

# THE APPOINTED TIME OF MAN

**BIBLE TEXT** : Ecclesiastes 3:1-17; 8:11-13; Psalm 95:1-11; Isaiah 49:7-9; II Corinthians 6:2.

LESSON 377 Senior Course

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (II Corinthians 6:2).

## **BIBLE TEXT in King James Version**

### **Ecclesiastes 3:1-17**

<sup>1</sup> To every *thing* *there is* a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

<sup>2</sup> A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up *that which is* planted;

<sup>3</sup> A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

<sup>4</sup> A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

<sup>5</sup> A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

<sup>6</sup> A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

<sup>7</sup> A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

<sup>8</sup> A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

<sup>9</sup> What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth?

<sup>10</sup> I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.

<sup>11</sup> He hath made every *thing* beautiful in his time: 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.

<sup>12</sup> I know that *there is* no good in them, but for *a man* to rejoice, and to do good in his life.

<sup>13</sup> And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it *is* the gift of God.

## **BIBLE REFERENCES:**

### **I A Season for Every Thing**

1. Life is pictured as a series of opposite actions, Ecclesiastes 3:1-8.

2. God has so designed all things that men might come to the knowledge of Himself, Ecclesiastes 3:9-14;

#### **Psalm 19:1-4**

<sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

<sup>2</sup> Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

<sup>3</sup> *There is* no speech nor language, *where* their voice is not heard.

<sup>4</sup> Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,

#### **Psalm 40:5**

<sup>5</sup> Many, O LORD my God, *are* thy wonderful works *which* thou hast done, and thy thoughts *which are* to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: *if* I would declare and speak of *them*, they are more than can be numbered.

#### **Revelation 15:3**

<sup>3</sup> And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints.

#### **Revelation 15:4**

<sup>4</sup> Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for *thou only art* holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

### **II Eternity's Appointment**

1. All injustices unrepented of will be dealt with in eternity, Ecclesiastes 3:15-17; 8:11, 13;

#### **2 Thessalonians 1:7-8**

<sup>7</sup> And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,

<sup>8</sup> In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

#### **Revelation 20:11-15**

<sup>11</sup> And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

<sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

<sup>13</sup> And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

<sup>14</sup> And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

<sup>15</sup> And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

2. The righteous shall be rewarded for their deeds, Ecclesiastes 8:12;

#### **Proverbs 10:22**

<sup>22</sup> The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.

#### **Matthew 25:31-40**

<sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.

<sup>16</sup> And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, *that* wickedness *was* there; and the place of righteousness, *that* iniquity *was* there.

<sup>17</sup> I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for *there is* a time there for every purpose and for every work.

### **Ecclesiastes 8:11-13**

<sup>11</sup> Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

<sup>12</sup> Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his *days* be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him:

<sup>13</sup> But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong *his days*, *which are* as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.

### **Psalms 95:1-11**

<sup>1</sup> O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.

<sup>2</sup> Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.

<sup>3</sup> For the LORD *is* a great God, and a great King above all gods.

<sup>4</sup> In his hand *are* the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills *is* his also.

<sup>5</sup> The sea *is* his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry *land*.

<sup>6</sup> O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.

<sup>31</sup> When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

<sup>32</sup> And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats:

<sup>33</sup> And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

<sup>34</sup> Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

<sup>35</sup> For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

<sup>36</sup> Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

<sup>37</sup> Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink?

<sup>38</sup> When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*?

<sup>39</sup> Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

<sup>40</sup> And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.

### **III God's Love and Call**

1. The Lord is a great God and is worthy of men's praises, Psalm 95:1-6;

#### **Psalms 67:3**

3 Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.

#### **Hebrews 13:15**

15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name.

#### **Revelation 7:9**

9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

#### **Revelation 7:10**

10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

2. The Lord calls for the hearts of all men, Psalm 95:7, 8; Isaiah 49:7-9; II Corinthians 6:2.

3. Not all men will serve God, Psalm 95:9-11;

#### **1 Samuel 8:7**

7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

#### **Luke 19:14**

14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this *man* to reign over us.

### **NOTES:**

#### **An Appointment**

"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). God has decreed this appointment and has planted an awareness of that truth in the hearts of men - a truth that cannot be erased. This truth has run the gauntlet of men's emotions. It has been thought about, talked about, written about, believed, denied, neglected; but none of men's actions, thoughts, or beliefs can in any wise change the appointment that God has unalterably fixed.

In many respects the Book of Ecclesiastes is a chart of the thoughts of a man on his journey to keep his appointment with God. It shows many of the wanderings and errors of the pilgrim's

<sup>7</sup> For he *is* our God; and we *are* the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice,

<sup>8</sup> Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, *and* as *in* the day of temptation in the wilderness:

<sup>9</sup> When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work.

<sup>10</sup> Forty years long was I grieved with *this* generation, and said, It *is* a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways:

<sup>11</sup> Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.

### **Isaiah 49:7-9**

<sup>7</sup> Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, *and* his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, *and* the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.

<sup>8</sup> Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

<sup>9</sup> That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that *are* in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures *shall be* in all high places.

### **2 Corinthians 6:2**

<sup>2</sup> (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)

meditations as he travelled along life's pathway, until at last God's Word and love brought him to the only feasible conclusion as announced in the final few words: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14).

### **The Passing Scene**

Solomon, through his backsliding, found that life became very distressing and difficult to understand. He could see the constructive forces of God at work in the world, but each constructive force seemed to have a destructive force that counteracted all gains. Birth was realised, only that death might have its chance; planting was accomplished, soon to be undone by reaping; and so forth. Life seemed empty. It is sad that men pass their time of sojourn on this earth and fail to notice that God has surrounded their life with many tokens of His love and goodness.

