

CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Ecclesiastes Chapter 3 — A Time for Everything Under Heaven

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Ecclesiastes Chapter 3 is one of the most familiar chapters in the entire book.

It opens with the declaration:

“To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven.”

The Preacher now turns from the search for meaning in pleasure, work, and wisdom to the mystery of time.

Human beings live inside time.

We experience:

Beginnings.

Endings.

Joy.

Sorrow.

Gain.

Loss.

Building.

Breaking.

Speaking.

Silence.

War.

Peace.

Yet behind all these changing seasons stands the sovereign hand of God.

The Preacher teaches that life is not made up of one permanent condition.

No season lasts forever.

There is:

A time to be born.

A time to die.

A time to weep.

A time to laugh.

A time to mourn.

A time to dance.

A time to speak.

A time to remain silent.

This chapter also introduces one of the deepest statements in Ecclesiastes:

“He has also set eternity in the human heart.”

Human beings know that there is something beyond the moment.

We sense that life should have meaning larger than:

Work.

Possessions.

Pleasure.

Success.

Survival.

Yet we cannot fully understand everything God is doing.

That tension runs throughout the chapter.

We desire to understand the whole plan.

God often gives us only the present season.

The chapter also confronts injustice.

The Preacher sees wickedness where judgment should exist.

He sees corruption where righteousness should be found.

Yet he concludes that injustice will not have the final word.

God will judge both:

The righteous.

And:

The wicked.

Ecclesiastes 3 therefore combines:

Time.

Providence.

Mystery.

Joy.

Judgment.

Mortality.

And trust.

The central truth of Ecclesiastes 3 is:

God appoints the seasons of life, gives meaning to each moment, places eternity within the human heart, and will ultimately judge every work according to His perfect time.

I. A TIME FOR EVERY PURPOSE

Ecclesiastes 3:1 — Every Season Has Its Time

“To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven.”

This verse introduces the entire section.

Life is seasonal.

Nothing stays exactly the same forever.

There are seasons when God opens doors.

There are seasons when doors close.

There are seasons of:

Growth.

Waiting.

Joy.

Grief.

Activity.

Rest.

Beginnings.

Endings.

The challenge is learning how to live faithfully in the season God has allowed.

Cross References

Ecclesiastes 8:6

Every matter has an appropriate time and proper way to be handled, even though the troubles of life can weigh heavily upon a person.

Galatians 4:4

But when the exact time appointed by God had fully arrived, God sent His Son into the world, born of a woman and born under the law.

Acts 1:7

Jesus told them, “It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has placed under His own authority.”

Spiritual Principle

God works according to His timing, not ours.

Key Truth

A difficult season is not necessarily a permanent season.

II. A TIME TO BE BORN AND A TIME TO DIE

Ecclesiastes 3:2 — The Boundaries of Human Life

“A time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot.”

Human life has a beginning.

Human life also has an ending.

We do not control either one completely.

Birth reminds us that life is a gift.

Death reminds us that life is temporary.

The same principle applies to planting.

There is a proper time to put something into the ground.

There is also a time to remove what has been planted.

Cross References

Job 14:5

A person's days are determined by You. You know how many months he will live, and You have established limits that he cannot move beyond.

Psalms 90:10

The length of our lives may be seventy years, or eighty if we are especially strong, yet even those years are filled with labor and sorrow. They pass quickly, and soon we are gone.

Jeremiah 1:10

God said, "Today I have appointed you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, and also to build and to plant."

Spiritual Principle

Life has boundaries that remind us we are not God.

Application

Because our days are limited, they should be used wisely.

III. A TIME TO KILL AND A TIME TO HEAL

Ecclesiastes 3:3 — Destruction and Restoration

"A time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build up."

The Preacher describes opposite realities.

There are times of judgment.

There are times of healing.

There are times when something must be removed.

There are times when something must be rebuilt.

This does not glorify violence.

