all human pursuits were vanity and vexation of spirit, or, according to the literal Hebrew, were but vapour and striving after the wind. There was no solidity, nothing permanent, nothing enduring, about human possessions or achievements. For man was doomed to pass away into nothingness.
- II. Having stated his position in these general terms, he now enters into the subject a little more in detail. He reminds himself how at one time he had tried to find his happiness in pleasure and amusement; but pleasure had palled upon him, and appeared good for nothing; and as for amusements, Koheleth thinks that life might, perhaps, be tolerable without them. Having discovered the unsatisfactoriness of pleasure, Koheleth proceeds to inquire if there is anything else that could take its place. What of wisdom? Can that make life a desirable possession? He proceeds to institute a comparison between wisdom and pleasure. Pleasure is but momentary; wisdom may last for a lifetime. Pleasure is but a shadow; wisdom is comparatively substantial and real. The lover of wisdom will follow her till he dies. Ay, there's the rub—till he dies. One event happeneth to them all. What then is the good of wisdom? This, too, is vanity.
- III. In the third chapter Koheleth points out how anything like success in life must depend upon our doing the right thing at the right time. Wisdom lies in opportuneness. Inopportuneness is the bane of life. What we have to do is to watch for our opportunity and embrace it.
- IV. In Ecclesiastes 3:14, Koheleth seems to rise for a moment into a religious mood. But his religion is by no means of an exalted type. Times, seasons, and opportunities, he says, are of Divine appointment; and,

like nature's phases, they happen in recurring cycles. God doeth it that men should fear before Him. The existence of so much unrequited wisdom in the world might seem to suggest that there is no higher power. But there is. God will rule the righteous and the wicked, and reward them according to their works. There is a time for every purpose and for every work, and therefore for the purpose of retribution among the rest.

*The Sermon Bible Commentary*; ©1888-1893; in the Public Domain; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll, M.A., LL.D., from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 1:12–3:22.

## Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

## A Complete Translation of Ecclesiastes 3

## A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase

[illegible]

## A Complete Translation of Ecclesiastes 3

## A Reasonably Literal Translation

## A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase

[illegible]

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

The following Psalms would be appropriately studied at this time:

### Doctrinal Teachers Who Have Taught Ecclesiastes 3

	Series	Lesson (s)	Passage
R. B. Thieme, Jr. taught this	1973 Sands of Time 373	#1–7	Ecclesiastes 3:1–15
	1992 Spiritual Dynamics 376	#1036	Ecclesiastes 3:1–2
	1985 Ephesians 412	#697	Ecclesiastes 3:1–8
	1981 Revelation 457	#310	Ecclesiastes 1–3
	1966 Ecclesiastes 514	#2–3	Ecclesiastes 3:1–22
	1975 Genesis 527	#71	Ecclesiastes 3:1–7
	1972 David 631	#364	Ecclesiastes 3:1–13
	1984 Protocol Plan of God 728	#202	The book of Ecclesiastes
R. B. Thieme, III	2019 Practical Divine Wisdom (527)	#	Ecclesiastes 3:



Word Cloud from a Reasonably Literal Paraphrase of Ecclesiastes 3

Word Cloud from Exegesis of Ecclesiastes 3<sup>382</sup>

These two graphics should be very similar; this means that the exegesis of Ecclesiastes 3 has stayed on topic and has covered the information found in this chapter of the Word of God.

Chapter Outline		Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines	
Beginning of Document		Verse Navigation	Introduction and Text
First Verse		Chapter Summary	Addendum
www.kukis.org		Exegetical Studies in Ecclesiastes	

<sup>382</sup> Some words have been left out of this graphic; including *Strong*, *BDB*, and *pronounced*.