

A Time for Everything

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[0 : 0 0] hold the mic in his hand is that actually many years ago we got him in the second hand shot but hope it will get better than that as we go through but at any rate we we come to to look at god's word this morning and um i don't know whether you like myself uh like some of those adverts on on television um i particularly like the spec saver adverts and i always find them quite quite amusing i like that one with the older couple and they sit down to enjoy their cheese sandwiches and suddenly they're caught in in a cage and they're on some ride which absolutely terrifies them and you see them wobbling away at the end and he's saying to his wife i don't know what you put in those cheese sandwiches and the advert is of course you should have gone to spec savers they sat down in the wrong place because they couldn't see properly i wonder what kind of glasses you're wearing this morning whether you're seeing things clearly and indeed if we look at the book of ecclesiastes we can see there that the uh solomon who was a writer of this uh looks through the spectacles of unbelief and he also looks through the spectacles of belief as he looks through the spectacles of unbelief as so many people do nothing makes sense if you leave god out of the equation nothing is seen clearly all is vanity meaningless a chasing after the wind a number a couple of years ago i went to a funeral i'd never been to a funeral like it before it was a secular funeral there was no mention of god and it struck me because the lady who was leading that funeral actually quoted from this particular book ecclesiastes i don't think she knew she was quoting from it and she quoted the word there is a time for everything and it's a time to be born and a time to die she didn't say anything about heaven but she said there is a time for everything a time to be born and a time to die what she didn't realize was ecclesiastes taught the futility of life without god no substance in this life it's just like the morning mist it vanishes away if we look at life through the spectacles of unbelief looking at the world in that way we come to the conclusion of ecclesiastes 1 and verse 14 i have seen all the things that are done under the sun all of them are meaningless a chasing after the wind that's the spectacles of unbelief but if we look through the spectacles of belief we see god is we see god's hand in all things and his purpose is being worked out and if we look through the spectacles of unbelief of course we'll reach a different conclusion ecclesiastes 2 and verse 24 a man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work this too i see is from the hand of god for without him who can eat or find enjoyment or ecclesiastes 3 and verse 14 i know that everything god does will endure forever nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it god does it so that men may revere him so solomon reaches a conclusion that men ought to seek god from their youth and he comes to the end of

the ecclesia the book of ecclesiastes he says to young people in particular remember your creator in the days of your youth before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say i find no pleasure in them so always look through the spectacles of belief do it constantly from youth upwards for that will lead to a happy and blessed life so i ask you the question this morning what spectacles are you wearing are they the spectacles of belief or the spectacles of unbelief and if your particular circumstances this morning mean that you're not seeing clearly i trust that this message will enable you to see that all things are indeed in god's hands and his ecclesiastes 3 and verse 1 says there is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven so what do these verses teach us that we read together this morning well the first thing i want to do is to lay down a principle which i think he does in his that first verse there is a time for everything and a season for everything every activity under heaven and the principle is surely this that time is in god's hands time is at the heart of this section of scripture solomon wants us to know that god ordains all events and that everything happens according to his timetable there is an appointed period for every activity for all that happens in life it was true in solomon's day and it hasn't stopped being true that time is in god's hands and the principle is not just here indeed it is right throughout scripture for isn't

god the creator of time go back to genesis 1 and verse 1 and we have a beginning a beginning of what the beginning of time before that there was eternity but in the beginning at the start of it all when the clock began to tick it was by the hands of an almighty all-powerful god in the beginning god created the heavens and the earth it was god who ordained that the clock would begin to tick it was in the hands of eternal god the days the nights the seasons were all ordained by him he himself of course remains outside of time he is the eternal i am he is the eternal ever present god he's not restricted by time as you and i are restricted by time we read that one day with him it is a thousand years and a thousand years are as one day god ordains time there is a time for everything and god ordained at that time if it's true that god is a creator of time it is also true that god will bring time to an end we see that in our own individual lives we are told there a time to be born and a time to die since time is in his hands it follows that it is his prerogative to bring time to an end it's true for us as individual but it's true also for the whole of time

an old hymn puts it like this when the trumpet of the lord will sound and time will be no more a time will be ushered in the bible calls it the day of judgment eternity will then come time will come to an end and eternity will be ushered in paul makes this very clear when he preaches at athens in acts chapter 17 and verse 31 for he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice an eternity which will be heaven for those who have put their trust in the lord jesus christ or hell for those who have not put their trust in the lord jesus christ and remember that it will be at that time eternity an eternal life death or an eternal death there will be no end now if god is the creator of time and god who will also bring time to an end it surely follows and we're still looking at the principle of time that all things in between are according to his timetable chapter 3 and verse 1 makes it clear and particularly in the authorized version it puts it like this a time for every purpose under the heaven it is his purpose that we're talking about here that solomon is mentioning we mustn't think of god as a kind of divine watchmaker who made the watch at the beginning of time who wound it up and left it to run on its own sweet way no god is intimately involved in his creation in the timing of events and scripture is clear about this right from genesis through to revelation we see god working out his purposes in time individuals are involved nations are involved but it is his purposes that are being worked out in time sometimes this comes across very clearly when god announces his plan remember that time when nebuchadnezzar had a dream in daniel chapter 2 and he read of a statue whose head was of gold and so forth right down to the feet part of iron and part of clay nebuchadnezzar didn't know what it meant but daniel by the hand of god is able to interpret the dream and this is what he says in daniel 2 and verse 45 the great god has shown the king what will take place in the future in the time of those kings the god of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed the parts of the statue represented various kingdoms various empires they would all come to an end but the time would come when god would set up a kingdom he announces his plan because time is at his in his hands and of course we read in the time of those kingdoms a kingdom was set up for galatians 4 and verse 4 tells us when the time had fully come when god's plan had been brought to fruition god sent his son born of a woman

