

*The King's Classroom: Studies in the Book of Ecclesiastes*  
**LESSON # 2 – THERE IS A TIME FOR EVERYTHING**  
*Ecclesiastes 3:1-22*

**I. Introduction**

A. Good morning.

1. It's good to see you this morning; I'm glad you're here.
2. I hope you had a very enjoyable Thanksgiving holiday.
3. The Swindle's spent some time in Northeast Arkansas with the parents and grandparents.
  - a. We rode four-wheelers, watched movies, and went Christmas shopping. We made the most of every minute.
  - b. In case you're wondering, there are only twenty-five shopping days left until Christmas.
  - c. And you know as well as I do, those days will fly by.

B. I thoroughly enjoyed my Thanksgiving break, but I can't seem to get over how quickly it passed.

1. Can you relate to that?
2. When I was a kid, the days between Thanksgiving and Christmas seemed to last forever. To say that something was "as slow as Christmas," meant that it took its sweet time in arriving, just like Christmas.
3. When I was a kid, everything seemed to last forever.
  - a. But it's not so anymore.
  - b. Time flies by, and there is nothing I can do to stop it.
  - c. Perhaps you've heard the old poem about time:

*When I was a child I laughed and wept, time crept.  
When as a youth I dreamed and talked, time walked.  
When I became a full-grown man, time ran.  
And later as older I grew, time flew.  
Soon I shall find when traveling on, time gone.*

C. If it's true that time flies when you're having fun, I must be having lots of fun.

1. I know you can relate to what I'm about to say, so go ahead and lament out loud with me, just fill in your own numbers.

a. I can't believe I'm \_\_\_\_\_ years old!

b. I can't believe I've been out of high school \_\_\_\_\_ years.

c. I can't believe I've been married \_\_\_\_\_ years.

d. I can't believe I have a \_\_\_\_\_ year old.

e. I can't believe I've been working here \_\_\_\_\_ years.

2. It doesn't seem possible does it?

3. Just yesterday everything was as slow as Christmas, and today I wish that Christmas would slow down just a bit, maybe stay for a little while.

D. We measure our lives by the passing of time.

1. The time from Thanksgiving to Christmas to New Year's Day to Valentine's Day to St. Patrick's Day to Easter to Memorial Day to Independence Day to Labor Day to Halloween to Thanksgiving to Christmas. Round and round it goes, and Wal-Mart won't ever let us forget it.

2. The time from the beginning of the semester to the ending of the semester to the beginning of the semester to the ending of the semester to the beginning of the semester. On and on it goes, and Harding won't ever let us forget it.

3. The time from birthday to birthday to birthday. Older and older we get, and our bodies won't ever let us forget it.

E. Yes, we measure our lives by the passing of time.

1. The only question is: *What time is it?*

2. I'm not talking about the time from Thanksgiving to Christmas, or from the beginning of the semester to the ending of the semester, or from 32 to 33.

3. I'm talking about the big picture. In your life, what time is it? If your life is measured by the passing of time, and if time is flying by, then do you know what time it is?

## II. There Is A Time For Everything

A. The inspired writers of Scripture were well aware of the importance of knowing the time.

1. The Hebrew sages instructed their pupils in the wisdom that comes from knowing the time.
2. They believed that there was something to be said for saying the right thing in the right way at the right time.
  - a. Proverbs 15:23 is a perfect example: “A man finds joy in giving an apt reply — and how good is a timely word!”
  - b. And Proverbs 25:11 contains a similar thought: “A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.”
3. They also believed that there was something to be gained for doing the right thing in the right way at the right time.
  - a. Proverbs 20:4 tells us: “A sluggard does not plow in season; so at harvest **time** he looks but finds nothing.”
  - b. And, in what is possibly the perfect marriage of untimely deeds and untimely words, Proverbs 27:14 warns: “If a man loudly blesses his neighbor early in the morning, it will be taken as a curse.”

B. For the ancients, to be able to read and to interpret the time was a mark of true wisdom.

1. So the Psalmist prayed: “Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12).
2. And Jesus scolded the religious leaders in Luke 12 when he said, “When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, ‘It’s going to rain,’ and it does. And when the south wind blows, you say, ‘It’s going to be hot,’ and it is. Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don’t know how to interpret this present time” (Luke 12:54-56)?
3. *Knowing what time it is makes a big difference in how one lives life.*

C. Perhaps the most famous passage in all of the Bible about knowing the time is Ecclesiastes 3:1-8:

There is a time for everything,  
and a season for every activity under heaven:  
a time to be born and a time to die,  
a time to plant and a time to uproot,  
a time to kill and a time to heal,  
a time to tear down and a time to build,  
a time to weep and a time to laugh,  
a time to mourn and a time to dance,  
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,  
a time to embrace and a time to refrain,  
a time to search and a time to give up,  
a time to keep and a time to throw away,  
a time to tear and a time to mend,  
a time to be silent and a time to speak,  
a time to love and a time to hate,  
a time for war and a time for peace.