The true meaning of life, however, is not to count the sorrows or joys, but to use these as steppingstones to the better life in Christ Jesus. The true value of life is to carry into eternity a soul that has been moulded by God. If men would think less often of the hardships of their duties and of the heaviness of their burdens, if they would think more often of the loving purpose of God who appoints them all, life would become less difficult, less toilsome, and less mysterious.

The knowledge that God is sovereign and that man will answer to Him in judgment at the appointed time, should cause men to prepare for that day by thoroughly repenting of all sin. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

### **Worldly-Mindedness**

If man were willing, God would bring him into a greater knowledge of Himself and His works, but man is not willing. "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." In other words, the natural mind of man has gone so far astray from God and has become so much occupied with the thoughts of the present world that he cannot comprehend anything beyond.

No doubt Adam and Eve in their state of innocency, before their fall into sin, had deep insight into God's work and plans. But the knowledge of evil replaced the knowledge of good; fear replaced fellowship and friendship with God. Generations passed before men, with few exceptions, thought much about the loving-kindness of God. A man has to separate himself from worldly-mindedness if he desires to make contact with God, for godliness and worldliness will not mix. "Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

### **Righteous Judgment**

Most people make an attempt to pass in this world with a high rate in the opinion of their fellow beings. Many will go to great lengths to deceive their neighbours and friends into believing them better people than they know themselves to be. This is especially true in religious circles, and it has been true throughout the years of the Bible. No wonder Solomon said: "Moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there." One of the first to try this subterfuge was Cain, but God quickly judged him. Achan was another who tried to hide sin, but he, too, was soon found out. In later life King Saul tried to pass as a righteous man, but he became his own murderer. The Pharisees and Sadducees came to John's baptism, but God searched them

out: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Mathew 3:7). The Bible warns, "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23).

Too often in these days do men practice wickedness in the place of judgment, and seemingly get away with it. The saying that men cannot live above sin in this present world has been worn threadbare, but the saying does not change God's Word. Heaven is still a holy place, to be occupied by those whose lives have been transformed and made sinless through the Blood of Jesus. Because iniquity has too often been noted in the place where righteousness should be found, many have turned aside from God, branding all church people and professors of godliness as hypocrites. How careful and exacting must be the walk and talk of those who are true Christians, that the light of the Gospel might truly shine to the world!

A time of separation is coming. "God shall judge the righteous and the wicked." This time of inequalities will be corrected. The Judge of all the earth will gather all people to His throne and judge righteous judgment. No lawyer will be there to plead an unjust cause and swing the verdict with his oratory. No jury will be there to be bought off with any amount of money, but each man will be judged by his actual works — works that God has recorded in His Book (**Revelation 20:11-15** 11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.).

### **Picking the Winner**

Seeing that these things are true, it is not difficult to determine the winner in the course of life. An important thought is introduced here: "Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that . . . it shall not be well with the wicked." The Bible states emphatically in many places that the seeming prosperity of the wicked is not a true criterion or measure by which to judge between the value of worldliness and godliness. "It shall be well with them that fear God." The man who trusts God truly experiences trials, testings, and chastenings, but he has the arm of God to lean upon and an understanding heavenly Father to trust. The sinner often suffers more than the righteous, and he has no one to help him or in whom to trust, except the arm of flesh. The wicked do sometimes amass great treasures, but true riches as described by the Lord are those treasures laid up in Heaven. Earthly treasures will perish, but heavenly treasures continue throughout eternity. Then, of course, the final triumph of the righteous will be to inherit Heaven as their eternal home, while the traveller of the broad way will find that his manner of life leads to destruction.

### **Accepted Time**

The Lord is a great God! Surely He is worthy of men's praises and worship. He has created all things, and he is now upholding "all things by the word of his power" (Hebrews 1:3). Just think, a man can get a prayer through to God, and He will send an answer!

The illustration is given of the Children of Israel, that they heard God's voice time after time, saw miracle after miracle performed by Him in their behalf; yet they provoked God,

tempted Him, and presumed upon His mercy. Forty years long was God grieved with that generation, saying, "They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways" (Hebrews 3:10). It was the accepted time for that generation of Israel -- a time when God would have heard and answered their prayers, had they prayed correctly. Their refusal to seek and trust God resulted in their loss of the promised land. That generation of Israelites perished in the wilderness.

In like manner the Spirit of God calls to the hearts of men today. In many ways God has manifested to the hearts of men that He is, and that He is the Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. When should men seek God? "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." The Holy Ghost saith, "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Hebrews 3:7, 8). "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" (Isaiah 55:6). The day is coming when the Lord can no longer be found. His Spirit will no longer be near the hearts of the children of men, trying to win them unto Himself. The present is man's accepted time with God. The present holds God's promise to answer prayer. The future holds no hope except to those who trust God here and now, except to those who make use of their acceptable time with God.

### **QUESTIONS**

1. Name one of the reasons why God appointed times and seasons.
2. What can be the only profit of man's appointed time on the earth?
3. Why is it so difficult for mankind to understand the work of God?
4. Why is it a stumbling block to some to see iniquity in the place where righteousness should be?
5. Who shall judge the righteous and the wicked? When?
6. Why are the hearts of the sons of men fully set to do evil?
7. Why will it be well with the righteous?
8. Why will it not be well with wicked?
9. When is man's accepted time with God?