

TURN



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**By David Lee Burris**

To everything there is a season,



a time for every purpose under Heaven...  
(Ecc 3:1)

# Book Of Ecclesiastes: The Preacher General Providence: The Lot Of Man

## GOD'S NATURAL & NORMAL LAW OF IMPARTIALITY

- Total Vanity (Vapor) Or Ephemeral Emptiness Of Mankind's Every Ambition & Pursuit
- Determining Role Of Random Chance In Large Majority Of Human Success Stories & Failures Of Endeavor
- No Denying That Luck & Time Happen To All Of Us & This Is Called "The Human Condition"
- Nature Repeats Itself In Endless Cycles (Chapter 1) Or In Amoral Alternation Of Opposites (Chapter 3) - Always At Work But Nothing Is Achieved
- Beasts Of Field Know No Difference But Humankind Requires Meaningful Objectives & Purposeful Existence
- The Creatures Of Intelligence Throughout Human History Have Searched For Answers As To The Positively Purposed End To Man On Earth - Teleological Study Of History

# Book Of Ecclesiastes: The Preacher General Providence: The Lot Of Man

## GOD'S NATURAL & NORMAL LAW OF IMPARTIALITY

- Successive Generations Of Humans On The Earth Compare In Impact To That Of Goalless Nature
- Aging Man Is Metaphorically Compared To An Old House
- Then The Lone & Inevitable Certainty Of Each Man's Death
- We Will Not Even Be Remembered By Those That Survive Us
- Thus, We Find In (12: 9 - 13) He States We Must Be Prepared To Go To Our Long Home
- Chapters One Thru Eight Written In First Person - That Person Claimed As Being King Solomon
- His Conclusion - Man Alone Is Not Merely A Number But Neither Are Men Together The Measure
- After - Chapter 8: Verse 12 - Written In Third Person & Centers On Advice For Living In The Duration Or That Interval Between House & Home
- Recommends "Seizing The Day" & Enjoying Small Pleasures Of This Life & The Three-Fold Chord Of Family.

There is a *time* for everything, and a *season* for every activity under the heavens: a time to be *born* and a time to *die*, a time to *plant* and a time to *uproot*, a time to *tear down* and a time to *build*, a time to *weep* and a time to *laugh*, a time to *mourn* and a time to *dance*, a time to *scatter* stones and a time to *gather* them, a time to *embrace* and a time to *refrain* from embracing.

*Ecclesiastes 3:1-5*

# TruthMagazine

## The Power of Negative Thinking In Ecclesiastes

Roman A. Madrigal  
Chicago, Illinois

"Vanity of vanities, All is vanity!" This pessimistic generalization of the human condition provides the keynote to the interpretation of the book of Ecclesiastes and characterizes its author Qoheleth<sup>(1)</sup> as a despondent man of despair and depression. Indeed, the book as a whole is quite negative and evokes a forceful sense of gloom. It is this feature of distinct pessimism that has led most students and exegetes of Ecclesiastes to overlook the positive message of the work. And there is an affirmative side to this fascinating book. While the author is not the total pessimist that his opening sentence might suggest, I think that his uncompromising insistence that all is vanity is the necessary framework within which his positive message must be understood.

While the positive value of Qoheleth has been greatly neglected by biblical scholars who continue to interpret the spirit of the book to be one of "overarching resignation and despair,"<sup>(2)</sup> it is my belief that the negative thinking of Qoheleth yields positive goals and results. His negative stance is prerequisite to his positive admonition to enjoy life. He is demolishing to build. This type of negative thinking can be quite powerful and productive. Qoheleth's advice to enjoy created life as a gift from God is a steady counterpoint to his central argument: man's desperate search for order in a chaotic world is simply fruitless. This proposition does not necessarily conflict with "the end of the matter" in 12:13. It simply means that there is nothing better for man to do than to eat, drink, and to rejoice - for this is his portion! It is the purpose of our study to discover Qoheleth's total world view by surveying these positive and negative motifs throughout the book. Our investigation will not attempt to be exhaustive, but rather suggestive an introductory.

