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IDYLLWILD BIBLE SCHOOL - 1992

UNDER THE SUN - THEMES FROM ECCLESIASTES

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Study #3: Time and Eternity

Reading: Ecclesiastes 3

Well, good morning my dear brethren and sisters.

If we can just pick up on something from yesterday to start with, one or two of you have come to me and have said about this matter 'of eating and drinking and being merry', "What I said was that there was nothing wrong with eating, drinking and being merry". Well, in a sense that is what I was saying: there is nothing wrong with eating, drinking and being merry. I think it's the last phrase there that creates difficulties for us, but if we check it through in our scriptures we discover that all it means is, 'eat, drink, and be joyful'. Now, as soon as we go over the top in eating, drinking and being joyful, then there are problems!

Turn, if you will, to Isaiah 22 and you'll see here (and it has a relevance to our topic today, when we're going to look particularly at Ecclesiastes 3) there are times to do certain things and times to refrain from doing them. The same is true, sadly, with eating and drinking, and there's a time to refrain from doing it; and, as Isaiah 22 makes very clear for us, verse 12, 'In that day did the Lord GOD of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth': the times were such that it required the people to afflict themselves, and the physical should have taught them that it was necessary that they ought to return to God and worship Him alone. They had had no thought for the One who had prepared for them a secure place, as we read this morning from 2 Samuel 7; and, because they had turned their back upon Him, then the LORD God in His desire for them to return to Him, was telling them now to take on board, this idea of weeping, mourning and showing that they were of that attitude of mind, by girding themselves with sackcloth and so on. They weren't doing it, verse 13, 'Behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine'. They were saying to themselves, 'let us eat and drink: for tomorrow we shall die'. They were seeing the troops gathering against Jerusalem, and instead of, when they saw those things, turning to God and afflicting themselves and recognizing their own failure in His sight; instead they were saying, 'Well, life is short, we can see the troops at the door, let's just make the best of the time that is available to us'. Now if our

eating and drinking and being joyful is of that nature, then it's wrong!

But there is something good in eating and drinking and being joyful. In fact, many of our most pleasant memories will be of meals taken when there has been good companionship, whether it's a candle lit dinner with the one who is close to our heart, or whether it is a large gathering of people, and the conversation is uplifting! It's interesting, isn't it? that the real token of our fellowship is a meal that we share together at the Lord's table, eating and drinking and being joyful. That's what our fellowship is about. So don't let us be too concerned about those things, but let's also recognize that it has to be kept in its right perspective. There are times when we should refrain from those things.

There was a question, a supplementary question, in a question-answer session yesterday, which just touched on fasting. Obviously fasting has a relevance to this particular aspect of our subject and the answer, it seems, about fasting is that we are to see that there are occasions when we must separate ourselves from the activities of the world (which are only concerned with pleasure and enjoyment) and recognize that we have no part of those; and, if we wish to do so by physically fasting, there is nothing wrong with it. If we're doing it like the Pharisees do, just so that we can show ourselves to be superior to everyone else because our cheeks suddenly go hollow (I can't do it very well and even if I did you wouldn't be able to see it very well, but you know what I mean) just to make our faces look as if we've been fasting; but there's no point in that, because that's doing it for pride. I don't know, and I'm not sure how many of you have actually tried it. I have on just a couple of occasions just tried not eating for 3 days, and actually it didn't make any difference, so I was quite pleased to get back to the food once more! But the rest of the family was eating and I had my glass of water at the table, and they all thought that I was madder than they knew I was. It didn't seem to make any difference, but the spiritual method of fasting, and that is to say, 'I'm now going to devote specific times which I would otherwise have spent doing other things, to do tasks that I know I ought to be doing', then that perhaps is an important aspect for us to consider.

It's interesting this idea of eating and drinking, and it's picked up in the New Testament. Turn to 1 Corinthians 15 and you'll notice here the apostle Paul links just as we have seen in Isaiah 22, the idea of eating and drinking with denying the whole purpose of God: verse 32, 'if after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus'. It's rather interesting that the apostle Paul here is using Ecclesiastes type language: he didn't fight with beasts! he didn't fight with animals! but he did fight with men who were bestial in Ephesus. 'If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?': (Why am I trying now to get over these things which are man's natural lot, if he takes no account of God in his life, and is just as the beasts that perish. Why am I struggling against these things, if there is no release ultimately from death for those who do make that struggle)? 'And if not, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die'. Do you see how often eating and drinking has this

connection with those who turn their backs upon God, even though in itself, it is not a bad thing.

