

Ecclesiastes

Part Two

Solomon is conducting a search for life's meaning through experiencing various situations.

Ecclesiastes 2:1-3 [New King James] *“I said in my heart, ‘Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure’; but surely, this also was vanity. I said of laughter, ‘Madness!’; and of mirth, ‘What does it accomplish?’ I searched in my heart how to gratify my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives.”*

Mirth and pleasure – all this was the physical gratification of the body and mind, all the time Solomon was evaluating what was happening to him as to whether it was good or bad.

Very few people if any evaluate what they do to experience physical pleasure, this too often ends up with addiction and heartache, instead of good.

The people who centre their lives around physical pleasure see no reason to puzzle out what is the true reason for human existence.

All they are concerned with is having a “*good time*” enjoying all the pleasures that physical life affords.

Yet every “*pleasure-addict*” cannot escape the “*morning after*” with all the regrets it may involve.

Ecclesiastes 2:4-10 [New King James] *“I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove. I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me. I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, and musical instruments of all kinds. So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart rejoiced in all my labour; and this was my reward from all my labour.”*

Work alcoholic – this could be looked on as a “*middle way*” that avoids bad after-effects, but this is **not** so.

Such a person is finding their pleasure **not** in sensuality, but in the full exercise of their faculties of mind and will.

Ecclesiastes 2:11 [New King James] *“Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labour in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun.”*

Yet every work alcoholic cannot finally escape the quiet hour of reflection and self-questioning which comes after a day's labour is completed.

They have to ask, “*am I attaining the true prize of human life?*”

Is the reward I have commensurate with all the labour I have expended?

Wisdom of foolishness –

Ecclesiastes 2:12-16 [New King James] *“Then I turned myself to consider wisdom and madness and folly; for what can the man do who succeeds the king? Only what he has already done. Then I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness. The wise man’s eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I myself perceived that the same event happens to them all. So I said in my heart, ‘as it happens to the fool, it also happens to me, and why was I then more wise?’ Then I said in my heart, ‘This also is vanity.’ For there is no more remembrance of the wise than of the fool forever, since all that now is will be forgotten in the days to come. And how does a wise man die? As the fool!”*

It is certain that wisdom is relatively superior to folly, for a wise person makes a better job of life than a fool.

But this is cancelled out absolutely by physical death, a fact that which even challenges the worth of wisdom.

While a fool lives for the moment a wise person will at least dip into the future in thought if not in physical preparation.

Yet even this human wisdom is most hazardous, for it is not in our power to foresee, still less to control, the future, [Proverbs 27:1] so the wisest plans may be confounded.

Ecclesiastes 2:17-25 [New King James] *“Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind. Then I hated all my labour in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labour in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity. Therefore I turned my heart and despaired of all the labour in which I had toiled under the sun. For there is a man whose labour is with wisdom, knowledge, and skill; yet he must leave his heritage to a man who has not laboured for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. For what has man for all his labour, and for the striving of his heart with which he has toiled under the sun? For all his days are sorrowful, and his work burdensome; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity. Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labour. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I?”*

Hard work can bear no long lasting fruit for those who work solely to earn money and gain possessions or prestige in life.

Not only does it all have to be left behind at death, but it may be left to those who have done nothing to earn or deserve it as an inheritance.

Hard work done with proper motives, caring for family and other people in need as well as serving our Creator God, is **not** wrong.

We must work to survive, and more important we are responsible for the physical and spiritual wellbeing of those in our care and those who we meet on a day-to-day basis, [Matthew 5:13-16].

Ecclesiastes 2:26 [New King James] *“For God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who is good in His sight; but to the sinner He gives the work of gathering and collecting, that he may give to him who is good before God. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.”*

True enjoyment in life comes **only** as we follow the Creator God’s guidelines as expanded in His Word, the Christian Bible. This is how we receive the true wisdom *“that is from above”* [James 3:17].