It recognizes the reality of life in a fallen world.

Cross References

Deuteronomy 32:39

God says, “Understand that I alone am God. There is no other god beside Me. I give life, and I bring death. I wound, and I heal, and no one can rescue from My hand.”

Hosea 6:1

Come, let us return to the Lord. He has allowed us to be torn, but He will heal us. He has wounded us, but He will bind up our injuries.

2 Kings 20:5

The Lord said, “I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I will heal you, and you will go up to the house of the Lord.”

Spiritual Principle

The God who allows seasons of breaking is also the God who brings seasons of healing.

IV. A TIME TO WEEP AND A TIME TO LAUGH

Ecclesiastes 3:4 — Sorrow and Joy

“A time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.”

The Bible does not teach that faithful believers must always appear cheerful.

There is a time to cry.

A time to grieve.

A time to mourn.

But sorrow is not the only season.

There is also:

Laughter.

Celebration.

Joy.

Dancing.

Faith does not eliminate emotion.

Faith learns to bring every emotion before God.

Cross References

Romans 12:15

Celebrate with those who are rejoicing, and share the sorrow of those who are weeping.

Luke 6:21

Blessed are you who weep now, because a day will come when you will laugh.

Psalms 30:11

You turned my mourning into dancing. You removed my clothing of sorrow and wrapped me in joy.

Spiritual Principle

God is present in both tears and laughter.

Application

Do not rush people through grief.

And do not feel guilty when God brings joy after sorrow.

V. A TIME TO SCATTER AND A TIME TO GATHER

Ecclesiastes 3:5 — Separation and Embrace

“A time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing.”

Some seasons bring people together.

Other seasons require distance.

There are times to gather.

There are times to separate.

There are times for affection.

There are times for restraint.

Wisdom recognizes the difference.

Cross References

2 Kings 3:25

The soldiers destroyed the cities, filled the good fields with stones, stopped the springs, and cut down the good trees until only the fortified city remained.

Genesis 33:4

Esau ran to meet Jacob, embraced him, threw his arms around his neck, kissed him, and both men wept.

1 Corinthians 7:5

Do not deprive one another except by mutual agreement for a short time so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that temptation does not gain an advantage over you.

Spiritual Principle

Love sometimes draws near.

Wisdom sometimes steps back.

VI. A TIME TO SEEK AND A TIME TO LOSE

Ecclesiastes 3:6 — Holding and Releasing

“A time to seek and a time to lose, a time to keep and a time to throw away.”

Not everything should be pursued forever.

Not everything should be kept forever.

Some things are worth searching for.

Other things must be released.

Maturity requires knowing when to hold on and when to let go.

Cross References

Matthew 16:25

Whoever tries to preserve his life at all costs will ultimately lose it, but whoever gives up his life for My sake will truly find it.

Philippians 3:8

I consider everything else a loss compared with the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have let go of all other things and count them as worthless so that I may gain Christ.

Job 1:21

Job said, “I came into this world with nothing, and I will leave it with nothing. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. May the name of the Lord be praised.”

Spiritual Principle

Faithfulness sometimes means keeping.

Faithfulness sometimes means releasing.

VII. A TIME TO BE SILENT AND A TIME TO SPEAK

Ecclesiastes 3:7 — Wisdom in Words

“A time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak.”

Words matter.

Silence can be wise.

Speech can also be necessary.

The challenge is discerning which one the moment requires.

Some people speak when they should remain silent.

Others remain silent when truth needs to be spoken.

Wisdom knows the difference.

Cross References

Joel 2:13

Do not merely tear your clothing as an outward sign of sorrow. Let your heart be broken before God instead. Return to the Lord your God, because He is gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, full of faithful love, and willing to show mercy.

Proverbs 17:28

Even a fool may appear wise when he remains silent, and keeping his mouth closed can make him appear understanding.