## Point And Counterpoint

The Hebrew word for "vanity" in Ecclesiastes can be interpreted as "vapor." This is, perhaps, even more depressing than the traditional translation of "vanity of vanities, all is vanity." The characteristic of vapor is that it vanishes, disappears. Qoheleth observes that the same is true for human life. Nothing endures. Nothing lasts forever. Nothing remains. While other biblical texts note the transitory nature of human affairs (see Isaiah 40:6-7 and Proverbs 27), Qoheleth sets forth this common insight with an emphasis and consistency that is without parallel in the Old Testament Scriptures. What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? What profit is there? What can be accumulated and stored up? Nothing! Qoheleth moves on to exclaim, "Therefore I hated life. . ." (2:17). Although this is the main point of the book, the author offers a secondary intent, or counterpoint. In spite of his inability to discover the key to life's meaning, man is to enjoy life, for "this is his portion." It is this uniform counterpoint that gives Ecclesiastes its overall equilibrium and sense of balance (2:24-26; 3:12-13; 3:22; 5:18-19; 7:14; 8:15; 9:7-9; 11:9-12:1).

Many scholars who have seriously studied Ecclesiastes maintain that the essential theme to the book is not resignation, but joy (*simha*), the enjoyment of life. Robert Gordis, for example, explains that "for Qoheleth, joy is God's categorical imperative for man, not in any anemic or spiritualized sense, but rather as a full-blooded and tangible experience, expressing itself in the play of the body and the activity of the mind, the contemplation of nature and the pleasures of love." [\(3\)](#) We shall notice both the negative motif of vanity and the positive motif of enjoyment throughout the remainder of our discussion.

Qoheleth reminds us through his various topics and themes that all religious affirmations which do not measure up to experience and the facts of life are naive and cannot be trusted. What he affirms in his blunt realism is the following three theses: (1) There are limits to human existence, especially death; (2) Man is thus disillusioned and begins to hate life; therefore (3) Man should recognize the reality of the present moment as a gift from God to be enjoyed. (4) Death cancels everything. This is the common lot of man...

This is the fundamental limitation placed upon the human race. This realization brings Qoheleth to despair as he cries "all is vanity!" Another limit placed on man is the thinking can be quite power created life as a gift from God is a steady unpleasant fact that he lives in an indiscernible moral advice to enjoy order (cf. 7:15 and 8:14). Any casual observer can see that the world is crooked, where the sons of men do only what is right in their own eyes. These human limitations reveal ultimately that there is no new thing under the sun. Even wisdom, however beneficial and bountiful, has restrictions. Qoheleth demolishes the myth of progress with a single blow.

Any attempt by man to master his life is presented as folly and a striving after wind. Wisdom cannot be pursued as an end in itself because it too, has certain limitations (1:18). Pleasure, wealth, honor, and fame(5) all are as the vapor which vanishes into thin air. There's no gain or profit from man's labor in which he labors under the sun. Given all this, the arrogant effort of autonomous (modern?) man to control his fate is laughable. "So, I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind (2:17).

## Conclusion

Having noted a range of limits imposed on man's existence and experience and the resultant folly of man's attempt to master his life, Qoheleth reasserts the sage advice that man's lot is to enjoy the life that God gives to him, for this is his portion. It is my belief that this theme of enjoyment provides a steady counter point to the main point of vanity, pessimism, and negativity in Ecclesiastes. "Enjoyment" can also be understood as the fruit of negative thinking in the book. That is, enjoyment and the transient pleasures of this life are highlighted in the context of Qoheleth's desperate and dismal declarations. There is a certain power of negative thinking which gives the Ecclesiastes its forcefulness, and this negative reflection yields the positive product of pleasure. Of course, the pursuit of life's pleasures must always be realized in light of God's Covenant (11:9; 12:13-14). Yet Ecclesiastes is concerned ultimately with the enjoyment of the present, not in any hedonistic sense, but in the context of life with all its toil and enigma. This is the life available to man. This is the life that God gives!

