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All in Good Time

Ecclesiastes 3: 1-15

All in good time DIG: In the list of opposites (verses 1-8), is the Teacher describing what is, or suggesting what one should do? Why do you think so? What is “the task God has given humanity to keep us occupied” (verse 10)? How does God give us an awareness of eternity (verse 11)? What is meant by “God seeks out what people chase after” (verse 15)?

REFLECT: What “time” is it for you? At what “times” in verses 1-8 do you doubt that God is in control? Would you rather spend your time comprehending God’s work (verse 11), doing good (verse 12), or eating and drinking (verse 13)? Why? How do you differentiate enjoying yourself and going too far? Does belief in God’s sovereignty free you to enjoy life? How so?

Yeshua Messiah is the Lord of time; we must learn to ask Him what time it is.



After everything else **he** has said about the pointlessness of our existence, we probably expect **the Solomon of Ecclesiastes** to say something discouraging about **time** also. **He** might say that the **time** is short, for example, and thus we never have enough **time** to do all the things we want to do. Or **he** might talk about the tyranny of **time** - the way it controls our lives down to the last millisecond. Or **he** might say that **time** is fleeting and we are running out of **time**. Or he might say that lost **time** can never be recovered.

A time for this, a time for that: These are all things that **the Teacher** might have said,

but **he** decided not to. Instead, under the inspiration of **the Ruach Ha’Kodesh, he** celebrated the orderliness of **ADONAI** by writing the world’s most famous words about the subject of **time**. And long before 1965 when the Byrds, sang their hit single “Turn, Turn, Turn,” (to hear that song [click here](#)), **Solomon’s** lyrics had struck a responsive chord in **the human** heart:

For everything there is a season, a right time for every intention under heaven. To explain this, **Solomon** uses a merism, a figure of speech in which polar opposites are chosen to indicate a totality: **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, 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 (3:1-8).** Remember that **Chapter 2** ended with a declaration of the enjoyment we find where **God** is present and we receive life’s blessings as a gift from **Him**. Notice as well the strong statement in **verse 11: He has made everything appropriate in its time.** Far from being a fatalist, **the Teacher** has come to praise **God’s** sovereignty over **time and eternity** as a thing of **beauty**.

Father time: Notice that **the Teacher** locates all the **times** of life **under heaven**, which is more positive than **his** usual phrase, **under the sun**, cutting **God** out of the picture. Everything in this **time-bound** universe is under the authority of **God** in **heaven**. The sovereign **God** rules over **time** and over what happens for **every intention under heaven**. Nothing happens outside the will of **ADONAI**.

Solomon’s words emphasize the scope of **the LORD’s** sovereignty with pairs of related opposites. Each pair forms a *merism* - a figure of speech in which two polar opposites make up a whole. Taken together, **birth and death** comprise the whole of **human** existence; **weeping and laughing** cover the full range of **human** emotion, and so on.

There is also something comprehensive about the entire list. There are fourteen pairs, which is twice the biblical number of perfection and completion (see the commentary on **Genesis, to see the link click [Ae - The Number Seven](#)**). Furthermore, the pairs themselves take in the whole sweep of **human** experience, from **birth to death**, from **war to peace**, and everything in between.

ADONAI rules all our moments and all our **days**, and there is a definite orderliness to what **He** does. **His** sovereignty has a chronology. In the divine economy there is **a right time for**

every intention under heaven . . . a suitable occasion or an **appropriate** opportunity for everything that happens. There is a **time** to enroll and a **time** to graduate; a **time** to start a job and a **time** to retire; a **time** to stay and a **time** to go home. Such a perspective is far from fatalistic. **The Teacher** is not saying that there is nothing we can do about what happens. We still have choices, **God** has not taken away our free will. But **Solomon's** point is that **the Sovereign LORD** does everything at just the right **time**.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Thank **You** for the gift of **time**! **You** are so loving! **You** delight in giving great gifts to **Your** children. **You** gave a huge gift of rescuing sinners from sin's shame and punishment (**Romans 10:9-10**), another gift of living within those who love and fear **You** (**John 14:23**). **You** have graciously given so many wonderful gifts! One gift is the gift of **time** that can be given back to **You** when we use our **time** wisely for **You**. It is a gift that can bring a **reward**. **You** will give for all eternity, a **reward** for a godly attitude when we use our gift of **time** to serve **You**. **For no one can lay any other foundation than what is already laid - which is Yeshua the Messiah. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear. For the Day will show it, because it is to be revealed by fire; and the fire itself will test each one's work -what sort it is. If anyone's work built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward (First Corinthians 3:11-14)**. Thank **You** for giving the gift of **time** that we may give our **time** back to **You** from a loving heart! In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

People usually think of the actions in **Ecclesiastes 3** as things that people do, which, of course, they are. We could demonstrate this from **the life of Solomon**, who built great buildings, planted magnificent gardens and gathered many proverbs. But the activities listed in **his** words here are also things that **God** does. They are divine actions before they become **human** activities. Consider **birth** and **death** - to appointments that every person must keep. Both **the cradle** and **the grave** follow **Ha'Shem's timetable**. A person's **days are fixed in advance**, said **Job**, **the number of his months is known to You, and You have fixed the limits of which he cannot pass (Job 14:5)**. **The LORD of life** has sovereign power over **death**. The whole of our earthly existence is under **His** divine authority.

