

Ecclesiastes Resumed (Part Eight): Time

God is Sovereign Over Time- All the Time

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I would like you to open your Bibles to, where else? Ecclesiastes. Solomon says:

Ecclesiastes 2:24-26 Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I? 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.

When I finished preparing the previous sermon in this series, I felt really pleased that I was able to give it, but after reflecting on giving it, I did not feel pleased about it at all because I believe it was ineffective and did not adequately describe the teaching that I intended. So I am going to begin by picking up where I left off in Ecclesiastes 2:24-26, because Ecclesiastes 3 is one of the truly great, encouraging, and downright inspiring chapters in the entire Bible for those who have a sincere, honest desire to please God by living by faith, by understanding what that chapter is teaching.

These verses that we just read are in reality not only the conclusion to the thoughts of chapter 2, but also the lead-in for the instruction in chapter 3. These verses are the first positive, solid, clear instruction Solomon has given regarding life in this writing. What he said previously was true, but what he had to report about life was not all that encouraging. These verses pave the way, as it were, for accepting what I feel is truly thrilling instruction regarding God in relation to time and our life of faith.

The central theme of this sermon involves: time, the depth of God's involvement with us, and most especially our overall attitude as we move closer to Christ's return. I think that you can grasp that Solomon, to this point, is describing life as being seemingly meaningless, monotonous, repetitious, and a difficult-to-endure waste of time and energy. This occurs even though one may be very busy in his own life, even as he, Solomon, was.

On a recent Sunday morning, Evelyn and I were in Trader Joe's and I saw a young woman wearing a shirt that proclaimed, "Life is divided between miserable and horrible."

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To many it seems as though life has no object to it except to bring difficulty and pain.

Ecclesiastes is giving us a message directly from our Creator, through Solomon, as to what our attitude must be if we are going to make the most and the best of the awesome opportunity He has given us, and most especially make the most and the best of the instruction just ahead in what is now chapter 3.

The approach of Solomon to this point regarding life has been completely 'under the sun' and I think you understand what I mean by that. By 'under the sun' I mean that God has not been positively considered in what Solomon is teaching. He is giving us a carnal, earthly view. It is clearly and thoroughly self-centered, a carnal approach, and the only time that God is mentioned before this is in chapter 1, where Solomon calls life a grievous task God has afflicted man with. That parallels the saying on the woman's shirt at Trader Joe's.

In these verses, Solomon takes a sudden, sharp turn to a clearly, 'above the sun' approach and says that we should enjoy good in our labor because this is from the hand of God. It is the hand of God that is important in that statement. The good thing mentioned is that we can work; labor. Laboring is a God-designed gift and assigned as a responsibility to man. We spent a whole chapter on that.

Outside of angels, we are the only created beings who can labor in this manner. We can work using creativity, objectivity, and purpose. No animal can do such a thing. We stand alone in this regard, except for the angels. Solomon is saying that we need to give thanks for such a circumstance because it places mankind in a category that no animal can ever have. We are, in this case, still less than God but so far above animals there is absolutely no comparison. Solomon also adds two verses later in verse 26, that God gives gifts like the gift of wisdom or knowledge to those who are good in His sight and that is another positive reason for one to approach life in a different attitude than Solomon was previously showing.

Our attitudes and demeanor are often highly variable. In an overall sense, without using the terms, he is saying that our attitude must be thankful and content. Despite the description that he gave in the first two chapters, he is telling us that this is what our attitude should be. Now why? Because, 1) the very fact that we even have life and, 2) tied to this is that we can even think about God in such a manner of looking forward to the future on the basis of truth, not fantasies. In very plain words, *we have been called by God*. We do not just have life, we have a calling, and he is thus giving a strong hint that we can have this outlook because God is already involved in the lives of those He is instructing through Solomon.

We were just talking about the kind of attitude that we ought to have, and now here is New Testament instruction from the apostle Paul.

I Thessalonians 5:16-18 Rejoice always [we just had a sermonette about being happy], pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Notice that he does not say “*for* everything be thankful,” he says “*in* everything be thankful.” That is certainly implying very strongly that he is talking about circumstances in trials, where we are in our life or whatever. “In everything give thanks.”