One final quotation in this little string of quotations, Luke 21, which perhaps put the whole matter into perspective for us. Luke 21 verse 34, 'Take heed to yourselves lest at any time and your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you unawares'. Nothing wrong with eating and drinking, but overcharged with eating and overcharged with drinking and surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this life (you see, how the connection is made)! This isn't just eating and drinking. These things are symptomatic of the whole of our lives, and if we are immersed in just the things which are under the sun and never lift our eyes above that horizon, then that day is going to come upon us unawares, and the day of death and the day of perishing is going to cut us all out as a thief in the night. So, verse 36, 'Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man'. That phraseology right at the end of verse 36 is phraseology which has to do with judgment, that's Romans 14, verse 10, to stand before the Son of man. We'll see how in Ecclesiastes, Solomon will introduce to us the idea of judgment.

Then just to pick up something else from yesterday as well: obviously, I wasn't being as clear as I hoped I might be, when I was saying that all the possessions that we acquire to ourselves, and was suggesting that perhaps on occasions we ought **not** to purchase something that we'd planned to purchase or even to get rid of some of the things which clutter our lives. Well, just turn to Matthew 12, because I ought really to have gone on a little bit further, and interestingly again, the Lord now, in speaking, introduces us to Solomon and his wisdom; so, it may well be that the Lord's mind was resting on these verses that we'd been considering in Ecclesiastes. So when speaking to the Pharisees who asked the Lord for a sign, you'll notice in verse 38, Jesus says in verse 42, 'The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, a greater than Solomon is here. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come he findeth empty, swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.' So, we must be careful taking things out of our lives, to be sure that we replace those things with matters which are right and holy and good, which is perhaps the best introduction we can have to what we're going to consider today.

If you'll turn to Ecclesiastes 3, our passage really is the first 15 verses: 'To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven'. So we've got to recognize that there are different times, there are times when it's appropriate to do some things and some times when it's far from appropriate for us to do them. You may

recall that we considered in our first session this idea that there is **madness** in the heart of man while he lives - that's Ecclesiastes 9 verse 8. Now, that's looking at man when God is not in his life at all! there is madness in his heart while he lives. Well, when we come to verse 11 of Ecclesiastes 3 we have a balancing verse which we are now to bring into the equation; 'God hath made every thing beautiful in its time: also He hath set the world in their heart, so no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end'.

Now it's an interesting verse, this verse 11 of Ecclesiastes 3. You see, we're being told something about the creation of man by God. In fact, there's a link here with the last verse of Genesis 1, where the LORD God beheld everything that He had made and behold, it was very good'. It comes out in this verse as 'God hath made everything **beautiful** in its time, everything very **good**', and if you just wanted to do a little bit of research and went through your concordance for this word 'beautiful', you'd discover that it's describing the external appearance but also with an inner quality. So that, for example, Abigail was of a 'beautiful' (3303) countenance, but it wasn't just her countenance, it was her courage that was beautiful. There are many other examples of 'goodly' and 'godly' and 'comely' women in scripture, and the word that is used often is the same as we have here. God has made everything beautiful in its time. There was something fitting about everything that was made, He beheld those things which He had made and it was very 'good'. Not perfect, you'll notice, but very good; so God had made everything beautiful in its time, so there's something to do with 'time' here. It's a new perspective that's been added to our consideration in Ecclesiastes and we've got to discover just what it is that it means.

Then the verse goes on to say, 'Also He has set the **world** in their heart'; now, obviously, God has not set the world in our hearts, no one's heart is big enough for that! So, we've got to try and understand just what is being said here, and the word that's used for 'world' occurs a little bit later in the same chapter, verse 14, 'I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for **ever**' (the same word, 5769). You say, well, that's not helping me very much: 'He hath set 'ever' in their heart, isn't really having very much more than we had before! Well, you may have a different translation for Ecclesiastes 3, verse 11: 'God has set **eternity** in their heart' and with that we're getting a little bit closer to the meaning. The Hebrew word is 'olam' (5769), it's the hidden period, and it always is a defined period, of course. Quite often it's speaking of the 'kingdom age'. We get another use of it in Ecclesiastes. If you'll turn to chapter 12, which is the chapter we shall look at on Saturday, but you'll realize that the first few verses of Ecclesiastes 12 are a very graphic and poetic description of old age and then we read, in verse 5 about half way through the verse, 'the grasshopper being a burden, desire failing, because man goeth to his long home', his home of **eternity**, his 'beth olam'. 'The mourners go about the streets', and 'a man going to his house of eternity' is speaking about **death**. It's a description now of the period of time when man will be in the earth.