There is a time for EVERYTHING, and a season for every activity under the heavens:

a time to be BORN and a time to DIE,  
a time to PLANT and a time to UPROOT,  
a time to KILL and a time to HEAL,  
a time to TEAR DOWN and a time to BUILD,  
a time to WEEP and a time to LAUGH,  
a time to MOURN and a time to DANCE,  
a time to SCATTER stones and a time to GATHER,  
a time to EMBRACE and a time to REFRAIN,  
a time to SEARCH and a time to GIVE UP,  
a time to KEEP and a time to THROW AWAY,  
a time to TEAR and a time to MEND,  
a time to be SILENT and a time to SPEAK,  
a time to LOVE and a time to HATE,  
a time for WAR and a time for PEACE.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 NIV

MorganalWands

## Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

Earthly pursuits are no doubt lawful in their proper time and order (Ec 3:1-8), but unprofitable when out of time and place; as for instance, when pursued as the solid and chief good (Ec 3:9, 10); whereas God makes everything beautiful in its season, which man obscurely comprehends (Ec 3:11). God allows man to enjoy moderately and virtuously His earthly gifts (Ec 3:12, 13). What consoles us amidst the instability of earthly blessings is, God's counsels are immutable (Ec 3:14).

1. Man has his appointed cycle of seasons and vicissitudes, as the sun, wind, and water (Ec 1:5-7). Purpose—as there is a fixed "season" in God's "purposes" (for example, He has fixed the "time" when man is "to be born," and "to die," Ec 3:2), so there is a lawful "time" for man to carry out his "purposes" and inclinations. God does not condemn, but approves of, the use of earthly blessings (Ec 3:12); it is the abuse that He condemns, the making them the chief end (1Co 7:31). The earth, without human desires, love, taste, joy, sorrow, would be a dreary waste, without water; but, on the other hand, the misplacing and excess of them, as of a flood, need control. Reason and revelation are given to control them. Everything hath its time; in which, to enjoy it, and therewith do good to others, is our good, [Ecclesiastes 3:1-13](#). God doth all according to his decree that we should fear him, and there's nothing new, [Ecclesiastes 3:14](#). The vanity of unjust judgment; God's the Judge.

**A season;** a certain time appointed by God for its being and continuance, which no human wit or providence can prevent or alter. And by virtue of this appointment or decree of God, all the vicissitudes and changes which happen in the world, whether comforts or calamities, do come to pass; which is here added, partly, to prove what he last said, [Ecclesiastes 2:24,26](#), that both the free and comfortable enjoyment of the creatures which some have, and the crosses and vexations which others have with them, are from the hand and counsel of God; partly, to prove the principal proposition of the book, that all things below are vain, and happiness is not to be found in them, because of their great uncertainty, and mutability, and transitoriness, and because they are so much out of the reach and power of men, and wholly in the disposal of another, to wit, God, who doth either give or take them away, either sweeten or embitter them, as it pleaseth him; and partly, **to bring the minds of men into a quiet and cheerful dependence upon God's providence, and submission to his will, and a state of preparation for all events.**

**To every purpose,** or *will*, or *desire*, to wit, of man; to all men's designs, attempts, and businesses. Not only natural, but even the free and voluntary actions of men, are ordered and disposed by God to accomplish his own purpose. But it must be considered, that he doth not here speak of a time allowed by God, wherein all the following things may lawfully be done, which is wholly besides his scope and business; but only of a time fixed by God, in which they would or should be done.



## **Question:**

**Can you explain Ecclesiastes 3:1-8?**

## **Answer:**

This may be one of the top ten famous passages in the Bible. It was popularized by the rock group The Byrds in the 60's. We have to look at the context of this passage. Solomon is not discussing deep theology here. He is presenting what he learned about the meaning of life as a human being—one who checked out pretty much all life has to offer. Solomon concluded that, when it comes to human activities, it is “meaningless, meaningless.” He says, to back up his point, that “there is nothing new under the sun.” In the last verse of chapter two he says God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness to those who please him, but even these things, apart from God, are meaningless.