Ecclesiastes 5:2

Do not be quick with your mouth or careless with your words before God. God is in heaven, and you are on earth, so let your words be few.

Spiritual Principle

Knowing when not to speak is part of wisdom.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Not every thought needs to become a sentence.

Not every silence should remain silent.

VIII. A TIME TO LOVE AND A TIME TO HATE

Ecclesiastes 3:8 — War and Peace

“A time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.”

Love is central to God’s character.

But Scripture also recognizes righteous opposition to evil.

To love what is good requires rejecting what is evil.

The verse also acknowledges the realities of war and peace in human history.

Cross References

1 John 4:8

The person who does not love does not truly know God, because God is love.

Psalms 120:7

I am a person who desires peace, but when I speak for peace, others are ready for war.

Matthew 5:9

Blessed are those who work for peace, because they will be called children of God.

Spiritual Principle

Biblical love does not mean approving everything.

It means loving what God loves and opposing what destroys.

IX. WHAT DOES HUMAN LABOR GAIN?

Ecclesiastes 3:9 — The Question Returns

“What do workers gain from their toil?”

The Preacher returns to one of the major questions of Ecclesiastes.

What is the lasting profit of labor?

People work.

Build.

Achieve.

Acquire.

Then time moves on.

If work is disconnected from God, it cannot provide lasting meaning.

Cross References

Ecclesiastes 1:3

What lasting profit does a person really gain from all the work he performs under the sun?

Ecclesiastes 5:16

This too is a painful reality: just as a person came into this world, so he will leave it. What lasting advantage does he gain from working so hard for things he cannot carry away?

Mark 8:36

What benefit would it bring a person to gain the entire world but lose his own soul?

Spiritual Principle

Labor is meaningful only when placed inside a larger eternal purpose.

X. THE BURDEN PLACED UPON HUMANITY

Ecclesiastes 3:10 — Life’s Difficult Assignment

“I have seen the burden God has placed on mankind.”

Life includes responsibility.

Work.

Pain.

Questions.

Limits.

The human condition after the fall includes difficulty.

The Preacher recognizes that life itself can feel burdensome.

Cross References

Genesis 3:19

You will eat your food through hard labor and sweat until you return to the ground from which you were taken. You came from dust, and to dust you will return.

Ecclesiastes 1:13

I devoted myself to studying and examining with wisdom everything done under heaven. I saw that God has allowed humanity to carry a difficult burden in this life.

Job 5:7

Human beings are born into trouble as surely as sparks from a fire rise upward.

Spiritual Principle

The difficulty of life should remind us that this world is not yet fully restored.

XI. GOD MAKES EVERYTHING BEAUTIFUL IN ITS TIME

Ecclesiastes 3:11 — Eternity in the Human Heart

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart, yet no one can fully grasp what God has done from beginning to end.”

This is one of the deepest verses in Ecclesiastes.

God sees the whole picture.

We see pieces.

He understands:

The beginning.

The middle.

The end.

We usually understand only the present moment.

The verse also says:

God has placed eternity in the human heart.

Human beings sense that life should be larger than the moment.

We long for permanence.

Meaning.

Justice.

Eternal significance.

Yet we cannot fully understand the complete plan of God.

Cross References

Romans 8:28

We know that God works through all things for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

Habakkuk 2:3

The vision is waiting for its appointed time. It is moving toward its fulfillment and will not prove false. Even if it seems delayed, continue waiting, because it will certainly come at the right time.

Romans 11:33

How deep are the riches of God's wisdom and knowledge! His decisions are beyond our ability to fully trace, and His ways are greater than human understanding.

Spiritual Principle

God's timing may be mysterious.

It is never careless.

Key Truth

What looks unfinished to us may still be beautiful in God's appointed time.

XII. REJOICE AND DO GOOD

Ecclesiastes 3:12 — Living Faithfully in the Present

“I know that there is nothing better for people than to rejoice and do good while they live.”

