

**Ecclesiastes 3:1-22**  
**November 17, 2021**

**II. Human Effort (1:2-6:9)**

**A. All Is Vapor (1:2-11)**

**B. The King's Experiment (1:12-2:26)**

**C. God's Work in Time and Eternity (3:1-22)**

1. A Time for Everything (vv. 1-9)

Just because we are in a new chapter doesn't mean that the author has cut ties with the previous chapter. These verses aren't strangers to funerals given v. 2 in particular, but in its context, Solomon gives us fourteen pairs of circumstances, highlighting the fact that we can never quite figure out when the "right time" is. What should we be investing in today? Should we be mourning or dancing? Should we be keeping silent or speaking? Who can know such a thing? Everything seems so haphazard! *What profit has the worker from that in which he labors* (v. 9)?

2. God's Work and Human Response (vv. 10-15)

As it turns out, when we quit trying to figure everything out and simply *rejoice and do good in our lives* (v. 12), we fare much better. Verse 10-15 remind us to let God do the work that only He can do. The Hebrew word for *make* occurs seven times in vv. 10-15, five of them referring to God (vv. 11 [3x], 14 [2x]).

Note well the sovereignty of God in this section. *He has made everything appropriate in its time* (v. 11, NASB20). Yet, Solomon goes on to say in that next verse that, even though *He has put eternity in our hearts*, we still can't figure out what it is He's doing, and how He's bringing it about. Even if we can't figure out the unfolding of events, God already has! Perhaps this idea of eternity ties in well with our inherent knowledge of God in Romans 1!

Supporting God's sovereignty of all the affairs of His creation, consider the poem of vv. 14-15. *Nothing can be added or taken from* all that God has done. God doesn't change His mind, God can't learn new things, He's never surprised; neither can His works nor will be changed in any way whatsoever.

In v. 15, Solomon borrows the same concept that he previously brought up in 1:9 – *there is nothing new under the sun*. We should never grow discouraged or weary if we think we are living in new or unprecedented times. We should also remember that God is sovereign over all; *nothing can be added or taken from* His purposes. The last phrase of v. 15 is difficult to translate and interpret. Most likely, it's along the lines of the HCSB: *God repeats what has passed* (NASB?, NET, NLT). It may also refer to human accountability (KJV, NIV, NKJV), or divine justice (CSB, ESV).

Instead of finding fault with God, or grumbling that it's unfair, Solomon tells us that this doctrine should lead people to *be in awe of Him* because of it (v. 14, HCSB).

3. God's Judgment Tests Human Beings (vv. 16-22)

Yet, even in accountability, Solomon finds futility, for it seems like injustice is everywhere (v. 16). This is parallel to what we saw last week in chapter two, where both the wise man and the fool end up forgotten, and the work of the productive man may be left to the lazy one. At the end of it all, we all die (vv. 19-20).

Don't worry about how God does it, or why He chooses to work a certain way, that's not our prerogative to know as His creatures, and we will only end up disillusioned and exasperated. Go about your life, let God sort it out. In the meantime, *rejoice in your works as the gift of God* (vv. 22, 13).