This Godly wisdom comes to us as one of the “gifts” of the Holy Spirit working actively in our lives, [1 Corinthians 12:1, 4, 7-8].

Ecclesiastes 3:1 [New King James] *“To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven:”*

To this statement **Ecclesiastes 8:6** adds the word *“judgement”* which explains why all these different events are part of human life.

A *“reason”* as well as a *“season”*!

Ecclesiastes 3:2-8 [New King James] *“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.”*

Each of these events in our life are a challenge for each of us to find out, from our Creator God, how we should respond.

Although we may face many problems that seem to contradict God’s plan for humanity, these should **not** become barriers to believing in Him and looking to Him for solutions.

Rather we should look on these times as opportunities to discover that without God, life’s problems have no lasting solutions.

Timing is important. All the experiences listed in these verses are appropriate at certain times.

The secret is to discover, accept and appreciate the Creator God’s perfect timing, for the motivating desire behind all these experiences is the development of Godlike character.

Genesis 1:26-27 [New King James] *“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”*

Note the two-part plan of God for every human being.

“Image” the Hebrew word used is *“tselem”* meaning resemblance, shadow or outward form, every human being is born with this.

The second part *“likeness”* is the Hebrew word *“demûwth”* which means manner, attributes or character.

For this Godlike character to be formed in us takes time and the active presence of the Holy Spirit [**Galatians 5:22-25**]. All these *“fruits”* are part of the very character of the Creator God that are to be formed in us.

Ecclesiastes 3:2 [New King James] *“A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted;”*

The timing of our birth and death are totally in the hands of our Creator God, but *“plant”* Hebrew word *“nâta”* meaning to fasten onto and *“pluck”* Hebrew word *“âqar”* meaning to exterminate are both the result of our free personal choice.

How we respond to these situations will tell our Creator God a great deal about our character.

Ecclesiastes 3:3 [New King James] *“A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;”*

There is a time to “kill,” the Hebrew word is “*harac*” meaning to smite with deadly intent, to put to death.

Romans 6:1-6 [New King James] *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? **Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.** For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, **that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.**”*

It is our old way of life, before we allowed Jesus Christ to influence it, that has to be crucified. Remember that at most times it took a long period of pain and humiliation before a person crucified actually died.

Jesus Christ only died relatively quickly on the cross because of the spear thrust into His side that caused all His life blood to be shed instantly, [John 19:34-37].

There is a time to “heal” the Hebrew word is “*râphâh*” meaning to mend or make whole.

Matthew 18:15 [New King James] *“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.”*

It is in the realm of human relationships that healing must take place.

“Break down” is the Hebrew word “*parats*” meaning to break away from.

This again needs to be applied to our new relationships with other human beings, [James 4:4].

John 17:14-19 [New King James] *“I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.”*

Even if we are physically in the world, a Christian is not a part of its society, for obedience to God’s Word, the Christian Bible, will set us apart from society. This is what sanctified means.

“Build up” the Hebrew word is “*bânâh*” meaning to make or set up.

Our relationship with other Christians who also have great respect and awe of the Creator God is built up by communicating often with one another, [Malachi 3:16].

Ecclesiastes 3:4 [New King James] *“A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;”*

The Hebrew word translated “weep” is “*bâkâh*” meaning to bemoan, complain and lament.

Ezekiel 9:4 [New King James] *“and the LORD said to him, ‘Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men **who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.**”*

God expects us to be emotionally affected by all the evil we see in the worldly, mostly prompted by Satan who hates all humanity, and still rules the world, [1 John 5:19; 1 Corinthians 4:4].

The Creator God allows Satan still to influence humanity for a good reason, that Peter refers to in **1 Peter 5:6-9**, by doing this we are growing in character in two ways.

“*Laugh*” the Hebrew word “*shachats*” meaning elation that is the result of success, when the influence of Satan is overcome in the life of a person [**Revelation 12:11**] by applying the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and our own personal example.

“*Mourn*” the Hebrew word “*caphad*” referring to an oriental style of grief involving the beating on the chest and a wail in lament.

