

# Times and Seasons

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Ecclesiastes 3:1-15  
Doug Roman, Bible Baptist Church  
Sunday AM, February 15, 2015  
Sermon Summary

## Introduction

We live in a world where people don't fear God. Atheists militantly deny God, Agonists question the existence of God, scientists reject the necessity of God, televangelists manipulate God for their gain, Christians trivialize God, and theologians dissect God. We forget God and think that we determine the times and seasons of our life (college, marriage, children, career, home, grandchildren, retirement, etc.).

## Exposition

The question, "Is this all there is?," has been expressed in despairing utterance, written, sighed, sung. This general theme has found its way into music. Several examples include "Ecclesiastes" by Stevie Wonder. The piece by Stevie Wonder only has music. It has a somber and almost dirge feel to it, a sort of march of despondency to it. "The Wanderer" by U2 expresses the pursuit of pleasure; "I went out there/In search of experience/To taste and to touch/And to feel as much/As a man can/Before he repents" Perhaps the best known portion of Ecclesiastes set to music is our passage this morning. "Turn! Turn! Turn!" by The Byrds is often associated with this passage. I mention these musical references because they tell us that the message of Ecclesiastes resonates with the human experience.

We find three phases of thought from Qoheleth in Ecclesiastes 3.

1. Assertion (v. 1). Qoheleth makes an assertion in v. 1. He goes on to support the assertion in the poem that follows.
2. Poem (vv. 2-8). The focus of this poem is time. The word "time" is found at least 14 times in vv. 2-8. Here's an interpretive help with the poem: keep it literal. As we quickly look at the poem, we want to stay on the firm ground of literal interpretation rather than move to the slippery slope of figurative interpretation (Greidanus, *Ecclesiastes*, 73). If the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense. As far as a structural help with the poem: it is built on pairs with two polarities. These polarities make up the whole, that is, they assume everything in between. "Each pair forms a merism, a figure of speech in which two polarities make up a whole" (Ryken, 80). For example, north and south or heaven and earth (Genesis 1:1). Moreover, you will find a desirable feature and an undesirable feature in each pairing.
  - A. A time to be born and a time to die (v. 2a)
  - B. A time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted (v. 2b)
  - C. A time to kill and a time to heal (v. 3a) (cf. Deuteronomy 32:29)
  - D. A time to break down, and time to build up (v. 3b)
  - E. A time to weep, and a time to laugh (v. 4a)
  - F. A time to mourn, and a time to dance (v. 4b)
  - G. A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together (v. 5a). The gathering of stones likely signified rendering a field useless (2 Kings 3:19, 25), while the casting away of stones was a way to say the field is ready for use (Isaiah 5:2).
  - H. A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing (v. 5b)
  - I. A time to seek, and a time to lose (v. 6a)
  - J. A time to keep, and a time to cast away (v. 6b)
  - K. A time to tear, and a time to sew (v. 7a)

- L. A time to keep silence, and a time to speak (v. 7b; cf. Proverbs 26:4-5)
  - M. A time to love, and a time to hate (v. 8a)
  - N. A time for war, and a time for peace (v. 8b)
3. Reflection (vv. 9-15). There are two conclusions that he draws based on his observations. Both are set off by the phrase “I perceived” (v. 12, 14).
- A. Enjoy simpler pleasures (vv. 12-13)
  - B. Fear God (vv. 14-15). This is portent to what Qoheleth says in 12:13-14. There are at least four facets of God’s purposes that we observe from these verses:
    - 1) God’s purposes are permanent. “Whatever God does endures forever.”
    - 2) God’s purposes are unchangeable. “Nothing added; nothing taken away.”
    - 3) God’s purposes are sure. “God has done it”
    - 4) God’s purposes are coherent. “That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already has been”

### Conclusion

We have power and can change the course of the world, right? We have the power of social media (e.g., the Arab Spring). Congress dictates the times through Daylight Savings Time. However, the reality is that we have little power to change the course of God’s ordered world. Psalm 31:15 says, “my times are in your hands.” God has always worked on His timetable. When we fight against God’s sovereign control, it leads to incredible frustration and even insanity. When we work within God’s ordered world, it leads to a humble surrender to the will of the Creator. God brought time into existence (Genesis 1:1). God sent His Son in the fullness of times (Galatians 4:4-5). Jesus had an appointed time for His death (Mark 8:31) and until then his hour had not yet come (John 7:30). The times and the seasons are for God to know (Acts 1:6-7, 11). The time of your life has already been ordained (Job 14:5-6; Psalm 139:16; Hebrews 9:27). “You cannot live any longer than the Lord has prescribed nor die any sooner” (Martin Luther in Ryken, 82). “When the Vicomte de Turenne was mortally wounded at the Battle of Salzbach in 1675, he wistfully said, ‘I did not mean to be killed today’” (Ryken, 85). Will you be ready?

### Discussion Questions

1. What are some examples of how Christians display a practical denial of God’s control of the times and seasons of our lives?
2. What kind of “fear” does Qoheleth (i.e., the author of Ecclesiastes) have in view?
3. Read Acts 1:6-7. When it comes to God’s purposes in your life, how can you submit yourself to God’s timing, even though it’s not for you to know?
4. Read Ephesians 5:16. How do you redeem the time God has given you?
5. Read Hebrews 9:27. How can you die well?