I've just noticed as we were doing the readings this morning, if you turn to 2 Samuel 7 and verse 29, there's a very interesting link with that verse from Ecclesiastes 12. You'll remember, and it came out very well as brother Ken was reading this for us this morning, where David says to the LORD, because David wanted to build a house for the LORD, but the LORD's answer was about David's house, and David said, 'Thou hast spoken of thy servant's house for a long while to come'; and then in the last verse of 2 Samuel 7, 'Therefore now let it please Thee to bless **the house** of thy servant, that it may continue for **eternity** (for the 'olam') before Thee: for Thou, O Lord GOD hast spoken it; and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for the olam'. The eternal home, the long home that David was looking for was something very different just from perishing and death, but was, in fact, a home which God had promised: the house of thy servant which had been described to David in that beautiful prophecy of the coming of the greater than David whom David would call 'Lord'.

So, if we go back in Ecclesiastes 3, how then are we to understand this in verse 11, that God had set **eternity** in the heart of man, when we read in Ecclesiastes 9 that man's heart is mad while he lives? Well, there are a couple of other things which we can also add in before we fully begin to understand what this means. Let's go back to the beginning of verse 11, 'He's made everything beautiful in His time', and just compare that with a verse in Ecclesiastes 7, it's the last verse of chapter 7, 'Lo, this only have I found that God hath made man **upright**; but they have sought out many inventions'. So we're being taken back in time to the creation of the world and God's making of man and of all creation and it being very good and upright. This is before the fall, of course. The problem was that man and woman sought out many inventions, and, because of that, they were no longer upright. So man has always since that time, has had a bias towards sin and the temptation towards sin comes as a result of his mortality, and if he gives way to that bias then he gives way to the madness, the possibility of madness in his heart. It's interesting, this last verse of Ecclesiastes 7 because, it's because God made man upright that he sought out many inventions; just the use of that word '**inventions**' (2810), because it only occurs twice in scripture once here in Ecclesiastes 7 and the other occasion is in 2 Chronicles 26.

Just look at this because it's quite fascinating really! It tells us what man does when man is no longer upright. It's in the time of king Uzziah, 2 Chronicles 26, verse 14. Uzziah is now fighting the enemy and 'he prepared for them throughout all the army shields and spears, and helmets, and habergeons, and bows, and slings to cast stones. And he made in Jerusalem inventions (engines), invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal. And **his name** spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction; and he transgressed against the LORD his God; and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense'. It was the downfall of Uzziah that he began to rest upon the inventions of man's hands and not upon the power that comes from God, and he made in Jerusalem

engines. **God had made man upright but they have sought out many inventions.**

So, we've got some interesting facts which we now have got to try to put together! There is **madness** in their heart while they live; they've sought out many **inventions**; but God has made everything **beautiful** in its time, He's placed **eternity** in their heart; God has made man **upright**, and how is it that we're going to square these two different ideas? How is it that we're going to bring them into harmony? Well, I think there is a way in which we can do so! You see, man was made like the beasts that perish in the sense of his mortality; so, we could draw a circle in which we've got man and beasts who are alike because of their morality. But God also made everything beautiful in its time and He made man upright, in fact, we're told that God made man in His own image; so we've got to draw another circle in which we've got man and the elohim (the angels) and in making man in His own image, and in making man upright, man was also given a quality that the beasts haven't got. The quality that the beasts haven't got was some sort of moral sense, a means of abstract thinking which the beasts haven't got, and eternity in his heart: the possibility to comprehend space and time, and the animals have not got that! A classic example, of course, are the lemmings. Now, you know what they do: they come up to a cliff and every year they sort of fall over and land at the bottom. Now you'll not find many groups of people doing that: they would reach the edge of the cliff and they'd look over and see how far down it was, and they would know their own frailty and they'd say, 'I don't think I'm going to go today, or at least not until I bring my parachute!' But you never see lemmings having that sort of a discussion on the top of the cliff; they just carry on over. There's a difference between lemmings and men, but there is a part where these two circles overlap and man stands in the little bit where the two circles overlap, because man is like the beast because he perishes, but he's like the elohim because he's got eternity in his heart, with a qualification, and the qualification is in Ecclesiastes 3, verse 11. Let me read this verse to you from the RV, 'He hath made everything beautiful in its time, also He hath set eternity in their heart, yet so that man can not find out, the work that God has done from the beginning, even to the end'; even though man has this quality which is not there with the beasts; even though it is possible for him to comprehend that and that there is something in man which responds to the good things of God and wishes to know more about God's purpose. Wishes because of the aspirations that man has, to be part of the olam, the hidden period, the eternity that God has planned from the foundation of the world. Despite all of that, man's comprehension is limited and he cannot find out everything that God has made from the beginning to the end. Why not? because man is limited by time which is what the rest of the chapter is now telling us. The LORD God is **not!** the day is with the LORD as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day; but, as far as man is concerned, all he has is a brief snapshot on the history of the world while he's living and we're just looking through that small snapshot of our own period of time on the earth!