Continuing his philosophical reflection on the nature of life “under the sun” (speaking of physical, not spiritual things), he notices that the natural rhythm of life includes birth & death, killing & healing, tearing down & building, weeping & laughing, mourning & then dancing, accepting & letting go, loving & hating, silence & then speaking & so forth. What he seems to be saying is that such things are the normal lot of human beings, whether they are righteous or unrighteous. In the end, if seen from a human perspective, all of these things appear to be meaningless. Yet, he noted earlier in 2:24 that it is better to have joy and pleasure than the opposite.

In Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 Solomon is not necessarily putting value or judgement on the list of human activities. He is simply describing life as it is. Later, of course, he will comment on these things. I do not think that we should seek any deep spiritual truth in the list of human activities in Ecc 3:1-8, but we should note, with Solomon, that in all things, there seems to be a kind of balance—giving and taking, gaining and losing.

**This is part of his reasoning that, in the big picture, human activity, apart from God is “meaningless, meaningless.”**

**Evidence supporting this interpretation is that after the famous set of opposing things in Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, he returns to the same kind of arguments as before. He notes that work is better than laziness, but even our work, outside of God, is meaningless. Solomon then discusses many items of wisdom in the book. In some cases, he makes moral judgments, but in others he simply notes what all of us learn to be true by our common experiences if we live long enough.**

**We need to go to the end of the book to see how God intends to use the remarks of Solomon. He tells us that, given the meaninglessness of a life of simple existence apart from God, we should “Remember our Creator in the days of our youth.” (Ecc 12:1) Only this will give meaning to the seemingly meaningless things of our everyday life. Remember him before the silver cord is severed (or before we die.) Repeating that (apart from God), everything’s simply meaningless, Solomon give his conclusion. “Here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring everything into judgment, including the hidden things, whether good or evil.” (Ecc 12:13-14).**

**If we know God and if we make a decision to fear him and obey him, then the meaningless things mentioned acquire meaning. Wisdom, knowledge and even pleasure become meaningful. We should look at Ecc 3:1-8 through this lens. In God, both birth and death gain meaning, as do even planting and uprooting. Any of these activities (except, hating) have meaning when experienced in submission to God. That is not what Solomon says in so many words in Ecc 3:1-8, but I believe it is what he has in mind. – John Oakes**