“*Dance*” the Hebrew word “*raqad*” meaning to spring about, jump or skip with joy, [**2 Samuel 6:12-14**]. This was King David’s response when his obedience to God referring to the carrying of the ark was correctly performed.

Ecclesiastes 3:5 [New King James] “*A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;*”

The Hebrew word translated “*stones*” is “*eben*” which means to build, make, **set up with the root word that includes having children, building a family.**

When we apply this to a family there is a time for our children to leave the parental home to start their own family [Genesis 2:24], but the tie of the extended family should never be completely broken.

Many Proverbs written by Solomon refer to the wisdom that parents have should continue to be available to their children, [**Proverbs 2:1-2; Proverbs 1:8; Proverbs 6:20**].

1 Peter 2:4-5 [New King James] “*Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*”

All Christians are likened to living stones being built into a spiritual house that the Creator God can use as a priesthood.

“*A time to embrace.*” Humans are what I call “*skin hungry*” from the moment we are born to our last moments of life we all seek the touch of another human being. [Please download our article ‘*Every Human Being ‘Skin Hunger’*’ listed under sub-heading ‘*Relationships*’.]

Yet there are times when we need to spend time with our Creator God in prayer and meditation without the presence of other human beings, [**Matthew 6:5-6**].

Ecclesiastes 3:6 [New King James] “*A time to gain, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away;*”

If we apply this to our spiritual growth there are certain characteristics we need to make a part of our new life [Galatians 5:22-25] and other attitudes of mind we need to lose.

Ephesians 4:30-32 [New King James] “*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*”

We will be limiting the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives unless we lose these wrong attitudes of mind.

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 [New King James] “*Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.*”

“Prophecies” is the Greek “*prōphēteuo*” meaning to speak under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We “*test all things*” by using God’s Word, the Christian Bible, as the standard by which we judge what is true and what is false, [1 John 4:1].

Ecclesiastes 3:7 [New King James] “*A time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;*”

To tear or rent your cloths in Jewish culture was a sign of grief or anger, [Matthew 26:65].

2 Corinthians 7:8-11 [New King James] “*For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while. Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.*”

The same indignation should be applied in our mind as we seek repentance, a change of mind and direction in life.

Mark 2:21-22 [New King James] “*No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.*”

Christianity is not just adding certain things to our old life, we have to make a completely new start.

Romans 6:1-6 [New King James] “*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.*”

Our old life has to be “*crucified*” which will be a very painful experience that will take time to complete.

“*A time to keep silence.*” **Physically we cannot listen to what others are saying to us when we are speaking.**

Amos 5:13 [New King James] “*Therefore the prudent keep silent at that time, for it is an evil time.*”

It is wise to remain silent in an evil situation or you may be seen to be part of it.

Habakkuk 2:20 [New King James] “*But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.*”

Only when we do this can we really understand who and what the Creator God is and in comparison who and what we are, His creation made out of dirt and given a fleeting moment of the awareness of existence.

“*A time to speak.*”

1 Peter 3:15 [New King James] *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;”*

Only when people ask why we live the way we do, will they be ready to listen to our explanation.

Ecclesiastes 3:8 [New King James] *“A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.”*

There is no time when we should not extend love towards other human beings, [Matthew 19:19; Matthew 5:44; 1 John 4:20-21; John 13:35].

When is there a time to hate?

Proverbs 6:16-19 [New King James] *“These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.”*

All of these things that God hates are harmful to human beings and relationships between humans and their Creator God.

“A time of war and a time of peace.”

Matthew 24:21-22 [New King James] *“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.”*

There will be a time of war leading up to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ [verse 3], for it is only when humanity has exhausted all their human efforts to bring about world peace that they will be ready to accept the rule of the Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6-7 [New King James] *“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”*

The nature of this new world is expanded in the revelation of Jesus Christ as given to the apostle John, **[Revelation 21:1-8; Revelation 22:6-8, 12-15].**