So let's take things just a little bit farther before we move into these verses at the

beginning of Ecclesiastes 3. Turn to Ecclesiastes 7 again and verse 13. We've been trying to consider the **work of God** in forming mankind, 'Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which He hath made crooked? In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider : God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him'. So, God has set prosperity and adversity in the lives of mankind, the verse that we saw yesterday that man should be 'exercised thereby' to try and appreciate from the experiences of life both the good and the bad, and to learn that God hath given to man these things in order that he might recognize firstly, that he himself is as the beasts, mortal, but will also recognize the good things of God and will wish to respond to them. We cannot alter those situations, that's not in our power! We cannot make straight those things which God has introduced into the world in order to teach us of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. We cannot make those straight.

If you turn back to chapter 1, the same idea comes out there. Verse 14 of Ecclesiastes 1, 'I have seen all the works that are done under the sun (so remember we've got our limited perspective) and behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. I communed with my own heart saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. What did he learn? verse 18: 'In much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow', and there was no way of getting out of that condition. You cannot make straight those things, only the LORD God ultimately can make those straight.

If you turn unto Isaiah 40 you'll see how this is picked up and the means of making these things straight, the means of straightening out our crooked world, has been in the gift of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. So, Isaiah is now using Ecclesiastes' language, verse 3, 'The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, **make straight** in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; the crooked **shall be made straight** and the rough places plain. The glory of the LORD shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.' Just to confirm that it really is the Ecclesiastes' theme which is coming out here in Isaiah 40, you'll notice how the record then goes on to speak of man's mortality. 'The voice said 'cry', and he said, what shall I cry? and here was the cry, 'all flesh is grass, and all the goodness therefore is as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever'. I find it absolutely fascinating that when this passage is quoted in 1 Peter 1, the middle part of the passage is missed out altogether, and just moves on straight from saying, 'all flesh is as grass and the grass withereth and the flower fadeth... (tape turned) in the Lord

Jesus Christ'. So it's not in our power in any sense at all, we are now in the position where we've got adversity and prosperity and they're side by side that we might recognize ourselves for what we are and see the need to rest upon the mercy and loving-kindness of the LORD God.

Right! Well, Ecclesiastes 3, 'To everything there is a season, and a **time** for every purpose under the heaven'. These are things that man cannot choose to start with, no man chooses the time of his own birth! and for the majority of us, no man chooses the time of his own death. I suppose it's only a suicide victim that could really decide that, but generally speaking those two things are things which we cannot decide for ourselves, the day of our birth or the day of our death. Many of the other things which are now mentioned in Ecclesiastes 3, are things that we **can** decide. Sometimes, however, they are things that are brought upon us by external circumstances. So, when we're placed in a situation, 'There may be a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up. A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance. A time to cast away stones, a time to gather stones together; A time to embrace, a time to refrain from embracing; a time to get and a time to lose; a time to keep and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate'. Now did any of you notice that the order is turned around in the last one? you would expect it to be a time of peace and a time of war, but it isn't! Poetically, the passage finishes with **peace**, because that is the purpose of God: God calls Himself the God of peace. Quite remarkably the apostle Paul in over half of his letters that he wrote, signs them off by speaking of 'may the God of peace be with you'. So the same thing is true here and all of these things now comprehend our lives, and when that time, from the time of our birth to the time of our death, we are being faced daily with choices as to how we shall order the time which is placed before us, and the LORD God is watching those things that we do because in those decisions that we take, we are declaring in a very eloquent way, whether we are resting on His promises in His strength, or upon our own strength, our own ingenuity, our own subtlety, our own guile. It is important that from time to time, we take stock of our lives and how we spend our time in the things that we do, the sort of people that we are!