Since we cannot control every season, the Preacher gives practical wisdom.

Rejoice.

Do good.

Live faithfully today.

Do not spend life waiting for the perfect season.

Serve God in the season you have.

Cross References

Philippians 4:4

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice.

Deuteronomy 12:7

There before the Lord your God, you and your households will eat and rejoice in everything you have worked for, because the Lord your God has blessed you.

Nehemiah 8:10

Nehemiah told the people, “Go and enjoy good food and sweet drink, and share with those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not remain in sorrow, because the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

Spiritual Principle

Joy and goodness are proper responses to God’s gifts.

XIII. THE ABILITY TO ENJOY WORK IS GOD’S GIFT

Ecclesiastes 3:13 — Satisfaction in Labor

“That each of them may eat and drink and find satisfaction in all their labor—this is the gift of God.”

The Preacher repeats an important theme.

Enjoyment is not merely produced by possessions.

It is a gift from God.

Two people can possess the same amount.

One may live gratefully.

The other may live miserably.

The difference is not always the possession.

Sometimes it is the heart.

Cross References

Ecclesiastes 2:24

There is nothing better than for a person to eat, drink, and find satisfaction in his work. I saw that the ability to enjoy these things comes from the hand of God.

1 Timothy 6:17

Tell those who are rich in this present world not to become proud or place their hope in uncertain riches, but to trust God, who generously gives us everything we need to enjoy.

James 1:17

Every good and perfect gift comes from above, coming down from the Father, who created the heavenly lights and does not change like shifting shadows.

Spiritual Principle

Gratitude turns ordinary life into worship.

XIV. GOD'S WORK ENDURES FOREVER

Ecclesiastes 3:14 — Nothing Can Be Added or Removed

"I know that everything God does will endure forever. Nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does this so that people will fear Him."

Human work fades.

God's work endures.

Human plans change.

God's purpose stands.

This contrast should create reverence.

We are temporary.

God is eternal.

We are limited.

God is sovereign.

Cross References

Numbers 23:19

God is not a man who lies, nor a human being who changes His mind like sinful people do. When He speaks, He acts. When He promises, He fulfills it.

Psalms 33:11

The plans of the Lord stand forever, and the purposes of His heart continue through every generation.

Psalms 33:8

Let the whole earth fear the Lord, and let everyone who lives in the world stand in reverence before Him.

Spiritual Principle

God's sovereignty should produce worship, not arrogance.

XV. GOD RULES OVER HISTORY

Ecclesiastes 3:15 — Past, Present, and Future

“Whatever is has already been, and what will be has been before; and God will call the past into account.”

Human history contains repeated patterns.

But God is not trapped inside those patterns.

He sees all time.

Nothing disappears from His knowledge.

He remembers what humanity forgets.

Cross References

Ecclesiastes 1:9

What has happened before will happen again, and what people have done before will be done again. There is nothing completely new under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 6:10

Whatever exists has already been named, and what human beings are has already been made known. No person can successfully argue with One who is greater than he is.

Isaiah 46:9

Remember what happened long ago. I am God, and there is no other. I am God, and there is no one like Me.

Spiritual Principle

History may repeat itself, but history is never outside God's knowledge.

XVI. WICKEDNESS IN THE PLACE OF JUSTICE

Ecclesiastes 3:16 — Corruption Under the Sun

“Moreover, I saw under the sun that in the place of judgment, wickedness was there; and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness.”

The Preacher is realistic.

Courts can become corrupt.

Leaders can become unjust.

Institutions created to protect righteousness can become places of wickedness.

Ecclesiastes does not pretend that earthly justice always works.

Cross References

Isaiah 5:7

The Lord expected justice from His people, but instead He saw bloodshed. He looked for righteousness, but instead He heard the cries of people who were suffering.

Amos 5:7

You turn justice into bitterness and throw righteousness down to the ground.

