

Message #9

Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

As disciplined as we may be or as organized as we may be, the truth is there are many things in our life that will happen over which we have no control and no say. And if God isn't at the proper place in our lives, those things will make absolutely no sense.

GOD SOVEREIGNLY CONTROLS EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS IN THE TIME OF ONE'S LIFE, BOTH THE POSITIVE AND THE NEGATIVE, AND IF ONE DOES NOT HAVE GOD AT THE CENTER OF LIFE, NONE OF WHAT HAPPENS WILL MAKE SENSE AND THE PERSON WILL NOT KNOW WHAT TO SAY OR DO IN VIEW OF THE COMING JUDGMENT OF GOD.

IDEA #1 – God has appointed a time for everything. **3:1**

There are two different Hebrew words used for “time” in this verse. The first word “appointed time” is one that refers to a time that is appointed, established, prepared and set (Gesenius, p. 246). The second word “time,” which is the one used throughout the rest of the section, is one that refers to a time that has a limit to it as opposed to eternity.

Now Solomon's point is this: God has set the time boundaries for all kinds of things that will happen to a person in life before he goes into eternity. Everything has a place and a time (**3:11**).

If a person is trying to go through life without a close relationship with God, most of it will not make any sense and life will end up empty and meaningless. If, on the other hand, one is in a close relationship with God, then most of the things that happen in the course of life will have clear meaning and one will know how to respond.

Everything that happens “under heaven” is time-controlled by God. Its boundaries are set and determined. Some of the stuff we will never figure out (**3:11**).

IDEA #2 – God has appointed things in the time of one's life that are positive and negative. **3:2-8**

The list here is comprised of 14 positives and 14 negatives; 14 things which are favorable and 14 things which are unfavorable. Sometimes Solomon begins with a positive and sometimes he begins with a negative. His breakdown is as follows: 3:2 – positive/negative; 3:3-4 – negative/positive; 3:5-6 – positive/negative; 3:7 – negative/positive; 3:8 – positive/negative and negative/positive.

Now everything in this list are things Solomon knew God controlled specifically as it related to the nation (Israel) and to the individual.

Couplet #1 - God has appointed a time for birth and a time for death. **3:2a**

God is the one who gives life and He is also the one who takes life. Job said, “The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away” (Job 1:21). Hannah said, “The LORD kills and makes alive” (I Sam. 2:6). Moses said of God: “It is I who put to death and give life” (Deut. 32:39).

Dr. Kaiser said it well—“God appoints both our birthday and the day of our funeral” (p. 63).

Now we do know when our moment of birth was, but we don’t know when God’s appointed time of death is. Therefore, it is imperative that we live our lives for His glory.

Couplet #2 - God has appointed a time for planting and harvesting. **3:2b**

Literally for Israel and for any farmer for that matter, success in agriculture comes from God (Psalm 65:9-13).

Couplet #3 - God has appointed a time to kill and to heal. **3:3a**

Probably Solomon had his father David in his mind when he wrote this. David spent much of his life literally killing enemies. Although Solomon also initially was involved in some of this, his kingdom was a time of healing for the nation. Solomon wanted everyone to realize that the timing of all of this was completely controlled by God.

The greatest moment of execution will occur at the Great White Throne Judgment. All will be damned to eternal fire. Now is the time to heal the wounded soul.

Couplet #4 - God has appointed a time to tear down and build up. **3:3b**

In the sovereign timing of God, there are times to tear down and there are times to build up. This is true of a nation, this is true of a building, and this is true of an individual. Break it down, tear it apart and then rebuild it is something God sovereignly does.

Couplet #5 - God has appointed a time to weep and a time to laugh. **3:4a**

There are some people who just can’t seem to ever figure out the reality of these verses. On the one hand, you have some people who walk around in total depression. They couldn’t smile if their life depended on it. On the other hand, others walk around with some giddy, silly smile on their face like life is one big party. Both perspectives of life are distorted and extreme.

Couplet #6 - God has appointed a time to mourn and a time to dance. **3:4b**

God providentially controls the sorrows and joys of life. I totally agree with many commentators who observe, we will learn more and develop more out of times of mourning than times of dancing.

Couplet #7 - God has appointed a time to throw stones and gather stones. **3:5a**

There have been several views as to what this means but we do know one Biblical interpretation is that of ruining an enemies' land by spreading and throwing stones on it (II Kings 3:19, 25). When land is filled with stones, the water stops flowing and the ground is almost impossible to cultivate.

Couplet #8 - God has appointed a time to embrace and to shun embracing. **3:5b**

That word "shun" means to move far away from them, keeping a great distance from them (Gesenius, p. 766).

There is a time for affirmation in a relationship, there is also a time for confrontation and excommunication.

Couplet #9 - God has appointed a time to search and to stop searching. **3:6a**

Every search and rescue team struggles with the timing of this one.

There is an appointed time when it is right to search for God in prayer. There is also a time when one should stop searching. There is a time to seek and search for the lost soul, there is also a time when the search stops.

Couplet #10 - God has appointed a time to keep and a time to throw away. **3:6b**

As one commentator observed, here is Biblical justification to have garage sales. This has to do with dealing with things in life. Some things are to be kept, some things are to be cleaned out and thrown away.

Couplet #11 - God has appointed a time to tear apart and sow together. **3:7a**

Tearing clothing, in the O.T., was connected to receiving bad news, especially about the pending judgment of God. There is a time for the nation and the church to humble themselves before God. There is also a time for the whole operation and the individual to work together to harvest something for the glory of God.

Couplet #12 - God has appointed a time to be silent and a time to speak. **3:7b**

It takes tremendous wisdom to know when to speak and what to say. The tongue can be a dangerous weapon and wise is one who knows how to use it.

Couplet #13 - God has appointed a time to love and a time to hate. **3:8a**

I love the words of Chuck Swindoll here—“We are from a generation that has talked about love, love, love until most of us are practically nauseated over the word. We seem to be in love with love...a love that’s almost unthinking, nondiscerning, gullible—loving anything! But the statement from Solomon (actually, from God) puts it into perspective. There is a time to demonstrate love, but there is also a time to hate. Acts of injustice, acts of prejudice, and inequities ought to be hated and ought to be withstood” (p. 75).

There are things we ought to have and there are people we ought to hate. We should hate “all” who do iniquity (Psalm 5:5). We should hate one who sows discord among the brethren and we should hate a liar (Proverbs 6:16, 19). We should hate one who loves violence (Psalm 11:5). We should hate that which is evil (Romans 12:9).

Couplet #14 - There is a time for war and a time for peace. **3:8b**

Peace at any cost is not a Biblical doctrine. There are times for peace and there are times for war. There are right ways, God-ordained ways to fight. The Christian life is a fight and we are called to fight a good fight (II Tim. 4:7) and wage a good war (Eph. 6:11).

IDEA #3 – God is the one who is needed for the timing of things in life to make sense.
3:9-11

1. Without God at the center of life, none of this is profitable. **3:9**
2. Without God at the center of life, all of life is a task. **3:10**
3. God is always sovereign over everything. **3:11**

Man will never know everything God is doing, but the only chance he has of living life in a meaningful way is by having eternity in his heart. In other words, one must be right with Him!

Years ago, Diane Ball, from Maranatha Music wrote:

“In His time, in His time. He makes all things beautiful in His time. Lord please show me everyday, as you’re teaching me your way, that you do just what you say, in your time.”

This is a prayer we all need to make. This is the relationship with God we all need to have!