

***Ecclesiastes***  
***Of Being and Time***

Lesson #4 for January 27, 2007

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 3.

1. In this chapter Solomon talks about time. He suggests that there is a time to do almost everything. But the most worrisome time for him seems to be the time to die!
2. What concerns and questions do you have buried deep in your psyche about death? Do all differences between humans and animals disappear at death? Finally, when we return to dust, are humans no better than animals? Are we humans no more than worms?
3. Does it concern you greatly that there is no way you can know what will happen after you die?
4. Why do you think Solomon made statements like: "Nobody knows for sure that the human spirit rises to heaven or that the animal spirit sinks into the earth"? (Ecclesiastes 3:21, *Message*) "How can anyone be sure that the human spirit goes upwards while an animal's spirit goes down into the ground?" (*GNB*)
5. How much evidence is there in the Old Testament for the future life, a resurrection, anything beyond this life? What evidence did Solomon have available to him that this life was not all that man lives for? For that matter, what real proof do we have for our beliefs about death and the future life? Why do we choose to believe that there is "a heaven"? In your opinion, what is the greatest evidence for life after life?
6. If God is the one who chooses a time for everything, then what happens if we are not doing God's will at any given time? If time is what life is made of, then is "killing time" murder or is it suicide?
7. Time heals nothing, it merely re-arranges our memory. (Gary Numan)  
Time is a great healer, but it's also a lousy beautician.  
Time is like money: you can either spend, waste, or invest!  
Time is relative... The mind makes it slow, the heart makes it fast, our friends make it worth while, and words... make it timeless.  
Time is the best teacher; unfortunately it kills all its students!  
Time is what keeps everything from happening all at once.
8. Does God treat humans in a manner which is different from how he treats animals? What makes us different from a sophisticated ape? Do we all really end up at the same place? Will the animals ultimately face God's judgment? Why, or why not? What about us humans? Are we morally responsible for our actions? Why?
9. In God's great calendar of events, there are two different kinds of "time."
  - "chronological time" (which can be very precisely measured using a cesium clock which is accurate to within a second or two in a thousand years) or "astronomical time" (which can be determined from the movements of the stars and is also very, very precise)
  - "event time" which means that there is a "right time" to do this and a "right time" to do that
10. Why do you think God chose "a piece of time" as the major monument to himself? Can you make a tangible idol out of time? Why is time so intangible?
11. As we have noted before, Isaiah and others have suggested that there are three characteristics that set God apart from all imitations: 1) God can create out of nothing, 2) God can predict the future, 3) God can perform supernatural miracles.
12. What is the relationship between God and time? Does he live outside of time? Is he able to

move forward and backward in time as far as he wants to go? Is God limited in any way by "earth time"?

13. Why do you think God uses prophecy—predictions about future events in time—to confirm our faith? Considering the major time prophecies in scriptures—such as the 1260 day-year prophecy and the 2300 day-year prophecy and the 70 weeks-490 day-year prophecy and others like them—do these prophecies and their various interpretations strengthen your faith or challenge your faith? Why?
14. Do you agree with the basic premise of Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 that everything has its time? Do all the ups and downs of our lives suggest in any way that God's will is being accomplished? Are there events which occur on this earth which are not according to God's will? **Does God either cause or allow everything?** Is he in some way responsible for everything he either causes or allows? Is God responsible for sin? Is God responsible for the rebellion and the great controversy? Is God responsible for the "final delay" prior to the second coming?
15. If you study human development, you will realize that time has a very different meaning to people at different stages in their lives. Why is that? Why does the year seem to be so long to a child and so short to a senior? At what times in a person's life does he normally pass through the different stages and levels of development? Do the studies of Piaget, Kohlberg and Fowler teach us anything of significance while we are trying to spread the gospel and reach out to others?
16. Why do you think some people experience so much more pain and sadness in their lives than others? Does God want every human being to be happy? Does Satan want every human being to be upset, angry, stressed, depressed and/or rebellious? Why?
17. Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. Clearly this section of Scripture is portrayed in the form of contrasts. Why do you think Solomon did that? Is God trying to teach us that every life needs some of each contrasting item?
18. Is there really a time to kill? How does that relate to the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill?" (Exodus 20:13) Is that talking about killing other human beings? It should be noted that the word for kill in Ecclesiastes 3 is not the same as the word for kill in the sixth commandment. In Exodus 20:13 the word is more accurately translated murder. Does that help in our understanding of Ecclesiastes 3? Do these contrasts suggest that God wants us to suffer some, to be depressed some, etc.?
19. Do sinners and rebels always lose in the end? What do we mean by "the end"?
20. How often do we get in trouble because we are not willing to wait for "God's time"? How different would things be if Eve had said, "Wait, let me talk to my husband and to God and if it's a good idea to eat of this fruit, I will come back tomorrow?"
21. **Do you get in trouble more often by rushing ahead of God or by being so slow that you don't keep up with him?**
22. In light of Eve's experience and others we could mention, is there any way to know for sure when the "right time" is?
23. Ellen White describes "time" as a talent. "Of no talent (God) has given will he require a more strict account than of our time." *Christ's Object Lessons* p. 342. What is implied by the idea that time is a talent?
24. Some have followed the example of Solomon and others in suggesting that God has fixed a time for everything, even a time to die. Some great religions of the world suggest that this is "ultimate fate." What is the relationship between "God's chosen time" and my freedom? Do my choices have any impact on "the right time"?
25. Can we as Christians just sit back and wait because when the right time comes, God will act?
26. Is the second coming in any way dependent upon human choices? Or is it predetermined by