Let us be reminded that these commands are addressed to us and that attitudes greatly impact on us during trials. So rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in everything. That seems, many times, to be a challenge. So let us look first at the last phrase where it says, doing these things “is the will of God.” God is commanding this of us and therefore it is something that is not impossible. He does not command us to do the impossible. We *can* rejoice always; we *can* pray without ceasing; and we *can* in everything give thanks.

These are attitudes and actions that we can control, and other scriptures show that God certainly permits us to be saddened or disappointed because of what is happening. For example the Bible says that Jesus sorrowed about certain things. That did not cause Him sin or anything. But the concern in these verses, though, is that our relationship with God, as well as the mention of prayer, clearly establishes that we do not stay that way for any extended period of time, that we should be able to come out of our funks, and if we cannot it is because we are too focused on ourselves.

The reason for these commands is that we not allow ourselves to decline from the normal, upbeat, positive, hopeful attitude, to a discouraged, self-centered concern. Now how is this achieved? It is what the Protestants say, by taking hold on God. In other words, it is almost like you climb up into His lap and talk to daddy. You get down on your knees and pray to Him and you trust Him. You are taking hold of Him in the midst of all circumstances in life. Peter tells us just a book or two later, that if our hope is in God, He will lift us up. That is a guarantee.

I Timothy 6:6-8 Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

The central issue in this particular context involves wealth, but it is the attitude of a reasoned faith-based contentment regardless of circumstance that is of great spiritual gain. It is not the money or the wealth, but rather the contentment that really counts, because one's wealth is going to fluctuate. This is the attitude that Solomon is speaking of in preparation for the instruction that is given in chapter 3. We began in Ecclesiastes 2:24 where he tells us what he did there to give thanks to God.

It is this faith-based attitude within a relationship with God that assists greatly toward enabling one to live an “over the sun” life. In an over the sun life, God is the central figure, and we accept whatever circumstances come one’s way and the Christian works his way through it without self-centeredness.

Without God being the beacon, providing guidance, one can be very easily led to wander in an easily discouraged, discontented, covetous, “life is down on me,” self-centered existence, and that leads into the next topic in Ecclesiastes 3, which is time and its importance to us. So let us take a look at Ecclesiastes 3.

I am going to give you a synopsis of what I believe is a major lesson for us in this chapter, and that is that our life is lived within time and therefore our choices in life are made within time, but in order to make the best of life, we must know that *God is sovereign over time all the time*, not just part of the time. God is sovereign over time all the time. His attention never wanders. He is not thinking about something else other than His purpose of creating what He has set out to do and we are part of that. *God does not lose track of us, at any time.*

God's rulership over time—His dominance over time; His sovereignty over time—is never relaxed. He oversees what happens within time, all the time, and His relationship with His children is very personal. His calling is personal and individual, and as Creator He has goals that He desires to be accomplished in and through us, and time is always moving. It is a fact that time is running out for all of us. That is a biblical reality; it is not intended to make us feel a sense of desperation.

God is so dominant over time that *He always has enough time*. Do you understand that? That is a hard thing for us to comprehend and it is because our faith is weak and because we do not look at time in the same way that God does. He always has enough time. Even if we die He can resurrect us. He never runs out of time.

It is a simple truth that we can deal with in our relationship with Him and this is where the principle or issue of contentment can be very helpful. Let us look at a couple of

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verses and feed them into this and understand how they fit.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven:

That includes God purposes. There is a time for every purpose.

Ecclesiastes 3:9-10 What profit has the worker from that in which he labors? I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied.

In verse 1, the important issue for us is—because God is sovereign over time, all the time—He will be overseeing and working to make the most and the best of every situation for us, and there is time because He is involved and He wants the most and the best for us.

In listing the merisms, He is not saying that everybody has to travel through and have experiences with all fourteen of them, although that would not do anyone any harm. They do, though, give us an overview of some major events of virtually everyone's life. So what verse 9 is asking is what is to be gained by experiencing these events? Almost everyone is going through one of these merisms at any given time. They are working in our lives all the time.

So verse 9 is asking what is to be gained by these experiences. The question is rhetorical. It is not answered directly by Solomon or God there, but rather answers are gathered by things taught later within the larger context. Understanding verse 10 is very important to our well being. Let us read it again here:

Ecclesiastes 3:10 I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied.