made under the law and even as we look at the life of the lord jesus we again see god ordaining time there were occasions when jesus was taken by men or could have been taken by men and thrown over a cliff or stoned to death but the bible tells us his time was not yet but then jesus prays in john 17 and verse 17 and verse 1 father he says the time has come and he hangs on the cross according to god's timetable because time was in god's hands there is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven that is the principle god is a creator of time there will come a time when god will bring time to an end and usher in eternity and all that happens in between are according to his perfect time table and you say to me well that's all right we've seen the big picture but you don't know what's going on in my life am i my life in god's hands indeed our life is in god's hands and that's our second point this morning every person born into this world is born according to god's timetable oh i know we could look at this biologically two people come together and nine months later a child is born but nothing but nothing happens outside of his control he is the giver of life paul preaches to the people of athens from one man he made every nation of men that they should inhabit the whole earth and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live for in him for in him we live and move and have our being we are his offspring and paul wasn't preaching there to christians he was preaching to a heathen people but he says your times ultimately are in god's hands they have been set by him he has determined your times and the exact places where you should live you are he says ultimately god's offspring and when solomon pens these lines he says very clearly that a time has been set for all men and

women a time to be born and a time to die psalm 139 and verse 16 all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be and isn't that what solomon is saying here to us all everything that happens in between our birth and our death is part of god's plan for each one of us look at verses 2 down to verse 8 and solomon gives a list of contrasts he gives them so that we might know that everything takes place according to his appointed timetable one writer has put it like this every detail of life serves an overall purpose and plays its part in bringing that purpose to pass seemingly chance events are all tied up in his eternal plan all of these activities all of these happenings that he lists there are according to his purpose there's a story told of a man who was sent on a horse to bring reinforcements in order that a battle might be fought it was an important battle but the blacksmith hadn't done a very good job on the horse's shoe a nail hadn't been placed properly so on the way the man the horse became lame because the shoe was loose so the reinforcements were not brought the battle was lost and the kingdom was lost and somebody wrote a little rhyme on it for want of a nail the shoe was lost for want of a shoe the horse was lost for want of a horse the rider was lost for want of a rider the battle was lost for want of a battle a kingdom was lost and all for the want of a horseshoe nail the little things in life that seem so unimportant are all working according to his purpose those times in our lives the planting the uprooting the weeping the laughing the mourning the dancing the war the peace they're all part of the fabric of our everyday lives all ordained by God because our times are in his hands what he is saying surely the good times and the bad times the highs and the lows of everyday life our health our illnesses our birth and our death for the believer they are part of those all things that work together for good to those that love God and to those that are the code according to his purpose all that takes place between our life and death happens under his sovereign hand our times have been ordained for us and of course there are so many applications to this truth that help us today help us today as we meet the demands that are placed upon us in our day to day life that will help us in the weeks that lie ahead and I want to close with a number of applications the first application is surely this that life has meaning as we remember these truths the unbeliever looks at everything as luck or chance que sera sera whatever will be will be a fatalistic approach he may have but the believer says with Solomon in Ecclesiastes chapter 3 and verse 11 the latter part of it he has set

[20 : 29] eternity in the hearts of men yet they cannot fathom what God has done from the beginning to end but the believer can recognize the hand of God and he knows that his life has meaning everything you see is meaningless if we leave God out we can work but what do we work for to leave any money that we may earn to someone else but the Christian believes that seemingly chance events are all tied up into God's eternal plan he knows that he's not a mere cog in a wheel but here for the glory of God to be pleasing to God and the sad times and the hard times work for his good and the glory of God and he's able to say with the psalmist my times are in your hands he has you see this confidence confidence in God a confidence that God is able to work his purposes out a confidence that God works out everything according to the counsel of his will do you recognize then God as being the author of time do you recognize that God is working his purpose out in your life today life has meaning if you remember these truths the second application is surely this we should not be anxious regarding our times

William Freeman Lloyd wrote a hymn and this is what he said in his hymn my times are in thy hand why should I doubt or fear a father's hand will never cause his child a needless tear doesn't mean to say we won't cry as different things happen to us in time but there won't be a needless tear we should not be anxious about our times and we are anxious at times aren't we we worry about the past which we cannot alter we worry about the present because things happen to us that seem to be outside of our control I've been reading in my own quiet time through the book of Job what a difficult time that man had he doesn't understand what is happening to him and even as we come to the end of the book he doesn't fully understand what God is doing and yet behind it all there's this trust in the living

