

Prayer List

Gene
Veda
Wallace
Sheila
Ophelia
Judy

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 10:00 a.m.
Assembly 11:00 a.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Elders:

Brad Behrens - bradbehrens@pinolechurchofchrist.com

Michael Odom - MichaelOdom@pinolechurchofchrist.com

Ernie Sprinkel - preacher@pinolechurchofchrist.com

This Week's Question:

What Syrian king had his servants wear sackcloth and grovel before king Ahab?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

Ezra - Nehemiah 8:9

Published by the church of Christ which meets at 755 Pinole Valley Road, Pinole, CA 94564, Phone (510) 724-1994, (Mailing address: church of Christ, P.O. Box 453, Pinole, CA 94564)

Pinole Tidings

www.pinolechurchofchrist.com

Vol. 15, No. 26 - April 13, 2014

A Time Under Heaven Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

Russ Bowman

I BELIEVE THAT it's inevitable that as one ages, he becomes more and more conscious of time. Oh, it's not that we are unconscious of time in our younger years, but the perspective changes. Or does it? As a child, it seemed to me that I was governed totally by some power beyond my own will. Each morning the light would burst forth in my room as "the force" declared, "It's time to get up." Then began a succession of seemingly predestined events. "It's your time to get in the shower", followed by breakfast time, time to take out the garbage, time to go, time for class, study time, dinner time, etc., etc. Moreover, if I ever opted to take my time, I was reminded that my time was short, running out, or not my own. Time after time these forces of destiny, whether parental or other, monopolized my time, and any sign of rebellion was met with such prophecies as "Your time's coming!" or, "It's high time you shaped up." There seemed to be no concern about whether I had time or could get time, for there was never any time to lose, spare, or waste. As a youngster, there were times when I perceived

childhood as little more than doing time. And I dreamed of adulthood when my time would be my own.

Disappointing, isn't it? For years I've anticipated time to do what I want, to be the master of my own chronology, but as time goes by, that freedom fails to appear. Time marches on, like it or not, and we are all caught up in its parade, still lacking time, running short of time, or even losing all track of time in our pursuits. And it is frustrating to try to pinpoint the present forces which so abuse my time! I can no longer blame my folks, teachers, etc. And I can't call time out to spend some time looking for the culprit—I don't have the time! And so it is that mankind is bound by the ticking of a clock. This being true of men of every age, time has been a popular subject of consideration, and the Scriptures deal with its significance and consequences.

Ecclesiastes 3:1–15 is probably the most well-known of the biblical references to time. Herein Solomon, if he be “The Preacher,” affirms that “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.” Roughly paraphrased, this says that in the events of earthly life, there is an appropriate time and duration for the various activities and matters which concern men. Obviously, to even the most superficial reader, the first eight verses of this chapter proclaim graphically the providence of God. And these antithetical observations serve to emphasize that much of the occurrences of life are beyond our own control. It is not in man to choose his time of birth, or natural death. We do not control the seasons, nor the influences of decay. The natural events of life go on in spite of our efforts to alter them. While the literal application of all these phrases is oft-debated, the overriding idea is that we are not the masters of every event in our lives. Again, this is a frustrating, even disappointing, consideration and Solomon queries, “What's the profit of our activities?” (verse 9).

Proceeding toward a practical conclusion, the lesson is offered by this man of wisdom. In consideration of the business which God has given us to occupy our energies, everything has its place in the workings of God, its own season of appearance and development, its own beauty in the picture which God has painted (verses 10–11). And the recognition of that providential control should serve to remind the honest man of that which surpasses this life and its bondage to time. In juxtaposition, “God has set eternity in their heart” (verse 11) that we might see the timeless from the time-bound, and appreciate the control which the Almighty wields and our insignificant understanding of Him and His ways (Isaiah 55:8f). Thus, verses 12–13 tell us in the most practical of terms to make the most of life as we find it, learning to enjoy and appreciate the wonderful blessings which God has provided, yet maintaining a dedication to that moral goodness which aligns us with the One who transcends time (Ecclesiastes 12:13f, Psalms 37:3, 27). As Solomon goes on to state in Ecclesiastes 7:13f, consider the works of God, enjoy the times of prosperity, and be patient in the times of adversity, deriving wisdom from the experience. And serve God (verse 18).

As the thoughts of Ecclesiastes 3:1f proceed toward other considerations, verses 14–15 seem to provide for us the most important truth of the argument. God is timeless. He is unlimited in power, for with God, to act is to establish forever, and this should cause us to fear Him. His control of the orderly procession of time is so in contrast to my own frustrating subjection to that same time, that I should not merely recognize His greatness and majesty, but more so, I must praise, glorify, and serve Him.

It is high time we learned that time well-spent is time employed in the service of God, “for this is the whole of man” (12:13).