It is interesting that the word “task” is singular here; it is like Solomon is focusing on one thing. In many cases, if it were these merisms, we would only be going through one thing at a time, but usually there is more than that and so this singular task is something that might encompass several different concepts at the same time, but is called singular.

In verse 10, Solomon begins assuring us that God is deeply involved in these issues of

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life. In fact, he actually says here that God has assigned them as disciplines for our development as His children. Notice it says, "I have seen the *God-given* task." God has assigned them, not all at once, but one at a time as we go through life and as He sees that we have a need for these things. Solomon makes sure that we understand what he is talking about here is God-given.

The overriding fact here is not whether God personally put them into our lives, because the issue remains open at this point that we may have gotten ourselves into them through our choices. We do dumb things from time to time, do we not? The important factor is that we are indeed in them and God is involved in them with us, because He has allowed us to fall into them. So whether He has assigned them or we got into it through our own choices, He is still involved with us and in it with us. Remember that, because it is very important.

Let us never forget that He is our Creator. We are not creating ourselves, that is why it has to say, God-given. God is the Creator and whether we got into it by our dumb choices, or God did it, He has permitted it and it is God-given from that point on, otherwise He would have stopped it.

Thus, the encouragement is that *He has most assuredly not abandoned us*. Now, are we accepting them and rising to patiently meet the challenge, or are we in despair, frustration, and resisting them? I have been through my share of bad times to know that I get frustrated; I get down; I get upset, but I usually come out of it too, because I get ahold of myself, or God does, He triggers thoughts and I pray and the gloom begins to lift. I am not out of the problem yet, but at least the attitude turns to the right direction to where it is highly likely that I will learn a lot more than if I am resisting and totally discontented.

Now let us move on to verse 11, where it says:

Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.

The instruction in this verse now becomes exceedingly important to our attitudes in meeting the challenges of living by faith. "He has made everything beautiful in its time." Tie this statement directly into the truth of verse 1, that there is a time for every purpose. The key word is time and therefore in these challenges to faith, some purpose is being worked out.

We learn that both the timing and what is being worked out is beautiful. I did not say that, it says it right there in the verse. The timing and what is being worked out are both beautiful. Now it may be very challenging to us, but God, who is involved in our lives, is involved in this challenge and He says that it is beautiful.

Let us look at this word 'beautiful.' The root of the Hebrew word translated beautiful literally means bright. But this Hebrew word can be translated as fair, comely, beautiful, suitable, appropriate, and timely, depending upon the subject of a given context in which it appears.

Song of Solomon 6:4 O my love, you are as beautiful as Tirzah, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners!

The word beautiful here is the same word that appears in Ecclesiastes 3:11. Surely Solomon would not be calling this girl ugly. Not merely suitable even, but she is beautiful! Now let us go to Job 42. It has something for us and it has to do with the Song of Solomon too. It says there:

Job 42:15 In all the land were found no women so beautiful as the daughters of Job; and their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers.

Same word that appears there in Ecclesiastes 3:11. In both of these verses the same Hebrew word is translated beautiful, so is the word used to illustrate something ugly, bad, detrimental, unsuitable, or inappropriate? Absolutely not. Therefore, this statement that he is making here in Ecclesiastes 3:11 is something that is good.

The trial is definitely good. So the word indicates something that is good, admirable, a blessing. If you feed that back into verse 11, we come up with a very encouraging truth. Solomon is saying that God's timing and God's overseeing the events and what He wants the events to accomplish is something good. It may be difficult to us, but it is something that is good. Now it is not merely broadly good, it can also be suitable, fitting, appropriate, and timely.

Here are a couple of questions that I want you to consider here. Was the scattering of Israel beautiful in its time? I will tell you, brethren, that was a real trial imposed on those people, and that kind of a situation can fit right in the context of Ecclesiastes 3:11 because, if we were the Israelites, we would be going through that and here is God saying that the timing was beautiful and what you are going through is beautiful. Dead

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people are all around you, the city has been burned down, the enemy is at your heels and God says this is beautiful. That is quite a contrast between what we can feel and the way God looks at it.

So, was the scattering of Israel and Judah beautiful in its time? If you read Lamentations without consideration of God's entire purpose, it looks very painfully ugly. However, over a long period of time the answer is undoubtedly "yes." It was beautiful and good. It was suitable for that occasion, and it happened at just the right time in Judah's history.