Micah 3:9

Listen to this, leaders of Jacob and rulers of Israel: you hate justice and twist everything that should be straight.

Spiritual Principle

Human injustice does not mean divine justice has failed.

XVII. GOD WILL JUDGE BOTH RIGHTEOUS AND WICKED

Ecclesiastes 3:17 — An Appointed Time for Judgment

“I said in my heart, ‘God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time appointed for every purpose and every work.’”

This is the answer to verse 16.

Earthly courts may fail.

God’s judgment will not.

The righteous and wicked will both stand before Him.

No injustice is permanently hidden.

Cross References

Psalms 96:13

The Lord is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with perfect faithfulness.

Acts 17:31

God has appointed a day when He will judge the world with justice through the Man He has chosen, and He has given proof of this to everyone by raising Him from the dead.

Romans 2:16

This judgment will take place on the day when God, through Jesus Christ, judges the hidden things in human hearts, just as the gospel declares.

Spiritual Principle

The final court is not on earth.

It is before God.

XVIII. HUMAN PRIDE MUST BE HUMBLLED

Ecclesiastes 3:18 — Like the Beasts

“I also said in my heart, ‘God tests the hearts of men so that they may see they are but like the beasts.’”

The Preacher is emphasizing mortality.

Human beings can become proud.

We build.

Rule.

Accumulate.

Plan.

But physically, death comes to humanity just as it comes to animals.

This should humble us.

Cross References

Psalm 49:12

A person may live with honor and wealth, but he cannot remain on earth forever. In death he is like the animals that perish.

Psalm 73:22

When I failed to understand Your ways, I was foolish and ignorant before You, behaving like an animal without understanding.

2 Peter 2:12

Some people behave like animals acting only by natural instinct, speaking against things they do not understand. Their corrupt way of life will eventually bring destruction upon them.

Spiritual Principle

Mortality destroys human arrogance.

XIX. PEOPLE AND ANIMALS BOTH DIE

Ecclesiastes 3:19 — The Same Breath

“For what happens to people also happens to animals—one dies just like the other. They all have the same breath; so man has no advantage over the beast. All is vanity.”

From the earthly viewpoint, both human and animal bodies die.

Both breathe.

Both stop breathing.

The Preacher is not saying human beings have no spiritual distinction.

He is emphasizing physical mortality.

Cross References

Psalms 49:20

A person who possesses honor but lacks spiritual understanding is like the animals that perish.

Psalms 39:5

You have made my days very short, and my lifetime is almost nothing compared with You. Every person, no matter how strong he appears, is only a passing breath.

Ecclesiastes 2:14

The wise person sees where he is going, while the fool walks in darkness. Yet I realized that the same earthly end comes to both of them.

Spiritual Principle

Physical life is temporary for every creature.

XX. ALL RETURN TO DUST

Ecclesiastes 3:20 — The Common Destination of the Body

“All go to the same place; all come from the dust, and to dust all return.”

Death returns the body to the earth.

This echoes Genesis.

Human beings were formed from dust.

The body eventually returns to dust.

Cross References

Genesis 3:19

You will eat your food by the sweat of your face until you return to the ground, because you were taken from it. You are dust, and to dust you will return.

Job 34:15

If God withdrew His life-giving breath, all humanity would die together and every person would return to dust.

Psalms 104:29

When You hide Your face, creatures are terrified. When You take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.

Spiritual Principle

Death reminds us that the body is temporary.

XXI. THE QUESTION OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

Ecclesiastes 3:21 — What Happens Beyond Death?

“Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and if the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth?”

The Preacher is speaking from the limited viewpoint of observation under the sun.

He raises the question that physical observation alone cannot answer.

What happens after death?

Later biblical revelation provides greater clarity.

Cross References

Ecclesiastes 12:7

Then the body returns to the earth from which it came, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

Job 34:14

If God decided to withdraw His Spirit and gather back the breath He gave,

Zechariah 12:1

This is the message of the Lord, the One who stretched out the heavens, laid the foundation of the earth, and formed the human spirit within each person.

