

TURN! TURN! TURN! (TO EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON)

Note: In the 1960's there was a song recorded by a group named the Byrds, titled, Turn! Turn! Turn! (To Everything There Is a Season). It describes the changes we go through in life. The song was taken from Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 where Solomon gives fourteen contrasting couplets of life cycles.

ALL THINGS HAPPEN FOR A CERTAIN LENGTH OF TIME AND AT A SPECIFIC TIME
(3:1)

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament the word for **time** is *chronos*, a fixed period of time. It refers to a specific length of time. Looking again in the Septuagint, we see the word for **season** is *kiaros*, a specific window of time or appointed time to experience an occurrence. There is a time and a season to every **purpose**. The word **purpose** comes from the Hebrew word *chephets* which originally meant delight or pleasure but later was used to signify an event or activity. What Solomon is saying in this verse is that there are appointed times and specific occasions that happen in the lives of human beings. It is further implied that man must do the appropriate thing at the appropriate time.

ALL THINGS HAPPEN IN CYCLES OF TIME (3:2-8)

Life Cycles (3:2)

A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted. *Qoheleth* starts his list of cycles with the beginning and ending of human life **A time to be born, and a time to die**; and the beginning and ending of plant life. **a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted.** The first two events humans have no control over while the second two events are totally under man's control.

Destructive and Restorative Cycles (3:3)

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

It might sound a bit strange when Solomon writes there is a **time to kill**. We see several references in the Old Testament that supports this statement (Gen. 9:6; Ex. 21:12-17; 22:19; Lev. 20:2-27; Num. 35:16-32). There is **a time to heal**. One of the names for God is Yahweh Rapha and He is the God who heals. Whenever supernatural healing takes places it is that God might be glorified. There are times when physical structures must be broken **down** and a time to **build up** new ones.

Gloomy and Jubilant Cycles (3:4)

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

The first two cycles are emotional promptings from the heart while the second two are appropriate behaviors in response to an event. There are times to **weep** (Jn. 11:25) and times to **laugh** (Ps. 126:2); times to **mourn** (Matt. 11:17) and times to **dance** (2 Sam. 6:14, 16).

Acceptance and Rejection Cycles (3:5)

A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing. When building a house there are stones which are no good and must be **cast away** and stones that are beneficial and should be **gathered**. There are times to **embrace** and to comfort and show support. While there are also times to **refrain from embracing**, when the embrace is deceptive or when showing support for something that is wrong.

Possessing and Not Possessing Cycles (3:6)

A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; There are times when man receives and loses things that are outside of his realm of control. Then there are times when he makes a decision to keep things or to give them away.

Wisdom Cycles (3:7)

A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; There are times to tear one's garments, i.e., grief, anger, age or to tear and use it for other purposes. There are times to **sew** new garments or repair torn garments. The wise man knows when it is time to **keep silent** and time to **speak**.

Extreme Cycles (3:8)

A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace. There are times to love (Matt. 5:44) and times to **hate** (Rom. 12:9); times of **war** (Ex. 17:14-16) a time of **peace** (Josh. 21:34, 44; 22:4).

GOD IS THE GREAT ORCHESTRATOR OF THE CYCLES (3:9-15)

What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth? I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it (3:9-10). Solomon again questions the **profit** (Hebrew *yitron* meaning "that which is left over") from **labor**. As people experience the laborious cycles spoken of in verses 2-8, in the end, how has it benefited them? Solomon looked at the travail (Hebrew *in-yan* "business/affairs") of men that God gave them to keep them occupied. As a result of this he concluded the five things below:

God Uses the Seasons of Life to Make all Things Beautiful (3:11a)

He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: The man who labors under the sun is an inmate in a penal system where there is no escape from the cycle of events. But for the child of God there is purpose in these cycles, they are like individual patches on a beautiful quilt. The word **beautiful** means appropriate, the idea here is that God has a timetable of events in which He works everything together to shape a beautiful outcome.

God Brings the Appropriate Event for the Appropriate Time (3:11b)

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. God has put **set the world** (Hebrew *olam* means eternity) in the hearts of men. Despite the theory of evolution which promotes the tenet that we are here by random change and this life is all there is, human beings have a sense that there is

something beyond our time and space existence. **No man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.** Only God knows the beginning to the end and as human beings we with eternity in our hearts, we must wait for Him to unveil His plan to us in the appropriate times and seasons.

God Wants Mankind to Enjoy the Fruit of His Labor (3:12-13)

I know that *there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life. And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God.* The only way we can get good out of the days of our lives is to **rejoice** (be merry) and **do good** (live a beneficial life). There must also be the realization that God wants man to **eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour.** God's gift to mankind is to sit back and enjoy His blessings.

As Man Go through the Cycle of Events, He Should Fear and Submit to God (3:14)

I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that *men* should fear before him. God has eternal purposes behind His plans and they need no improvement or alterations. When one realizes who God is, there should be a reverential fear and submission to the course He has set forth.

Those Who Forget Lessons Learned in Past Cycles May Be Doomed to Repeat Them (3:15)

That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past. God uses past things **that which hath been** and **hath already been** for His current purposes **is now** and future purposes **that which is to be.** In other words, God brings back past cycles of events to use in the present and in the future when it is appropriate. There may be some lessons experienced during a past cycle that have been forgotten. God may have to recall them in the present and in the future as a reminder.

WISDOM FOR EVERY GENERATION

How can we know when to do the appropriate thing during the appropriate season?

As you reflect upon the life cycles in verses 2-8, which ones can you control and which ones do you have no control over? What should be your response to each one?

What did Solomon mean when he said God "makes all things beautiful in his time?"

God has given the fruit of our labor as a gift, what should we do with this gift?