God and we can have that trust too we should not be anxious concerning what is happening to us in the present but also we worry don't we about the future as we see problems arising yes we enjoy the planting but perhaps we don't like the uprooting perhaps there's those times when we like to build but we don't like the tearing down the difficulties that come into our life and we're worried about what might happen in the future so that we live not as those who recognize that there is a purpose to every activity under heaven but we live our lives as practical atheists failing to put into

practice what we say we believe but God is in control no season no event no time is outside of his control and we can trust him it is this attitude that gave

Paul the contentment that he had you remember how he speaks in Philippians 4 and verse 11 he's received a gift and he thanks the people for their gifts but he says I'm not speaking in respect of want because I says he says I've learned in whatsoever state I am whatever the circumstances I've learned to be content and the secret of contentment is surely to recognize the hand of God in our times we should not be anxious about those times a farmer was once asked the question what was the reason for his contentment well he said it's like this he said when it rains I let it and there's a lot of truth in that isn't there there are things that we cannot alter but though that we might learn to be content whatever happens to our time

God ultimately knows what is best for us you may say to me what happens then regarding the problem of sin we may be sinned against we may sin ourselves is this out of God's timetable well we are responsible for our sin and we will have to answer for our sin the same as everybody will have to answer for their sin but ultimately even sin itself cannot thwart the purposes of God he can and he does overrule to bring about his purposes those seasons for his activity under heaven we see this in the life of Joseph remember his brother sold him you meant it for evil he said God meant it for good it doesn't excuse his brother sins but it sees

[26 : 58] God overruling the wickedness of men to bring about his purposes and do not we see this in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ God planned in all eternity the death of his beloved son upon the cross of Calvary this man says Peter on the day of Pentecost filled with the spirit I remind you this man was handed over to you by according to God's set purpose and for knowledge and you with the help of wicked men put him to death nailing him to the cross wicked men put Jesus on the cross but it worked the purposes of God cannot sin still work the purposes of God today I know who holds the future and he'll guide me with his hand with God things don't just happen everything by him is planned so as

I face tomorrow with his problems large and small I'll trust the God of miracles give to him my all time is in his hands two final points in by way of application we should all of us remember that we are here for such a time as this if we believe that there is a time to be born and the Bible says that that is a time and if we believe that our times are in God's hands it follows that we are here now because the Lord has planned us to be here at this time remember the story of Esther remember that drunken banquet where the queen who rejected her husband's request remember the sordid beauty contest remember how

Esther keeps quiet about her Jewish heritage and she comes to the throne remember what is said to her you are here for such a time as this and the Jewish people are saved we are here for such a time as this we are here to serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in our places of employment we are here for such a time as this in our schools in our hospital bed in our university at the particular address that we live in there are neighbors around about us we are here for such a time as this and we're here as part of this church for such a time as this we are to live our lives as Jesus lived his life he submitted himself to

God's timetable for his life anything else is just so much meaninglessness we are here for such a time as this and the final word by way of application we are not here forever ever in a little booklet it spoke of a man is speaking he's writing it being in his early 80s and he's saying there's more before me than is behind me he was in effect saying that there is an eternity to face he says when I get together with my colleagues now we always have an organ recital how's your heart how's your kidneys how's your back it's always an organ recital but we're not here forever that was the burden of the book we are ever complaining said someone that our days are few and at the same time acting as though they will never end there is a time to die sometimes the

Christian is accused of not living in the real world but I would argue and scripture would argue that it's only the Christian who lives in the real world because the Christian lives in the light of eternity he always remembers that his citizenship is in heaven he and he and he will bring our life to a close it may be while we're still young so young people here this morning live your life in the light of eternity We turn on the radio, don't we?

[32 : 15] And we hear of a seven-year-old being suddenly struck by a truck or whatever it was and killed, ushered into eternity. We never know.

Death comes to us all at some time. Day will come when God will bring our lives to a close. Therefore, we should constantly live to redeem the time.

We should use it wisely and well. Time, said a writer, is the deposit each one of us has in the bank of God.

And no one knows the balance. We can check our balance in the bank, but we can't check our balance as far as time is concerned.

So let us live our lives, as one man put it, as though Jesus died yesterday, rose again from the dead today, and is coming again tomorrow.

[33 : 24] A time to be born, a time to die. And all the times in between, the planting, the uprooting, the embracing and the refraining from embracing, they're all part of his timetable.

So let us live our lives remembering that we're not here forever. Our times are indeed in God's hands, and there is a time for everything, a season for every activity under heaven.

Let's pray together. Lord, thank you for your divine timetable. Help us to be ready to submit to it, both those difficult times and those joyous times.

Those times, O Lord, that we face difficulties. May we face them, knowing that you're still working out your purposes. Knowing that all things are working together for good to those that love God and to those that are according to his purpose.

Help us to live our lives remembering that we do not know how many days we have left. Indeed, how many hours or minutes we may have left.

[34 : 50] So help us to live, to glorify you in all that we say and do in all circumstances of life. And this we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.