What verse 3 tells us of Ecclesiastes 3 is that we are not pacifists and there is a time to kill, and so those that have had to stand before tribunals in order to answer for their faith, have had to say, 'if the Lord instructs me then I will take up arms', and there is a time to kill. Under the Law there were times to kill, because it was necessary that the evil should be put away; and as the nation entered into the land there was a time to kill because the tribes there which had so corrupted themselves by their false worship and had defiled the land needed to be removed, and the same is true about the land in which we live, that the world is being defiled, and when the Lord returns it will be necessary for those people to be destroyed, and it may be that He will use people like ourselves in order to carry out that work. So there is a time to kill! and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up, and there were many who recognized the

need to break down. Sadly, (though, some of the kings put away idolatry from within the land, but still we learn that the groves remained and were not broken down), though sometimes we have to break down those things which we erect, which form barriers between ourselves and the service of the LORD God. There is also a time to build up and we build up those things which guard us against the incurrence of iniquity and modern idolatry into our lives.

'There is a time for us to weep'; turn with me to Ecclesiastes 7 verse 2, 'It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for in the house of mourning we discover the end of all men and the living will lay it to his heart'. Well, he will if he takes notice of it and there is something quite remarkable about a Christadelphian funeral; as you'll all know if you've gone both to a Christadelphian funeral and to a funeral of someone who does not share our hope, it brings properly into perspective our own lives. We sorrow not as though we have no hope, that doesn't mean that we don't sorrow, of course, we sorrow, but the person with whom we've shared sweet fellowship with, is now no longer with us, but we don't sorrow as those that have no hope. Our sorrow is of a different nature, our sorrow is that we are still in this veil of tears and it's right that we should be thankful that the person who is now resting from his or her labours, they're next waking moments will be with the Lord! What a difference it is! and the living will lay it to heart so that we should spend every waking moment, if it is at all possible, with the Lord. That's what we should lay to heart, not to wait till the day of our death and then say, 'well, now we should meet the Lord', because the promise has been that the Lord is with us: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock', and He is knocking daily, and the responsibility is for us to let Him in!

Verse 4 of Ecclesiastes 7, 'The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning', as if it's there, that is its dwelling place; 'the heart of the wise is **in** the house of mourning' constantly; 'the house of fools is in the house of mirth'. It doesn't mean that we're to go around sad and sombre, that there is no humour in the world at all, that we're not to see the funny side of things; I'm sure that's not the case! There it is right that we should be joyful and rejoice because just as there's a time to weep, there is a time to laugh, just as there's a time to mourn, there is a time to dance. We ought to, God has given us bodies which enjoy physical recreation, so let's dance; God has given us mouths with which we can sing and praise His name, so let's do it and let's be joyful and there is nothing wrong in it. There was the occasion you may recall, and I just wonder whether there is a possibility that Solomon had this in mind, (of course, he wasn't there at the time), but whether Solomon had in mind the time when David was bringing the ark of God up to Jerusalem and David danced before the LORD with all his might. Do you remember how Michal, the queen, said, 'What a fool you've made of yourself today, David, uncovering yourself like one of the shameless fellows in front of these handmaidens'. Of course, there was a bitterness there! Michal's nose was out of joint because when she'd been brought back as David's queen there were two other women in the household (who were Abigail the wife of Nabal and Ahinoam from Jezreel who was also a wife of David). You can understand Michal's position, she said, 'Look, I'm a

king's daughter, I ought to be #1 queen', and yet she wasn't acting like #1 queen. So David's reply to her was, 'in the sight of these handmaidens (and I think he was talking about Abigail and Ahinoam) I will be had in honour', and Michal had no child to the day of her death, we're told, because her response to what David was doing was wrong. There was a time for rejoicing and dancing and praising God, just as there was a time as we saw in Isaiah 22, for mourning and fasting and sackcloth. So the same is true for ourselves and we ought to introduce this balance into our lives, so there are times of rejoicing and praise; and also those sombre moments when we rightly remember the care and the seriousness of our calling and it induces within us that emotion which is sober and serious and reflects those things that we have learned.