How about the scattering of the Worldwide Church of God? The same principal is true. Going through it may be stressful and may require some painful adjustments while enduring to the end as Jesus states in the Olivet prophesy, but in the long term, it will most certainly be beautifully good.

Is correction good? This is a little bit more common, it is usually not quite so painful, but is correction good? That is what He was doing to those people in Judah and that is what He is in the process of doing right now with all those of us that have come out of the Worldwide Church of God. The correction continues and things still are not completely settled out.

So let us ask ourselves another question: Do we really want to continue doing things wrong? Going through your whole life and $2+2=5$? It is a simple illustration, but is it not far better to be corrected so that you are on track towards the right answers? Of course it is. We do not really want to continue to do things wrong.

If God did not do what He did, when He did, and how He did it, how many serious spiritual character and attitude problems would have gone uncorrected and been disastrous, perhaps even to the salvation of those who were in the Worldwide Church of God? Which is better, to be corrected and go into the Kingdom of God, or to not be corrected and live a seemingly happy life right into the Lake of Fire?

Who knows how many nice people we fellowshiped with in the past, but are now seemingly swept aside and appear lost? The reality might be that those people may have been nice tares. They indeed may have been nice people, having many social graces, but unconverted, and perhaps God spared them from the Lake of Fire by delaying their true calling. Peter makes very clear that God is unwilling that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

There used to be a TV Program called, *Father Knows Best*. Our Father knows best. The kids could never see what Jim, the father, saw, and that is the way it is with God and us.

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God knows best, and because of the way God acted, many, many more will enter God's Kingdom in His image than if He had not intervened. It is even possible to consider that we all might have been lost, except for His rough intervention.

It is important for us to always keep in mind that God knows the end from the beginning. His overview captures the entire span of events. He sees the entire picture, but we, brethren, live in a time-bound, material universe, and all we have is a mere point of view. We are, for the most part, restricted in grasping things from our narrow perspective. This is why faith is required of us and also why Solomon says in verse 11 that we cannot find out what God has done from beginning to end. We just do not see the whole picture. It is interesting that God uses this same verse twice, "that no one can find out what God is doing."

Do you know that it is for our well being that He keeps us somewhat blind as to what is going on? In a sense, He is prodding us, forcing us to trust Him, using faith in Him. That is for our good. He does nothing that is not for our good. So we are, for the most part, restricted to grasping things from our narrow perspective. If you think that the scattering of the church has been difficult to accept in a good attitude, just be patient—as prophesy shows, things are going to get worse as time moves on.

I am personally becoming ever more aware that time is moving on for me. My mother, who lived to be almost 93 years old, said to me one time, "getting old is not for sissies." Let me tell you that she was right, it is not. She was saying, in her unconverted way, that the trials of life never do really end, regardless of age, and it is almost as though one's age is not respected. As one ages, the trials simply morph into another dimension. Evelyn and I have gotten to the place in our life where we think of something, and we have got to do it immediately because we will forget to do it otherwise.

In order to help us during these spiritual trials we now face and through what we know will intensify as time moves on, we must come to know God through a personal relationship, and to trust Him to work things out. We must use our faith, knowing full well we do not see the entire picture. So what does God require of us? What is it that pleases Him? What makes Him look upon us with pleasure as we go through our difficulties? I will give you a couple of simple, easily understood instructions from His word. Let us turn to Micah 6. This is a very simple but really weighty instruction. He says:

Micah 6:6-8 With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, ten thousand

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rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly [that you treat people fairly, honestly and righteously], to love mercy [filled with compassion and easily touched], and to walk humbly with your God?

These verses were uttered at a time when Judah was really going through a terrible period of time, but this was what God wanted: "Just be humble before Me; be kind; be good." Do you know, brethren, we can do that in every situation in life, depending upon our attitude? That pleases Him very much. Now let us go to Isaiah where he said something very similar through Isaiah.

Isaiah 66:1-2 Thus says the Lord: "Heaven is My throne [that is, where the Great High God is], and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist," says the Lord. "But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.

In those periods of time where things are really tough, what God wants is just honest submission to Him in humility, just obeying what we can do in the circumstance. So simple humility and acceptance to obedience to His Word as we follow through overcoming the challenge that God has set before us. You can match this up by recalling Paul's instructions in I Thessalonians 5.