1. In this particular lecture the Teacher asserts that there is a right time for everything; everything in life has its time and its place.
2. The events enumerated here, twenty-eight in all, span the entire spectrum of human existence from the most monumental to the most mundane. These are the days of our lives.
3. Isn't there great comfort in knowing that nothing is left to chance, but that God has ordered it all? According to verse 11, "He has made everything beautiful (or appropriate) in its time."
4. But there is a problem here. After asserting that God has ordered a time for everything and everything for a time, the Teacher then contends that it is difficult, if not downright impossible to figure out God's timing.
5. Look at verses 9-11:

What does the worker gain from his toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on men. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

a. No, this lecture is not nearly as comforting as we'd like to believe. It is true that God has ordered a time for everything and everything for a time, but who can read the mind of God. Who really knows what time it is? Think about it:

- 1). We know that there's a time to be born and a time to die, but who knows the exact dates of birth and death?

2). And we know that there's a time to plant and a time to uproot, but who knows if what is planted will actually grow, or precisely when the fields will be ripe?

3). We know that there's a time for war and a time for peace, but who knows if it will be just war or lasting peace?

4). Yes, we know there's an appropriate time for everything, but that's about as far as we've figured it out.

5). "Humans are so bad at telling time," the Teacher proclaims in verses 16 and 17, "that even though we know there is a time for judgment and justice, the best we can accomplish is wickedness. Those times practically don't exist in our time."

b. "He has also set eternity in the hearts of men," the Teacher says, "yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end."

1). In other words, humans have been given an eternal awareness, but not an eternal perspective.

2). Our lives are measured by the passing of time, and time is flying by, but from our limited perspective we have absolutely no idea what time it is.

3). You know, in the grand scheme of things, in the big picture.

4). "In this regard," the teacher says, "we're really no different than the animals."

5). Look at verses 18-20:

### III. Conclusion

A. It's pretty depressing isn't it?

1. Time is not on your side or mine.

2. The truth is that our lives are measured by the passing of time, time is absolutely flying by, and none of us has the foggiest notion what time it is.

B. So what do we do?

1. How do we live?

2. If knowing what time it is makes a difference in how one lives life, how do we live?

3. Well, I want to submit two options to you this morning: You can either rebel or receive.

C. You can rebel against what the Teacher has taught.

1. There are just some students that, no matter how convincing the arguments, will not accept what the teacher has to say.

2. Perhaps that student is you.

3. You have the freedom to continue to labor on under the erroneous notion that you are in control, that you can manipulate the circumstances, that you can tweak the times to produce the desired outcomes.

a. You can work long and hard.

b. You can study long and hard.

c. You can party long and hard.

d. And when your time is up what will you have to show for everything that you've spent all your time on?

e. Is there any satisfaction for a person who spends all his or her time chasing the wind?

1). "What does the worker gain from his toil," the Teacher says.

2). To quote a modern proverb: He who dies with the most toys still dies."

3). To quote an ancient one: "Everything is meaningless."

D. The alternative is to receive – receive the Teacher's teaching and receive the time that God has graciously allowed you to live.

1. Listen carefully to the Teacher:

I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is the gift of God. I know that everything God does will endure

forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him . . . .So I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work, because that is his lot. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him (3:12-14, 22).

2. Once again, the Teacher brings us to the heights of joy in the midst of despair.
3. God has not granted to us the ability to control the time. Say it with me “WE ARE NOT IN CONTROL.”
4. However, he has given us the ability to make the most of the time that we have.
5. He has called us to spend our lives, not in the meaningless pursuit of those things that are meaningless, but in the pleasure of those things that he provides.
  - a. It is a long, hard road for those who are constantly chasing after the wind.
  - b. On the other hand, time flies when you’re having fun.
  - c. Are you having the time of your life – with your wife, your kids, your job, your hobbies. These are all gifts from God granted to bless your time on this earth. These blessings are from the hand of God, and they are truly a foretaste of glory divine, a glimpse of the eternity that God has in store for his people.

E. So what will you do, how will you live?

1. Knowing the time ought to make a difference in how you live your life.
2. Will you continue to worry and fret over the things you can’t control, or will you thankfully receive the blessings of God?
3. The Apostle Paul encouraged the Ephesians: “Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15-16).
4. There is a time for everything, and perhaps now is the time for you to turn your life and your times over to the giver of life and time.
5. Life is too short and too uncertain to wait another day.