So, back into Ecclesiastes 3 and verse 5, 'A time to cast away stones and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace (this isn't only written for young people, but these young people take notice) and a time to refrain from embracing. A time to get and a time to lose; a time to keep and a time to cast away. A time to rend and a time to sew' (and what I think that is telling us is, you'll recall that in the pattern of life of the Jews, when they were expressing their own mourning, they rent their clothes and put on sackcloth, ashes on their heads). So I think it's all part of the same picture, a time of mourning and a time of joy; a time to rend and a time to sew; a time to keep silence and a time to speak', and here probably is where we so often fail! all of us, and I speak for myself as much as for any one else, we are **too quick to speak and to slow to hear**, often aren't we? But there is a time to keep silence and there is a time to speak, so let's try to take care of that, shall we?

Turn to Proverbs 25, and you'll know the passage well, verse 11, 'A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver', and you'll notice from the beginning of Proverbs 25, these were also proverbs of Solomon, which Hezekiah's men copied out. So, it's the same man who is telling us these things, 'a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear'. So it is necessary on occasions for us to say things, and if that is a word of reproof, as Proverbs indicated it might be from time to time, then that reproof is not something which should not be widely broadcasted. It should be said quietly between two people, the one who is reproving and the one who is being reproved. So we take note of this verse, 'a time to keep silence and a time to speak.'

Verse 8, 'A time to love, and a time to hate'. It creates difficulties perhaps in people's minds because the Lord instructed us to 'love our enemies, but there is a time when that love has been spurned and we are commanded differently, that we are to show a different aspect towards those who become the enemies of God. There will be a time when that love is expressed as hatred. 'A time for war and a time for peace'. You see, these are all things even though we've got some control over them, they're all things which Solomon recognizes as he came to consider them, placed a minute upon man himself. A minute which does not exist with God; so there's a conflict between eternity being in man's heart, man's aspirations for a larger vision, and the finite limit to his life.

What man wishes to have, man cannot get! and Solomon couldn't get it with all the power, and all the resources at his disposal, he still couldn't get it, it only remained in his heart, it couldn't be expressed. Eternity was there, the olam was there in his heart, he wished to be in the kingdom even though he was king over God's kingdom, he knew that it was trail, failing and faulty and flawed, and he wished to be in the kingdom, but he was limited by time; and, he was limited by the pressure of the circumstances of life which came upon him just as we are; and, however much we may try to order our lives, it's a good thing for us to just sit down and say, 'what have I done today?' Just jot down the times when we woke up and how long we may have spent praying and how long we spent reading the word of God? and how long we spent filling our minds with things that were not godly? reading ungodly things, watching ungodly things. How much time we spent with our families, how much time we spent talking to our partners, instructing our children, reading with them from the word of God? meeting with our brethren and sisters, eating, drinking, sleeping, praising before we lay our heads down again to rest? and we'll be surprised by the amount of time we spend like the fool, folding our hands and eating our own flesh! It's awful, isn't it?

We've got to reorder our lives, we've got to try and turn those things which are necessary for us to do in order to sustain life, in acts of worship to the LORD God. He gave us these things that we might be exercised thereby. If it's possible for us to do that, then we are giving glory to the God who gave us life and who will give us life by His Son, when He returns to the earth. So Solomon came to this conclusion, you see, that's indicated in Ecclesiastes 9 verse 11, 'I returned and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong; neither yet bread to the wise nor yet riches to men of understanding; nor yet favour to men of skill; but **time and chance** (time and occurrences) happeneth to them all'. That word 'chance' (6294) only occurs here in chapter 9 verse 11, and 1 Kings 5 verse 4, where those are translated 'occurrence'; so, time and occurrence happens to them all; and, what we've got to do is to respond to those occurrences in our lives, and properly responding to them! then we will bring glory to God. 'For man also knoweth not his time' (meaning the time of his death). So, are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them'? We have to thank God that He has indeed placed eternity in our hearts, so with that we have a promise and a hope of being with him in the house of eternity, when the Lord shall return.

Let us just bow our heads in prayer shall we?

LORD God the Creator of heaven and earth, the Maker of every good and perfect gift; we thank Thee for the gift of life in which we rejoice. We thank Thee that Thou doest cause us to breathe and in our breathing to show that we are thy children. We pray that we might also show in those other things that have been given to us, the ability we have to weep with those who weep, and to rejoice with those who rejoice; to receive and to give words of correction. To enjoy those moments of silence and reflection and meditation and in our lives as we see that they are filled with so many

things which would, if we'd let them, turn us from thy service. May we reflect more carefully and set aside more time when we might worship Thee and honour thy name, praising Thee as we hope to praise Thee throughout the olam, throughout eternity. So we pray for the coming of the King, for the return of the Lord, for the rising of the Son, and offer our prayers in His name, Amen.