# Ecclesiastes 3

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

5 A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

6 A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

7 A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

8 A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

9 What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth?

10 I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.

11 He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.

He has  
*made*  
everything

BEAUTIFUL

IN ITS

TIME

Ecclesiastes 3:11

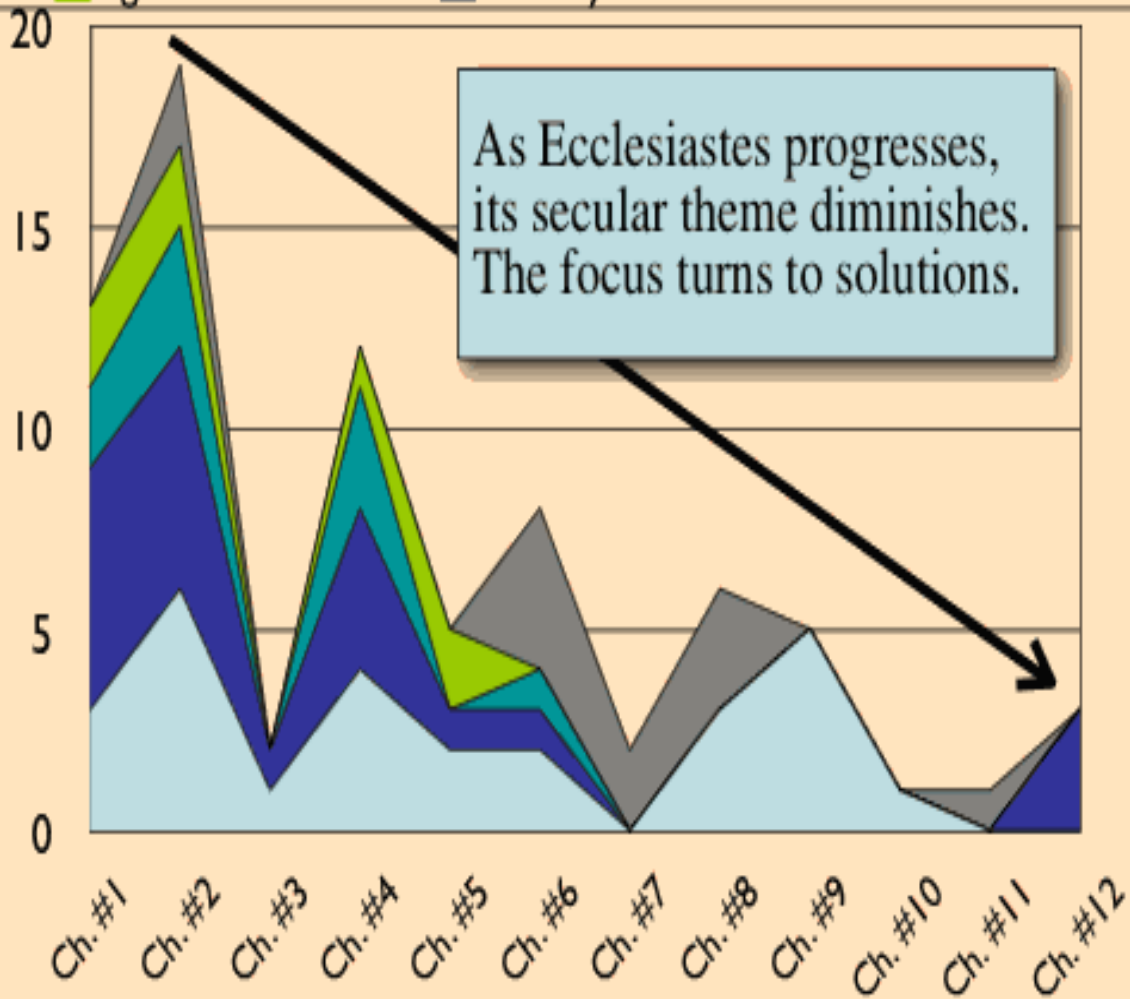
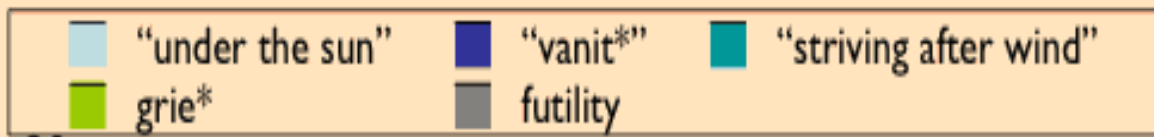
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**There are 3 turns in the song. The first turn, is for “Turn from your wicked ways”. The second turn is to “turn with the earth as it rotates”. The final turn stands for “wait your turn”. This one is obvious, as each line in the song states a thing, then the obvious! So, if you wait your turn, the opposite will come to pass!**

**— *Internet Review***

# Book of Ecclesiastes



**ANALYSIS**

**SOLUTION**

# **JUDGEMENT PREPARED**

# **FIVE STATES FIVE STEPS**

## **Five States of the Soul:**

- **EXEMPTION:**
- **Ezekiel 18: 20; Matthew 18: 1 – 3**
- **CONDEMNATION:**
- **Galatians 3: 22**
- **JUSTIFICATION:**
- **Romans 5: 1, 2; 8: 1, 2**
- **DAMNATION:**
- **Matthew 23: 3; Mark 16: 16**
- **GLORIFICATION:**
- **Romans 8: 17, 30; II Thess. 1: 7 – 12**

# **JUDGEMENT PREPARED**

# **FIVE STATES FIVE STEPS**

## **Five Steps For Saving:**

- **HEARING:**
- **Romans 10: 17; Matthew 7: 24 - 27**
- **BELIEVING:**
- **Hebrews 11: 6; Mark 16: 15, 16**
- **REPENTING:**
- **Acts 2: 38; 17: 30; Luke 13: 3**
- **CONFESSING:**
- **Matthew 10: 32, 33; Acts 8: 36, 37**
- **BAPTISM:**
- **Romans 6: 3 – 5; Acts 8: 36 - 38**