Ecclesiastes 3 gives us the complete picture: to know **God** and to understand our place in **His** world we need to accept that both halves of each pair tell us the truth about **His** character. **ADONAI** makes a **time for every intention under heaven** because at the **right time everything in his words** are fully in keeping with who **He** is: **birth and death, weeping and laughing; love and hate; a time to embrace and a time to refrain; war**

and peace.²⁶⁷

The Teacher continues to draw out the implications of what **he** has just said. The main point up to now has been that **God** has established periods, moments or **times** for a wide diversity of emotions and activities. Is the world a wonderfully ordered and varied place for us to **enjoy**? His initial reaction reveals that he would answer that question negatively. No. **What does the worker gain from his efforts?** But as we read on, we discover why. **I have seen the task God has given humanity to keep us occupied. He has made everything appropriate in its time; also, he has given human beings an awareness of eternity.** There may indeed be **appropriate times** for everything, and **ADONAI** knows these **times**, but in speaking in **human** terms, we **can't fully comprehend, from beginning to end, the things God does (3:9-11).**²⁶⁸

Solomon reaches another conclusion based on **his** observation in **verses 1-8**, and **he** begins it again with the familiar **I know**. In essence **the Teacher-king** comments that whatever **YHVH** does, no one can change **His** mind. **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. That which was here already; and that which will be has already been.** The clamor of **human** activity is guaranteed and secure because **ADONAI** watches over it all each and every moment with divine concern **(3:14-15).**²⁶⁹

Perfect timing: The place where we see **God's timeliness** most clearly is in **the person** and work of **Yeshua Messiah**, who is **the Lord of time**. And as we witness **His** life in the Gospels we see a **Savior** who always knew what **time** it was. There was a **time** for **Him** to be born - just at the right **time**, in fact. The Bible says that **when the appointed time arrived, God sent forth His Son, born from a woman (Galatians 4:4).** At just the right **time** - when the Gentiles were tired of serving the old pagan gods, when the Jews had corrupted the Torah into works righteousness, when the Greeks had given the world a common language, and when the Romans had established relatively safe travel across the Mediterranean Sea - **Yeshua** came with a message of salvation for the whole world.

There was also a day appointed for **Yeshua** to die. **He** died on Pesach, not the day before, or the day after. For years Pharisaic Judaism had plotted against **Him**, trying to kill **Him** as soon as they could; however, **His hour had not yet come (John 7:30).** When **the hour** did come, **Messiah** was crucified and suffered for the pointlessness of all our sin. The Scripture says: **At the right time, Messiah died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6).** **He** rose at the right **time** also; on the festival of First Fruits, on the third day, as the Scriptures had promised **(Hosea 6:2; Luke 24:45-46; First Corinthians 15:4).** From **His** birth to **His**

death and then on to **His** resurrection, **Yeshua** did everything **timely** in **His** saving work. **He** was never late and never early, but always right on **time**.

Our times, God's hands: **Yeshua** still knows what **time** it is. Do you believe that? **He** knows **the time** to **love**, showing mercy to needy sinners who ask **Him** to be their **Savior**. **He** knows **the time** to hate, standing against evil and injustice. **He** knows **the time** for war, as **His** Church does battle against Satan and the enemies of **God**. Soon it will be **time** for peace, when **He** will **make wars cease to the end of the earth (Psalm 46:9)**, when **He** will set **creation** free from its bondage to the pointlessness of our sin (**Romans 8:20-21**) and we will never suffer again from the futility of life **under the sun**.

In the meantime, **the Lord** calls us to make the best use of every moment. **His** lordship over **time** is not just for the big events of world history, but also for our own everyday experiences. One of the best ways to avoid life's frustration is by knowing what to do with our **time**. The way we spend our **time** is the way we spend our lives. Since we follow **Yeshua Messiah**, then we need to know what **time** it is, not measuring **time** merely in terms of hours and **days** but viewing it as an opportunity for the service of **God** and the use of our spiritual gifts. **There are at least three practical ways to apply these verses to our lives.**

First, wait for God's time. Since it is true that our **Savior** has perfect timing, then we should trust **Him** to know the right **time** for everything. **King David** was able to **bless ADONAI at all times (Psalm 34:1)** because **he** knew that whatever **time** it was, **God** was still in control. Most of us would prefer to manage our own agenda, which makes us quick to criticize **God's** timing. Instead of insisting on keeping our own **timetable**, we ought to hurry up and wait for **God**, as **David** did when **he** said: **I trust in You, ADONAI; You are my God. My times are in Your hand (Psalm 31:14-15a).**

Are you willing to put your **time** into **God's hand**? Writing sometime in the fourth century after **Messiah**, Didymus the Blind used a vivid example why we should believe that God is in control. Didymus compared us to passengers on a large sailing vessel who have never met the captain, yet still believe that he is steering the ship. He wrote, "**God Himself** manages the cosmos and looks after it . . . when you see a ship that is piloted and holds its course, you perceive the idea of a helmsman even if he is not visible. Likewise, **the Creator** is known by **His** works and the order of **His** creation."