Spiritual Principle

Human observation cannot answer every question about eternity.

We need revelation from God.

XXII. REJOICE IN THE WORK GOD HAS GIVEN

Ecclesiastes 3:22 — Receive the Present Portion

“So I concluded that there is nothing better for a man than to rejoice in his work, for that is his portion. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?”

The Preacher returns to practical wisdom.

We cannot see everything that will happen after us.

We cannot control every future event.

Therefore:

Receive the present faithfully.

Work.

Rejoice.

Give thanks.

Trust God with what comes next.

Cross References

Ecclesiastes 2:24

There is nothing better than for a person to eat, drink, and enjoy the good that comes from his labor. I saw that this ability to enjoy life comes from God’s hand.

Ecclesiastes 5:18

I have seen that it is good and proper for a person to eat, drink, and enjoy the results of all his work during the short life God has given him, because this is his portion.

Ecclesiastes 6:12

Who truly knows what is best for a person during the few and fleeting days of his life that pass like a shadow? And who can tell him what will happen on earth after he is gone?

Spiritual Principle

Faithfulness means living well today while trusting God with tomorrow.

XXIII. SEVEN GREAT LESSONS FROM ECCLESIASTES 3

1. Life Is Seasonal

No earthly condition lasts forever.

There is:

A time to begin.

A time to end.

A time to laugh.

A time to cry.

Principle:

Do not treat one season as though it defines your entire life.

2. God Controls the Larger Timetable

Human beings live inside time.

God rules over time.

Principle:

God is never early, never late, and never surprised.

3. Eternity Is Written into the Human Heart

People sense that life should mean more than survival.

We long for:

Permanence.

Justice.

Meaning.

Eternity.

Principle:

The desire for eternity points beyond this temporary world.

4. We Cannot Understand Everything God Is Doing

God sees the whole story.

We usually see one page.

Principle:

Faith trusts God where understanding reaches its limit.

5. Ordinary Joy Is a Gift

Food.

Work.

Friendship.

Daily provision.

These become meaningful when received with gratitude.

Principle:

Enjoyment is not merely found in having more but in receiving what God gives.

6. God Will Judge Injustice

Earthly systems may fail.

God's judgment will not.

Principle:

No evil escapes the final justice of God.

7. Mortality Should Produce Humility

We came from dust.

Our bodies return to dust.

Principle:

Remembering death can teach us how to live wisely.

XXIV. WHAT ECCLESIASTES 3 TEACHES ABOUT TIME

Time belongs to God.

Human beings try to control:

Schedules.

Deadlines.

Plans.

Seasons.

Outcomes.

But many parts of life remain outside our control.

Birth.

Death.

Loss.

Unexpected change.

The actions of others.

The future.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Faith is not controlling every season.

Faith is trusting God through every season.

XXV. WHAT ECCLESIASTES 3 TEACHES ABOUT GOD'S PROVIDENCE

God is not presented as distant from human history.

He is active.

He appoints times.

He gives gifts.

He judges.

He works beyond human understanding.

He brings purpose through changing seasons.

Key Truth

Providence means that the events of life are never outside God's ultimate rule.

XXVI. WHAT ECCLESIASTES 3 TEACHES ABOUT ETERNITY

Human beings are different from creatures who live only by instinct.

We ask:

Why?

What happens after death?

What lasts?

What is the purpose?

Why should justice matter?

Why does the human heart long for permanence?

Ecclesiastes says:

God has placed eternity in the human heart.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

We long for forever because we were made by the eternal God.

XXVII. WHAT ECCLESIASTES 3 TEACHES ABOUT JUSTICE

The Preacher does not ignore injustice.

He sees corruption.

He sees wickedness in places where righteousness should exist.

But he refuses to conclude that evil has won.