I Thessalonians 5:16-18 Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Again, simple things, and this brings us right back to Ecclesiastes 2:22-24 again. We are going to read these verses again and lead up to the end of this sermon.

Ecclesiastes 2:24-26 Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I? 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.

Verse 26 mentions that God gives gifts. Now let us consider another wonderful gift that God has given, not His to children only, but actually to all of mankind. That specific gift is mentioned in Ecclesiastes 3:11.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. [We just spent a lot of time on that, but here comes the gift here.] Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.

He has put eternity in their hearts. The gift is wonderful, but there is an aspect that can work against us if we are not careful, because God has given us a spirit. We can think spatially, and this includes thinking of time as eternal reality. Unlike animals, we have thoughts of immortality. We normally do not want to die; we want to live forever. No animal does that, only man can do that, because eternity is part of our thinking. That is a gift from God. Yet at the same time, we know that we are caught between time, as it is for us right now, and eternity. Eternity is off in the future and we are not there yet. As God reveals Himself to us and becomes a major part of our desires to live eternally with Him and to be like Him, this becomes part of our thinking, but we are not there yet.

The filmmaker Woody Allen—who is an atheist, by the way, and certainly has no revelation from God—made an insightful observation regarding mankind that he has learned, at least partly from his occupation as a writer and filmmaker. You know that he has a creative mind and he studies people and he thinks about them as characters that he can put in a book, novel, a stage play, movie, or whatever. He has a really active mind, and he said this, “The universe is indifferent and humanly we create a fake world for ourselves.” That is what novelists are doing all the time, they are creating a fake world, but what Woody is saying is that everybody does this. He goes on to say that, “It’s a fake world,” a world that he says means nothing at all because it is fake, it is a fantasy, it is meaningless. “But it is important that we create some sense of meaning, because no perceptible meaning exists for anybody.”

Now to me the most meaningful part of that comment for us is, “it is important that we create some sense of meaning,” and here is where the gift of God really becomes important. Now, why is this important? It is because our thinking is what creates a sense of purpose for our existence, and therefore it gives direction for using life. So the question for us is, will what we are thinking be real or will it be fake? Our mind can only

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work with what it already has and it gets what it has as we move through life's events.

Woody observed that the creation, the universe, tells us nothing about the purpose for life. That is not entirely correct, but it is close enough for the unconverted. How much does the unconverted mind really have to work with? Humanly, we attempt to create our own meaning and purpose and fit ourselves into what we have imagined. How much of a chance does a person have to come up with—to have exactly—the same purpose and meaning the Creator has for us?

So this is very important, fitting ourselves into it. Do we do it on our own? Well, the correct answer to the question I just asked is, how much chance do we have to fit it into God's? Zilch, none; therefore since the universe tells us nothing; the purpose must be revealed through God's calling. So what is of supreme importance for us is whether our thinking creates a sense of meaning and purpose for our life from what God has revealed in His Word.

You put that into the great gift, He has put eternity in our hearts, and we have truth to work with to create a position within what God is working out. So Ecclesiastes 3:11 reveals that God has given all mankind thoughts of eternity, that is of time, both backwards and forwards endlessly, but He has not yet given His truth about eternity to all of man, but He has given it to us. What a chapter!

Understanding and fully accepting what He has given us is not always easy because we are so easily attracted to the world by our former experiences, and thus we are slow to live by faith because we allow our former teachings from the world to pull us into self-centeredness. So the challenge for us is to live focusing on the cause—the purpose revealed to us—not on what we have imagined for ourselves, as Woody Allen suggested.

Please understand more of the fullness of what verse 11 is telling us. When we add other truths gleaned from God's Word in other sections in His Word, then verse 11 is telling us that we are being created for another world, an entirely different world, one that is in the realm of eternity. God has given us the ability to transcend the present and we are being created for the spirit world of the Father and Son and the angels they have created for our benefit as ministering spirits. We are being created for the Kingdom of God. That is why we cannot look at things the same way as the world does.

Solomon attempted many avenues of work and of thought, much seeking of satisfaction and fulfillment. However, we must come to understand ever more fully that God has ordained that we must live life by faith, awaiting our change, and it must be lived within a

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relationship with Him in order to come to know Him and His way ever more fully. This is the testing time, the time for trials to help prepare us for the future. We must learn that our satisfactions in life must come from an over the sun, spiritual relationship lived by faith, and it is those who pursue the relationship that will be given eternal life because they know Him and He knows them. Now, let us look at verse 10 again, in light of what verse 11 says.