Second, live your whole life knowing that there is a time for you to die. The Bible says: **It's appointed for people to die just once, and after that to face the judgment (Hebrews 9:27 CJB)**, which is also **appointed** by **God**. But believers never face **judgment**

because **Yeshua** has paid for our sins on the cross (see the commentary on [Revelation Cc - We Must All Appear Before the Bema Seat of Christ](#)). Are you ready for **eternity** (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer](#))? When it comes to receiving the free gift of eternal life in **Yeshua Messiah**, there is no **time** like the present.

The Bible says **that Messiah died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (First Corinthians 15:3b-4)**. If you **believe** this? Nothing else matters.

Salvation = faith + nothing (not baptism, not good works, nothing means nothing). **Without faith it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him. Now is the day of salvation (Heb 11:6 and Second Cor 6:2c)**.

Would you like to be saved right now?

Pray this simple prayer in **faith**. But before you do, I want you to remember that saying a prayer does not save you, **trusting in Yeshua Messiah** does. **God, I admit that I have sinned. I believe Yeshua Messiah died for my sins and I want to trust Him to save me right now. Lord, please come into my heart and make me a new person. I accept your gift of salvation.**

If you were to **die** right now, where would you go?

Why should **God** let you into **His** heaven?

That's right, because **Yeshua** died to pay for your **sins**.

If you prayed that prayer in **faith** see my commentary on [The Life of Christ Bw - What God Does for Us at the Moment of Faith](#).

Finally, make good use of whatever time you have. To use a memorable phrase from Paul, we should always be **redeeming the time (Ephesians 5:16)**. As far as **the Teacher** was concerned, the best way to use **time** in that way was to get busy in **God-honoring** ways. So, in conclusion, **he** said: **I know that there is nothing better for them to do than to be happy and to do good 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 (3:12-13)**.

It's not easy for us to use our **time wisely**. In this **time**-bound universe, where we are caught between **time** and eternity, the moments of our **days** are our most precious commodity. **Time** is the priceless currency that **ADONAI** has given for doing the work of **His Kingdom**. **Time** also happens to be one of the most difficult things for us to manage. We all have the same amount of **time** on a daily basis; the question is how we spend **it . . .** or waste **it**.

The best way to use our **time** is for the glory of **God** and the Kingdom of **Yeshua Messiah**. This always requires deep spiritual wisdom. Even though we **cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end (3:11)**, we still have decisions to make every day. Later, **the Teacher** will say that **the wise person** is the one who **knows the right time (8:5)**. There are different **times** to start something. But there are also **times** when something is supposed to come to an end - a project, a relationship, a ministry. Knowing the difference takes wisdom, because they are some of the hardest decisions in life.

If we want to have a heart of **Yeshua** we need to know when it is **time to weep with those who weep** or else **rejoice with those who rejoice (Romans 12:15; John 16:20)**. We need wisdom for the **timing** of our relationships, knowing when it's **time** to embrace someone and when it's **time** to exclude them from our plans and our priorities. There are **times** when it's important to **speak up**, saying **a word in season (Proverbs 15:23; 25:11)** or giving **a reason for the hope that is in us (First Peter 3:15)**. But there are also **times** to shut up - **times** when silence is golden and it's better to hold our **tongues (Psalm 141:3; Proverbs 27:14; James 1:26)**.

Who is sufficient in all these things? If there's **a right time for every intention under heaven (3:1)**, then **redeeming the time** will require **wise** decision-making. We must learn to ask **God** what **time** it is. **Lord**, is this a **time** to break down or build up? Is this something **You** want me to **love** or to **hate**? Am I **speaking** because I want to say something, or because I really have something to say? Ask **God** for help, and **He** will give you **the wisdom** to know what **time** it is (**James 1:5**).

The Bible says that one day soon, **Yeshua** will come again - **a second time (Hebrews 9:28)**. Indeed, **Messiah** will come at the right **time**, at the exact **day and hour His Father** has appointed (**Matthew 24:36**). Then, after the thousand year Messianic Kingdom is over (see the commentary on **Revelation Fh - The Dispensation of the Messianic Kingdom**), **time** will be no more, and our deep longing for eternity will be satisfied. We will live with **God** forever and forever. But in the meantime, we are **wise** to pray the way **Moshe** prayed: **Teach us to count our days, so that we will become wise (Psalm 90:12)**.²⁷⁰