He says:

God will judge.

Spiritual Principle

Delayed justice is not the same thing as absent justice.

XXVIII. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

What does it mean that there is a season for everything?

It means human life contains different periods and circumstances.

No one season describes the whole of life.

God permits different times for different purposes.

Question 2

Does Ecclesiastes 3 teach fatalism?

No.

The chapter teaches divine sovereignty, not meaningless fate.

God rules over times and seasons with purpose.

Question 3

Why does the chapter mention so many opposites?

The opposites show the full range of human experience.

Life includes:

Birth and death.

Joy and sorrow.

Gain and loss.

Speech and silence.

War and peace.

Question 4

What does “eternity in the human heart” mean?

It means human beings possess an awareness that life reaches beyond temporary earthly experience.

We long for lasting meaning and permanence.

Question 5

Why can't we fully understand what God is doing?

Because human knowledge is limited.

God sees all of history at once.

We see only a small part.

Question 6

What does verse 13 teach about ordinary life?

It teaches that eating, drinking, working, and enjoying life are gifts from God.

Ordinary blessings should be received with gratitude.

Question 7

Why does God's work produce fear or reverence?

Because His work is permanent and cannot be improved or overturned by human beings.

This should humble us before Him.

Question 8

What does verse 16 teach about human institutions?

It teaches that even places designed for justice can become corrupt.

Human institutions are not perfect.

Question 9

What hope does verse 17 provide?

God will judge.

Human injustice will not have the final word.

Question 10

Why does the Preacher compare humans to animals?

He is emphasizing physical mortality.

Both humans and animals eventually die and return to the earth.

Question 11

Does Ecclesiastes 3 deny life after death?

No.

Verse 21 raises the question from the viewpoint of observation.

Later in Ecclesiastes, the Preacher states that the human spirit returns to God who gave it.

Question 12

What should Ecclesiastes 3 change about the way we live?

It should teach us to:

Trust God's timing.

Receive each season faithfully.

Enjoy His gifts.

Do good.

Remember eternity.

Fear God.

Trust His judgment.

Live humbly.

XXIX. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Ecclesiastes 3 asks several searching questions.

Am I Fighting a Season God Has Allowed?

What would faithfulness look like in this season?

Do I Believe God's Timing Is Better Than Mine?

Can I wait without becoming bitter?

Am I Trying to Understand Everything Before I Trust God?

Faith often begins before full understanding arrives.

Am I Enjoying the Gifts God Has Already Given Me?

Or am I constantly waiting for the next season?

Do I Live with Eternity in Mind?

Are my priorities shaped only by this life?

Do I Trust God When Justice Seems Delayed?

Do I believe He will ultimately judge rightly?

Am I Living Humbly?

Do I remember that my days are limited?

XXX. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Do Not Judge the Whole Story by One Season”

A season of grief is not the whole story.

A season of waiting is not the whole story.

A season of loss is not the whole story.

A season of joy is not the whole story either.

Every earthly season changes.

Only God remains constant.

We often make the mistake of saying:

“This is my life.”

When what we really mean is:

“This is my present season.”

There is a difference.

Principle:

Never confuse a temporary season with God’s permanent purpose.

XXXI. GOD’S TIMING AND HUMAN IMPATIENCE

Human beings often want:

Immediate answers.

Immediate healing.

Immediate justice.

Immediate success.

Immediate clarity.

But Scripture repeatedly reveals that God works through appointed times.

The Messiah came:

At the appointed time.

Judgment comes:

At the appointed time.

Promises are fulfilled:

At the appointed time.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Waiting does not mean God has forgotten.

Delay does not mean denial.

XXXII. FINAL APPLICATION

Ecclesiastes Chapter 3 teaches us to see life differently.

Life is not one unchanging condition.

It moves through seasons.

Some seasons are welcomed.

Others are painful.

There is:

A time to laugh.

A time to weep.

A time to gain.

