

Ecclesiastes 3:1–22 – The Seasons of Life and the Eternal God

Contents: The changing seasons of human life contrasted with the unchanging purposes of God.

Ecclesiastes 3 is one of the most well-known chapters of the Bible. Its words have been set to poetry and even music—*“a time to be born, a time to die... a time to weep, a time to laugh.”* Many read this as something beautiful and romantic, but in the original Hebrew setting, the sense is heavier.

Solomon was not celebrating life’s variety; he was wrestling with its monotony. Life “under the sun” can feel like a never-ending cycle—birth and death, planting and harvesting, joy and sorrow. There seems to be a time for everything, yet nothing ultimately changes.

But woven into this cycle, Solomon reveals something profound:

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.” (Ecclesiastes 3:11, NKJV)

Here we see two truths side by side:

1. **God orders time with purpose.** Seasons of joy and sorrow are not random. Even if they seem repetitive, God makes all things beautiful in His time.
2. **God has placed eternity in our hearts.** Deep inside, every human being has an awareness that life is more than the passing cycles of time. We long for something beyond the temporary. We long for the eternal.

Some deny this inner awareness of eternity or try to silence it with distraction, but it remains. God put it there. This longing finds its fulfillment only in Him.

God’s Eternal Work vs. Man’s Fleeting Work

Solomon then reminds us that our labor, no matter how hard, cannot last forever. Our works fade, our names are forgotten. But what God does endures:

“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.” (Ecclesiastes 3:14, NKJV)

This is a sobering and freeing truth. My efforts pass away, but God’s work remains. When He imputes righteousness to us by faith, that is His eternal work. I cannot add to it with religious rituals, nor can my failures subtract from it. God’s work is complete, and it lasts forever.

Too often we try to “improve” on God’s work by thinking our performance makes us more righteous—or our failures make us less righteous. Neither is true. We are accepted by God not because of our works, but because of His work.

Wrestling with Eternity

Solomon also stretches our thinking about eternity. God is outside of time. To us, life is measured in days and years, but God exists in the eternal present—He is the *“I AM.”* Past, present, and future are

all before Him at once. This is beyond our comprehension, but it reminds us that He is not limited as we are. His purposes transcend our brief lifespans.

Life Without God: A Beastly View

When Solomon views life only “*under the sun*,” apart from God, it looks bleak. He sees injustice in places where there should be righteousness. He observes that humans die just like animals and concludes that man has no advantage over the beast.

But this is human reasoning apart from revelation. The truth is that humans are made in the image of God and given eternal souls. Animals return to the dust, but the spirit of man goes upward to face God (Ecclesiastes 3:21; see also Hebrews 9:27). Jesus confirms this distinction. Life without God reduces people to animals, but life with God lifts us into eternity.

Practical Application

1. **Trust God’s timing.** Life has seasons, and some are painful. But God makes everything beautiful in His time. You may not see it now, but He is weaving a greater plan.
2. **Recognize your eternal longing.** If life feels monotonous or meaningless, it is because you were made for more than this world. That longing is meant to drive you to Christ, who gives eternal life.
3. **Rest in God’s finished work.** Stop trying to add to or take away from what God has done. Your righteousness is secure in Him. Don’t fall into despair when you fail, and don’t fall into pride when you succeed.
4. **See life as more than “under the sun.”** Without God, life is a cycle that ends in the grave. With God, life has purpose now and hope forever.