

## The Path of Life Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

### Introduction

The Hebrew Bible is called the Tanakh. The Tanakh lists the book of Ecclesiastes as one of the books of wisdom. The book of Ecclesiastes has only twelve chapters and is a contrast of two different views of life. The preacher poses the question, "Should life be viewed from a human perspective or a divine perspective?" People of every age ponder this question which makes the book of Ecclesiastes a very relevant book even today.

There are two statements that come from Ecclesiastes, each representing one of these positions. You've probably heard the first one many times in the phrase, "Vanity, Vanity, all is vanity." It first appears in verse 2 of Chapter 1 but is a reoccurring theme throughout the book. It is the view of life viewed through human eyes.

The second position is the one of divine instruction, found in Chapter 12, verse 1, which begins, "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth and ends in Verse 13 with, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all."

The word "Ecclesiastes" comes from the Latin translation of the Hebrew title Qoheleth. In English, the name Qoheleth is translated as "The Preacher." The preacher is the author and main speaker of the book.

Qoheleth introduces himself as "a son of David and a king in Jerusalem." He endorses wisdom as the means for a well-lived earthly life. But without a view of the eternal, he cannot ascribe any lasting meaning to this life. No wonder so many people enjoy this life's pleasures and adopt the view, "Eat, drink, and be merry, and then we die." But the preacher says that even the enjoyment of this life comes to us as a gift from the hand of God.

According to the Talmud, the point of Qoheleth is to say that everything is futile under the sun. Therefore, a person should put all their effort into that which is above the sun. The preacher's advice, in the end, is to fear God and keep His commandments, for that is the whole duty of everyone.

So, is life worth living? - For that is the question the preacher is asking. What about your life? Are you satisfied with the life you're living?

Only God's eternal presence and purpose can help us make sense of our human experiences. Let's read this well-known passage of scripture in Chapter 3, verses 1-15 of the book of Ecclesiastes.

"To everything, *there is* a season, A time for every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, And a time to die; A time to plant, And a time to pluck *what is* planted;

A time to kill, And a time to heal; A time to break down, And a time to build up; A time to weep, And a time to laugh; A time to mourn, And a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, And a time to gather stones; A time to embrace, And a time to refrain from embracing; A time to gain, And a time to lose; A time to keep, And a time to throw away; A time to tear, And a time to sew; A time to keep silence, And a time to speak; A time to love, And a time to hate; A time of war, And a time of peace. What profit has the worker from that in which he labors? I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied. 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. I know that nothing *is* better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—it *is* the gift of God. 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. That which is has already been, And what is to be has already been; And God requires an account of what is past." (Ecc 3:1-15 NKJV)

The Apostle Paul writes in Galatians Chapter 4 that when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son. The preacher says that timing has an essential impact on everything. Unfortunately, things inspired by our own humanity never fully satisfy. The preacher concludes that when you look out and back and around you, the only conclusion you can come to is that all is vanity. That is why we must share the good news of God's divine love and purpose!

God does not want you to live a life of futility, frustration, or fear. God wants you to look up and discover what the preacher does in Chapter 8, verse 12, "I know it shall be well with them that fear God."

God has an eternal plan and purpose for your life! But you will never know that until you discover God loves you and promises His presence will always be with you when you receive Jesus and his offer of eternal life. Choosing Christ is the only real solution to the problems and questions we face in life.

In verse 11, the preacher says, " 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." (Ecc 3:11 NKJV)

Only in Christ can we achieve the eternal purpose and destiny that God has designed for us. This life is temporal, and all you do seems to fade away quickly. But whatever the Holy Spirit motivates you to do has an eternal value and becomes a work that will never pass away. Because whatever God does is eternal and cannot pass away!

Since God chooses to do his work through us, the work He does through us will abide forever. The first thing we need to do is learn to recognize God's eternal presence.

## **I. Begin to See God's Presence Around You**

Do you see God at work in your world? Verse 11 says that He has made everything beautiful in its time. God's work in creation displays His beauty every day of your life. David writes in Psalm 19, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament (heavens) shows His handiwork." ([Psa 19:1 NKJV](#))

The fascinating thing about beauty is that each person has a different idea about what it is. Beauty is something that's very difficult to define. You've probably heard the saying, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." But who can deny the beauty of God's artistry in nature? You've heard the phrase, "Beauty is more than skin deep." Beauty is not only the surface adornment of creation, like paint on a house or pictures on the wall; the beauty of God is something that thoroughly permeates nature.

God's beauty is profound. The more in-depth you investigate it, the more amazed you become. You can see it under the microscope, and you can view it through the telescope. You marvel at the beauty in the tiniest things of creation and are equally captivated by the immenseness of space and the mammoth planets and galaxies in our universe. That is the nature of the perfect work of God. The detail of God's artistry saturates all of life.

If you can somehow break out of the humanistic tunnel vision that we all seem to gravitate to, you will discover the beauty God has placed all around you. That is when you begin to realize the presence of God surrounds you every day of your life. Get out of the rut of rushing into your self-created environment. Cut out those negative fear-producing news reports from your daily diet.

Begin your day by recognizing the eternal presence of God and be inspired by Him! Begin your day by saying, "Good morning, Lord!" rather than, "Good Lord, it's morning!" The preacher warns us not to get lost in the tasks of life! You are a product of God's creative genius, and that alone gives you unique value!

Start seeing the beauty God has placed around you, and let Him fill you with His eternal presence each day.

