



Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

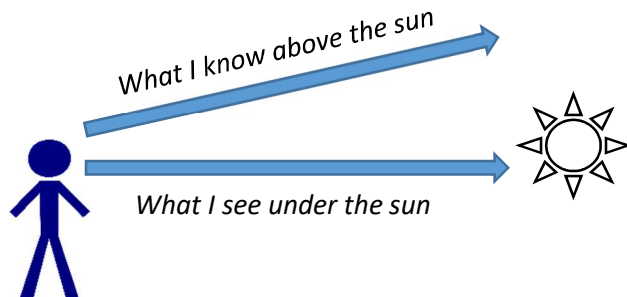
# GETTING A BIGGER PERSPECTIVE

*The trouble for us is not that life refuses to keep still, but that we see only a fraction of its movement and of its subtle, intricate design. ...Instead of frozen perfection, there is the kaleidoscopic movement of innumerable processes, each with its own character and its period of blossoming and ripening, **beautiful in its time** and contributing to the overall masterpiece which is the work of one Creator. ...We are like the desperately near-sighted, inching their way along some great tapestry or fresco in the attempt to take it in. We see enough to recognize something of its quality, but the grand design escapes us, for we can never stand back far enough to view it as the Creator does, whole and entire, from the beginning to the end.*

—Derek Kidner, *The Message of Ecclesiastes*

In **Ecclesiastes**, Solomon, the son of David, the king of Israel, speaks to us as “the Teacher” (1:1). Nearing the end of his life, and having seen the emptiness of pursuing satisfaction apart from God, the Teacher gives us a good dose of Reality 101.

## The Two Perspectives of Life in Ecclesiastes:



### 1. We are part of a grand, \_\_\_\_\_ story, written, arranged, and ordained by God.

- God’s story has a purpose and an appointed time for everything (cf. 7:14; Ps. 139:16; Acts 17:26; Eph. 1:11).
- God’s story includes both bright and dark moments.

The poem in 3:2-8 is arranged in fourteen symmetrical lines, with each line presenting a contrast between a “favorable” and “unfavorable” event, alternating in an overall pattern. [+ + - - - + + + - - + -]

- God’s story will be perfectly beautiful in its completion.

*Ecclesiastes 3:11 summarizes the teacher’s whole argument, and in context (3:10-15) it serves equally well as a summary of the entire wisdom corpus.*

—Walter Kaiser

**Season.** Hebrew, *zeman*, “a set time; an appointed or predetermined time” (Seow).

*The foundational charter of the philosophy of history is found in one biblical verse: “God, at the beginning of time, created heaven and earth.” This text shattered the pagan conception of an eternal universe parceled out in an infinity of cycles.*

—R. A. Herrera

*God appoints both our birthday and the day of our funeral. He knows exactly when they will occur. He always has. There are absolutely no surprises with God.*

—Keith Krell

**A time to cast away stones (3:5),** by breaking down and demolishing fortifications when God gives peace in the borders...but there is a time to gather stones together for the making of strongholds.

—Matthew Henry

**2. We have \_\_\_\_\_ in our hearts—a God-given hunger to transcend time and to see the whole story.**

- God has given us the *gift* (Heb., *natan*) of *eternity* (Heb., *olam*).
- “A sense of something eternal and a desire to know the eternal significance of what we do” (Delitzsch).
- “An eternal itch for tomorrow...a hunger to know what is next” (Swindoll).

**3. We are \_\_\_\_\_ creatures, bound in a moment of time, unable to see the whole story from beginning to end.**

*The near-sighted sheep which can't see the whole landscape and doesn't know the way has to learn to trust and follow his Shepherd.*

**4. When we know God's goodness and sovereignty, we can REST in Him in the midst of the tragedies and uncertainties of life.**

- R\_\_\_\_\_ the future into God's hands.
- E\_\_\_\_\_ the good things of life...and learn to be held and loved by God in the midst of the painful times.
- S\_\_\_\_\_ to do good with the opportunities you have.
- T\_\_\_\_\_ that God will make all things right and beautiful in the end (cf. Romans 8:28).

*We want to see how the whole—the beginning, the end, and everything else in life—fits together, but God has hidden the total program from our eyes. We see the events, but can't piece them all together. There are always unanswered questions.*

—Bruce Waltke

*God has put eternity in our hearts but bound us within time, all in order to drive us to Himself.*

—Eric Ortlund

*Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.*

—Corrie ten Boom

*We cannot let what we cannot know destroy what we can enjoy.*

—Tommy Nelson

*Man is to take his life day by day from the hand of God, realizing that God has a fitting time for each thing to be done. He is responsible to discern the right times for the right actions and when he does the right action according to God's time, the result is "beautiful."*

—Addison Wright

*All the events of human history that time has chased away into the past are not lost with God.*

—David Gibson

*I hope you never lose your sense of wonder; you get your fill to eat but always keep that hunger. May you never take one single breath for granted; God forbid love ever leave you empty-handed. I hope you still feel small when you stand beside the ocean; Whenever one door closes I hope one more opens. Promise me that you'll give faith a fighting chance and when you get the choice to sit it out or dance... I hope you dance.*

—Tia Sellers