

LIVING ON THE RAGGED EDGE: COMING TO TERMS WITH REALITY

DO YOU KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS?

ECCLESIASTES 3:1-11



The Heart of the Matter

Will time last forever or will it ultimately come to an end? Because humans invented the clock, then obviously that device will not accompany us into eternity. The planets that God Almighty arranged in space continue to be the most perfect chronometer ever created, but when those planets stop, well, time stops. So even time is temporary. And that means we need to invest it wisely and find ways to enjoy it while it is ours to claim.

Ecclesiastes 3 provides a necessary and relieving break from the frenzied, hard-driving, seldom-resting business person of the latter half of Ecclesiastes 2. Because our time is short and the seasons of life keep going in a seeming endless cycle, Solomon addressed two questions: Are we able to affect or alter life's events, and are these events moving toward any ultimate objective?



Discovering the Way

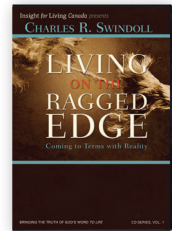
1. Time: Some Random Thoughts

Before turning to Solomon's description of life under the sun, let's answer a few difficult but necessary questions about time.

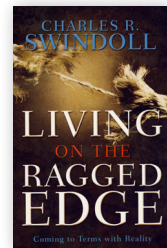
- *What is time?* Time is the way we measure events and the passing moments of our lives. Though He is beyond it, God created time—past, present, and future—to provide order to the many events that would occur in the history of the world.
- *Why is time important?* Time is completely irretrievable. Once a unit of time has passed, it can't be recaptured or reversed. So we must make the most of the time we have.
- *When will time end?* In the new heaven and new earth, events will still proceed in logical order (Revelation 21:1–22:5), but time as we know it will come to an end. The cycles of day and night will cease, and the measurement of time will become obsolete.



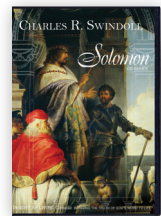
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2. Life: Measured according to Its Events (Ecclesiastes 3:1–10)

In Ecclesiastes 3:1–8, Solomon presented a series of snapshots of real life—pictures of reality that capture the good and bad, the positive and negative. While most of us fill our photo albums or scrapbooks with only positive memories, Solomon portrayed life in its stark reality, including not only laughter and love but also hardship and pain.

Then in Ecclesiastes 3:9, Solomon asked an all-encompassing question to help us evaluate the events in our lives. Based on Solomon’s question, *what is the profit* of the inevitable ups and downs in life, and *what is the purpose* of these divinely timed life events?



GETTING TO THE ROOT

What Time Is It?

Solomon used two Hebrew words for “time” in Ecclesiastes 3:1. The first, *zeman*, means “appointed time” and occurs only three other times in the Old Testament (Nehemiah 2:6; Esther 9:27, 31). In each case, it refers to the allotted time for an event to occur. The second word, *et*, is far more common and refers to the time that an event occurs.¹

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Starting Your Journey

Finally, in Ecclesiastes 3:11, Solomon made several all-important conclusions:

- *Regarding time:* God makes all things beautiful in their time.
- *Regarding life:* God has placed eternity in our hearts.

What time is it for you? In what season of life do you find yourself? Is it tragic, unfair, or beautiful? Are you still searching for meaning and purpose “under the sun”?

ENDNOTE

1. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006), 773.