

got wisdom? Lesson 5

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

Throughout these first three chapters of Ecclesiastes, the Preacher wrestles with the experience each of us faces on earth; a striving and working for a sense of satisfaction. Unfortunately, we discover that the only true certainty we all have is that there is death at the end waiting for us all.

This, however, is not intended to create a defeatists mindset, but to alter our perspective. It is also not to lead us into a hedonistic viewpoint, but an appreciation for all things godly. Now the preacher is sharing the observations that he has gleaned throughout his search for the purpose and meaning of life under the sun.

Vs. 1-8

In poetic form, Solomon lists specifically the things of life or “activities” that summarize all of life for which there is a seemingly designated “time” and a “season”. While these verses move back and forth among desirable and undesirable aspects of life, they also present times or seasons that every human being will experience.

He gives fourteen pairs of contrasts, grouped into seven pairs of pairs. In the Bible, the number seven often symbolizes completeness, and so here, we have in these seven pairs of pairs of activities, all of life summarized completely. Considering our lives, most, if not all of us are experiencing at least two or three of these activities right now?

Because there’s a time and season for these things, in the cyclical nature of life, our challenge is often being able to discern the time and season and then to be able to manage the activity; if we can. Discernment is the ability to make careful distinctions in our thinking, typically between truth and error, right and wrong and follow God’s lead.

Since most if not all of us have some form or measure of control issues, it takes great faith and maturity to be able to make concessions in life that allow God to lead us. We would love to know what is going to happen and maybe even when it’s going to happen so that we can take the necessary steps to either get there or avoid it.

Because the word “time” used in verse 1 denotes a “fixed” or “appointed” time (Ezra 10:14; Esth. 9:27, 31), it eliminates the concept of happenstance. In other words, Solomon is implying that God has ordained that each of us experience these things at their fixed and appointed time. They are either the perfect will of God or His permissive will.

This gives us the reassurance that we are not fumbling about through the experiences of life at the mercy of blind chance, but rather according to the purposeful plan of a loving, caring God. Wherever we are in the cycle of these experiences, we are not there alone, and we are not there on accident.

Vs. 9-10

After repeating the opening question of 1:3, “Is all this labor really worth it?”, Solomon is now adjusting his sights and is no longer looking at life only “under the sun”. Bringing God into the equation is giving him, as it does us, a new perspective. In light of “new evidence” he accepts that even our life’s labors are gifted to us by God, to spur our pursuit and dependence upon Him.

In view of the travail that we experience from day to day, life may seem like a strange gift, but it is God's gift just the same. If we believingly accept life as a gift, and thank God for it, we will have a better attitude toward the burdens that come our way. If we grudgingly accept life as a burden, then we will miss the gifts that come our way. Outlook helps to determine outcome.

Vs. 11-15

According to the Preacher, God's plan is unfathomable (Job 9:10, 37:5). If we know nothing else, the goodness of God's nature means that all of these events will be good in their time. The inference is plain: if we cooperate with God's timing, life will not be meaningless. Everything will be "beautiful in His time", even the most difficult experiences of life.

The "meaninglessness" of life from the human point of view has become "beauty" when God's plans and purposes are considered. Pray that we have the discernment to see life from His point of view, and have the wisdom to recognize the beauty of His plans and purposes as He works through our lives.

The implication is that man's happiness and greatest good is found from operating within the laws of God and not by trying to control these things ourselves – something we are powerless to do anyway (1 Tim 6:6-10). Since there is a distinguishable system to everything, the conclusion is that this must also be true of man, even though it cannot always be seen or fully comprehended.

Also, man's life is linked to eternity, created in the image of God, and was given dominion over creation (Gen. 1:26–28). This explains why nobody (including Solomon) can be satisfied with his or her endeavors and achievements, we were created for more than life under the sun can offer us.

This does not mean that life cannot be enjoyable now (vv. 12–14) especially since this enjoyment of life is the gift of God (Ecc 6:2; 1 Tim. 6:17). It, more so means that we need a God inspired life's perspective to truly enjoy the temporal life that we have as spiritual beings on an earthly sojourn.

Solomon is encouraging not pagan sensualism, but rather the practice of enjoying God's gifts as the fruit of one's labor, no matter how difficult life may be. Life appears to be transitory, but whatever God does is forever, so when we live for Him and let Him have His way, life is meaningful and manageable.

Instead of complaining about what we don't have, let's enjoy what we do have and thank God for it.

THE TAKE HOME:

- 1. Why is it important for us to understand that it is God who has created time, purpose, and a season for everything? How does this allow you to live more confidently?**
- 2. What life gift have you received from God that you took for granted and wish you have another chance to take advantage of it? How would you use it moving forward?**