## **II. Receive God's Presence Within You**

Secondly, let God into your life. The preacher says that God has set eternity in our hearts. God has placed within the heart of every person a consciousness of eternity and a longing after it.

Even though the material world is aging and decaying right before our eyes, we still struggle desperately to slow and even halt this inevitable process. Consumers spend billions of dollars on products - all aimed at prolonging life! Why? Because the reality is, no one really wants to die! And why is that? Well, one reason the preacher gives us is that God has put within us a consciousness of eternal life! And even if you try to ignore or disavow it, the seed of eternity is still deep within you.

Historically, humanity has continuously tried to grasp hold of the boundless reaches of eternity and conquer the limitations of time and space. And now we are trying to achieve eternal life with AI's help instead of acknowledging God.

But the preacher suggests that it is the Divine One who has put eternity in our hearts. It's impossible to remove the work that God has done from the beginning to the end. Discovering God is not simply an intellectual pursuit. It is a matter of the heart. It is rooted in relationship. Knowing God is not a matter of understanding the tangibles of creation. It is a matter of entering into fellowship with the Creator.

The Apostle Paul tells the Corinthians, "Clearly *you are* an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, *that is*, of the heart." (2 Corinthians 3:3 NKJV)

God's laws of eternity are upon the fleshly tablets of our hearts. God created us as worshipping creatures. Everyone worships something! That is our created nature. When we recognize that God's love has been revealed to us in Christ, we can say, "Lord come and fill my life with your eternal presence. Fill the deepest part of me with your eternal life!" That is the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ - so that outwardly and inwardly, we can stretch forth our hands towards heaven and receive God's presence.

God wants you to invite Jesus to come into your life and fill you with a personal sense of His divine presence and purpose for your life. The ultimate work of Christ through the Holy Spirit is to manifest eternity within you. And God can use all that happens in your world to reveal himself to you. He does this so you will discover Him and allow the Holy Spirit to create a spiritual awakening within you. Without that kind of heavenly revelation, you would never be able to see God's work or receive God's gift of eternal life.

### **III. Let God Reign Over You**

Verse 11 says, "Yet so, man cannot find out the work that God has done from the beginning even to the end." The finite can never attain infinity. You are never going to be the Infinite, Eternal God! Satan tried, and look what it has got him - Insanity! And that is precisely what the preacher says will happen. The preacher says that everywhere you turn will only bring you to vanity and vexation of spirit.

We live in a time-defined world, yet we have the consciousness of eternity in our hearts. Everyday problems and crises intimidate and threaten us with ruin. People today live in a constant state of struggle. And no extension of time will ever solve that problem. We need help! We need Divine transformation. We need eternal intervention.

Nothing in this life will ever sufficiently prepare us for eternity. That is nothing in this life but Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only one who can bring peace to the great

struggle within us. The joy and hope of those who believe in Christ is that there are greater things to experience and enjoy beyond the bounds of time and space.

We won't be limited to a physical body forever. God plans to outfit us with a body that's not limited to time and space. No space suits are needed, no oxygen tanks; God will give us eternal, glorified bodies. God plans to give us bodies that will allow us to discover for eternity just how great He really is!

No matter how great the conflict, no matter how difficult the problem, no matter how desperate the circumstance, the Bible says, "Greater is He that is within you than he that is within the world." As you grasp hold of His divine sovereignty and embrace His lordship over your life, you will experience eternal victory and find yourself praising God through every circumstance of your life.

We spend far too much time identifying and describing God in terms that relate to our circumstances. But the New Testament truth is that God is greater than our circumstances! Focus on God's power and wisdom instead of your life's problems and difficulties.

Jesus is still the master of the winds and the waves. At any moment, God can conquer and order the circumstances of your life. We need to learn that whatever we face – our God is big enough!

The preacher says that a person's eyes grow weary with the sight of things. From the first time our eyes look out into this world, they see pain and struggle. The preacher says, "Not only do the leaves and flowers wither and fade, but even the stars in the heavens dim and fall away." The natural conclusion of this mortal life, even by the most gifted mind, can only be, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

But to those who discover the beauty and eternal presence of the living God comes a joy and peace of knowing that to everything, there is a season and a time to every purpose under heaven.

## **Conclusion**

So don't become a captive of time or a victim of your circumstances. Embrace God's love and kindness. Ask for and accept His help. Become a conqueror of time and a victor over your circumstances. Don't forget to stretch out your hands and touch eternity by receiving the eternal life that Jesus Christ offers you.

Let me hasten to say that God is not the cause of everything that happens to you. It's popular today to say, "Everything happens for a reason." I wonder what you mean when you say that! If you mean everything that happens is God's will, that's New Age teaching; it's certainly not biblical. If you mean there's nothing you can do about whatever happens, that's fatalism.

Of course, everything God does happens for a reason. But, be careful about assigning things to God He is not a part of! Don't say, "Everything happens for a reason," as an easy way to avoid answering life's tough questions!

We may be unaware of why some things happen, but not everything happens for a reason. Many things in this sinful world defy logic and reason. The beauty of the Gospel is that God can use whatever has happened to reveal His love and grace. Even in the worst situations of life, God can work things out for your eternal benefit. Allow the presence of God to become so real to you that no situation of life can destroy your faith.

The challenge of the preacher is, "Will you keep struggling with the issues of your life, or surrender them to God and ask Jesus to come into your heart and remove the struggle and fill you with His presence and peace."