Ecclesiastes 3:10 I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied.

Brethren, this relationship with God is the task that God set before us that we might be occupied with. Our job in life is to come to know God. The more we know Him, because we have His Spirit, the more we become like Him and live like Him. So in order to fulfill this, we must live by faith, trusting His sovereignty in every situation. That means being at peace, content, comforting ourselves with the truth that God is fully aware of what is going on in our life, as well as being in control of the big picture. This is something Satan could not endure, so he attempted to throw off these restraints.

This leads us to what verse 14 says. Recall that in verse 1 it says, "there is a time for every purpose under heaven," but is the time right or wrong, bad or good, suitable or unsuitable, ugly or beautiful? Are we learning, brethren, that it depends on who chooses the timing? Do you get my point? Let Him do the choosing as much as we possibly can.

Now there is one more point to make and it is tied to this very thing. Let us go to Galatians 4. Notice how often the word "time" comes up here.

Galatians 4:4-5 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

God scheduled that time. "Fullness of time" is a way of saying, "when the right time came." It was the time He scheduled. There is nothing more right than God scheduling the time. It was not happenstance; the timing was fitting, good, beautiful, appropriate. Now in Mark 1:15, it says:

Mark 1:15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

Jesus began preaching at the exact time that God set. When it was reached, He began preaching. In Matthew 26:18, Jesus says here:

Matthew 26:18 And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is at hand [you know that He meant His crucifixion]; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.'""

That was timed too, right down to the day, the hour, and probably right down to the very minute.

Matthew 26:27-29 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

Did you ever stop to think that was timed by the Father and the Son, when He would take His next drink of wine? That is just a little thing, but it was not little to them and He put it right in the book that it was timed. I think you are beginning to get the point here.

Mark 8:31 And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

The amount of time He spent in the womb of the earth would be exactly three days. It was timed. His death was timed and so was the time He would spend in the tomb. Now we are going to go to something that is important to us here in this time.

Acts 1:6-7 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

He is talking about His return. We have people searching all over the place for the time that Christ will return, but it is useless, it will *not* be revealed. In fact it says in one place that He is going to come like a thief in the night. That sounds to me like it is not going to

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be revealed even to the church. It is something to not really worry about. We will just find out when He comes.

Acts 1:11 Who also said, [an angel said this] “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

So the point is that God has sovereignly set times and this is just a little overview, and that includes the times for our trials as well. Do not men set times for school tests? I have had to take tests where the proctor was in the room, and he would say, "You have 45 minutes to do this, and that is it." We are not taking a test in a school room, but we are nonetheless under tests that are preparing us for the Kingdom of God and teaching us as we go along and our proctor, God, said, “Okay, time to take the test and I’m not telling you how long it’s going to go on. Live by faith.”

Now all of this, to me, leads up to Ecclesiastes 3:14, but let us begin with verse 12.

Ecclesiastes 3:12-14 I know that nothing is better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—it is the gift of God. I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. [What is God doing? He is creating us in the image of His Son. Nothing can be added to it or taken away from it because we are going to be in the image of His Son.] God does it, that men should fear before Him.

I have mentioned in the past that some translations say that last phrase in verse 14 is best read, “Man should stand in awe before Him.” When is that going to occur? I think that it will not truly occur until after the resurrection. What is it that we will stand in awe of? There is very much about His glory that we will truly admire, but I think that one of the things that will strike us with a mind-numbing awe is that after going through all of these experiences with Him involved so closely in our life that we will look at ourselves and say, “What an awesome thing You made me.”

God's timing is always good, right, and appropriate and it is up to us to use our faith in Him to remain in a good attitude, using the time that He has set for us to grow, overcome, and meet the responsibilities the trials impose. In all of our life, there is nothing that we deal with as continually as time. Every day, from the time we get up until the time we go to sleep, we are watching time, setting time, counting time, meeting

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schedules, timing out how much time we have, etcetera.

This points out that everything matters because there is only so much time for us. So the overall point of this magnificent chapter, I believe, can be summed up as: ***God is in control of time, all the time.***