

Ecclesiastes 3:1-15  
God's plan embraces all of reality  
Understanding God's All-encompassing Plan—3:1-5:20

- 1) The contrasting times of life—3:1-9
  - a) Theme—3:1 <sup>1</sup> *For everything there is an appointed time, and a time for every event under heaven.*
  - b) Polar opposites in life often related to the decisions of people—3:2-8 (Merisms)
    - i) Life spans
      - (1) <sup>2</sup> *A time to give birth, and a time to die;*
      - (2) *a time to plant, and a time to uproot what was planted;*
    - ii) Constructive behavior
      - (1) <sup>3</sup> *a time to kill, and a time to heal;*
      - (2) *a time to break down, and a time to build up;*
    - iii) Emotional responses
      - (1) <sup>4</sup> *a time to weep, and a time to laugh;*
      - (2) *a time to mourn, and a time to dance;*
    - iv) Relationships
      - (1) <sup>5</sup> *a time to throw stones, and a time to gather stones;*
      - (2) *a time to embrace and a time to avoid embracing;*
    - v) Possessions
      - (1) <sup>6</sup> *a time to search and a time to lose;*
      - (2) *a time to keep and a time to throw away;*
    - vi) Grief
      - (1) <sup>7</sup> *a time to rip and a time to sew;*
      - (2) *a time to keep silent, and a time to speak;*
    - vii) Relationships
      - (1) <sup>8</sup> *a time to love, and a time to hate;*
      - (2) *a time of war, and a time of peace.*
  - c) Rhetorical question—3:9 <sup>9</sup> *What advantage does the worker have from his toiling?* (assumed negative answer; cf. 1:3; 2:11, 13)
- 2) God's sovereignty on display—3:10-15 <sup>10</sup> *I have seen the task that God has given to the sons of Adam to occupy themselves with.*
  - a) Skillfully precise—3:11a <sup>11</sup> *He has made everything beautiful in its time.*
  - b) Wisely inscrutable—3:11b *He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that the man cannot find out the work that God has done from the beginning to the end.*
  - c) Tenderly gracious—3:12-13 <sup>12</sup> *I know that there is nothing better for them than ...*
    - i) ① *to rejoice and* ② *to do good in his life;* <sup>13</sup> *and* ③ *also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—it is the gift of God.*
  - d) Awesomely unchangeable—3:14 <sup>14</sup> *I know that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken away from it. God has made it this way so that people should be in awe before Him.*
  - e) Relentlessly connected—3:15 <sup>15</sup> *That which is has already been, and that which is to be has already been* (cf. 1:9); *and God seeks what has been driven away.*