A time to lose.

A time to speak.

A time to remain silent.

A time to build.

A time to tear down.

If we demand that every season feel the same, we will constantly fight reality.

The better question is not:

“Why can’t this season be different?”

The better question is:

“Lord, how should I live faithfully in this season?”

Ecclesiastes also reminds us:

We do not see the entire picture.

God does.

We often judge a situation from the middle.

God sees:

The beginning.

The middle.

The end.

Something that seems painful today may eventually become part of something beautiful in God’s appointed time.

That does not make pain unreal.

It means pain is not necessarily purposeless.

God has also placed eternity in our hearts.

That is why temporary things never completely satisfy us.

We were made for more than:

Money.

Work.

Success.

Pleasure.

Possessions.

We were made to know the eternal God.

The chapter also teaches us to enjoy the present.

Eat.

Drink.

Work.

Do good.

Rejoice.

Receive the ordinary gifts of God.

Do not miss today because you are obsessed with tomorrow.

Do not miss this season because you are waiting for the next one.

And when injustice troubles you:

Remember God will judge.

When death humbles you:

Remember your life is in God's hands.

When the future confuses you:

Remember God already sees it.

When your season changes:

Remember God has not changed.

Therefore:

Trust Him in the beginning.

Trust Him in the ending.

Trust Him when you laugh.

Trust Him when you weep.

Trust Him when you gain.

Trust Him when you lose.

Trust Him when you understand.

Trust Him when you do not.

There is a time for everything.

And God is Lord over every time.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You that our lives are in Your hands.

Thank You that You are Lord over every time and every season.

Teach us not to fear the changing seasons of life.

When a season begins, help us receive it faithfully.

When a season ends, help us release it without bitterness.

When we rejoice, keep us grateful.

When we weep, remain near to us.

When we gain, keep us humble.

When we lose, keep us trusting.

When we need to speak, give us courage and wisdom.

When we need to remain silent, give us restraint.

When we are called to build, give us strength.

When something must be torn down, give us discernment.

Father, thank You that You make everything beautiful in its proper time.

We confess that we do not always understand Your timing.

We often want immediate answers.

Immediate healing.

Immediate change.

Immediate justice.

Immediate direction.

Teach us to wait.

Teach us to trust.

Remind us that delay does not mean You have forgotten us.

Thank You for placing eternity in our hearts.

Keep us from living as though this temporary life is all that exists.

Help us see everything through the perspective of eternity.

Thank You for the ordinary gifts of life.

Thank You for food.

Thank You for work.

Thank You for rest.

Thank You for family.

Thank You for friendship.

Thank You for moments of laughter.

Thank You even for the lessons learned through sorrow.

Teach us to enjoy what You give without worshipping the gift.

Father, we see injustice in this world.

Sometimes wickedness appears where righteousness should exist.

Remind us that You see everything.

Remind us that You will judge rightly.

Keep us from becoming bitter while we wait for Your justice.

Help us live humbly.

Our lives are short.

Our bodies return to dust.

Teach us to number our days wisely.

Help us use the time You give us for Your glory.

And in every season:

Keep us faithful.

In every change:

Keep us grounded.

In every mystery:

Keep us trusting.

In every blessing:

Keep us thankful.

In every trial:

Keep us near to You.

You are God over every season.

And we place our times in Your hands.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Key Verse

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart, yet no one can fully grasp what God has done from beginning to end.” — Ecclesiastes 3:11

Central Truth

God sovereignly appoints the seasons of life, gives meaning to ordinary blessings, places eternity within the human heart, and will bring every purpose and every work into His perfect judgment at the proper time.

Ecclesiastes 3 in One Sentence

The Preacher teaches that every part of life has its appointed season under God’s sovereign rule, that human beings long for eternity without fully understanding God’s entire plan, and that wisdom means receiving His gifts gratefully, trusting His timing, and living in view of His final judgment.