God no matter what our choices are?

27. Read Ecclesiastes 3:13, 22. What do these verses say to you? Is Solomon speaking like some party animal suggesting that we should just eat, drink and be merry? How much of our time should be spent in pursuing happiness, even pleasure? Why would Solomon conclude that there is nothing more to life than to eat, drink, and enjoy your job?
28. Read Ecclesiastes 3:11. Would you like to know what is going to happen in the future? Why do human beings desire to look into the future? Can we ever fully understand God's actions?
29. Can God "foreknow" your free choices? Read Hebrews 2:15. Are you ever motivated by a fear of death? Have you ever felt enslaved or powerless because of your fear of death?
30. Should God's faithful, believing people be able to face death without any fear? Did God ever intend for anyone to die? Let us understand clearly that death is an invader! It is the result of sin and was never a part of God's original plan.
31. Why does Solomon repeatedly talk about his "work"? Does a king who has perhaps thousands of slaves and lives the life of luxury, really know anything about work? What was Solomon referring to when he talks about his work? Did he regard his "work" as being his efforts to obtain knowledge and wisdom, to do research and study?
32. Would you agree with the sentiment from Solomon: "God deals out joy in the present, the *now*. It's useless to brood over how long we might live"? (Ecclesiastes 5:20, *Message*)
33. Read Ecclesiastes 3:16. What is Solomon talking about? What is the place of justice or the place of right? Was Solomon in any way responsible for the courts (the place of justice) or the temple (the place of righteousness)?
34. Is there a right time for God's judgment? When will that time come? Or has it come already?
35. Read John 12:31. What did Jesus imply by saying "now is the judgment of this world"? He appears to be talking about his own trial and crucifixion. In what sense was the death of Jesus a kind of judgment for the world? How does the death of Jesus affect the righteous and the wicked? Is it some kind of judgment? Does his death in some way condemn the wicked? What does the death of Christ mean to you in your daily life?
36. After reading Ecclesiastes 3 should we conclude that we have no control over anything? Does God dictate every detail of our lives?
37. Read Ecclesiastes 3:18-22. How do we fit the sentiments of these verses with Psalms 8:5 which says we are "made a little lower than God himself!" Is that true of the animals also? How do you reconcile Ecclesiastes 3:19 with John 3:16? Is all we have to look forward to a "return to dust" or is there a real possibility that we could experience eternal life? Can you reconcile Ecclesiastes 3:21 with Romans 8:38,39? Could both of these passages be inspired? Is it true that there is no way we can know what will happen after we die? How does that fit with all of the pictures of heaven which are presented in Scripture?
38. What have you learned from this lesson? Are the issues involving God's timing in your life clearer or more confusing? Does God play a major role in your day-by-day existence? Can you see evidence of God's timing in your life?

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