



[Ecclesiastes 3:18-22](#)

(18) I said in my heart, "Concerning the condition of the sons of men, God tests them, that they may see that they themselves are *like* animals." (19) For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all *is* vanity. (20) All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust. (21) Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, which goes down to the earth? (22) So I perceived that nothing *is* better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that *is* his heritage. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?

New King James Version

Solomon certainly does not mean that men are beasts in terms of potential. He limits this expression to the fact that sinners will die in their sins, and without being called at this time, it appears that they have gained nothing truly valuable. Therefore, at least on the surface, they live and die on the same level as animals.

However, he also says that [God](#) tests men that they may see that they are like animals. The most likely time that they will grasp this is after they are resurrected, when their minds will be open to God and His [truth](#). Only then will they be able to see that, morally and ethically, they had lived no better than animals. Therefore, he is suggesting that what is truly valuable in the lives of many people lies beyond the grave. In addition, if a person is not living a life that is glorifying to God or preparing himself for living in God's Kingdom, then he has gained nothing despite all the wealth and power he might possess.

Thus, his conclusion is that our image of life must be more penetrating and broader than that. The life of a wealthy and powerful sinner, though it may seem attractive on the surface, may be as vain, meaningless, and profitless as a beast's life.

[Ecclesiastes 3:22](#) is penetrating advice because we all tend to let our minds wander

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Ecclesiastes 3:18-22 (<http://www.theberean.org>)

from God's purpose into envy of those of [this world](#) who do not seem to have the difficulties we face: "So I perceived that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his heritage. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?"

We must learn to live each day by [faith](#), contentedly accepting it as it comes. This is possible because a foundation of faith and understanding enables us to know that we have been greatly blessed with knowledge far more valuable than money. God has revealed Himself to us; He knows us personally. He is overseeing our lives, and we are growing in knowledge of Him and His purpose.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[Ecclesiastes and Christian Living \(Part Four\): Other Gifts](#)

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