

Why God Does What He Does

What does God want us to learn from what he does?

Ecclesiastes 3.14–22

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • December 5, In the year of our Lord Christ, 2021

Scripture Reader and Reading: Wayne Duncan – Ecclesiastes 2.12–16

Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Larry Amberg – Songs on God

Prelude:

I. Can you figure out the ways of God in life, including in your life?

- A. We know he loves us.
- B. We know that he controls all things.
 - 1. Yet, we do not understand why
 - 2. he does some things that he does.

II. We know we should be learning something from this, but what?

Persuasion:

I. Ecclesiastes 3.14–15 • Why God Does What He Does

**14 I know that whatever God does,
It shall be forever.
Nothing can be added to it,
And nothing taken from it.
God does it, that men should fear before Him.**

**15 That which is has already been,
And what is to be has already been;
And God requires an account of what is past.**

- A. Who is God?
 - 1. If we understand who he is,
 - 2. then we know certain things are true about him,
 - a) putting him in strong contrast to
 - b) what we have seen about man.
 - (1) First, whatever God does lasts forever,
 - (a) not so with man.
 - (2) Second, no one can add to what God has done,

(a) whereas we can generally add to what man has done.

(3) Third, no one can take away from what God has done,

(a) whereas we can often take away from what man has done.

B. Why does God do such immovable, unchangeable, and unalterable things?

1. Solomon said God does it that we should fear before him.

2. We see our feeble works and God's awesome works.

a) That makes us fear God,

(1) standing in awe of him,

(2) trembling with the thought of someone so grand!

b) As Mark 4 shows

(1) that after Jesus stilled a storm on the Sea of Galilee,

(2) the disciples feared and asked a question:

41 And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"

– Mark 4.41

(3) Solomon said that God does the same with us daily.

(a) He works in our affairs, and

i) sometimes we can see why and

ii) sometimes we cannot see why.

(b) However, we know that he is the Creator.

i) Therefore, he knows what he is doing, because

ii) we find out later that he was right.

(c) That moves us to fear before him.

3. Who is God that we cannot add to his works or take away from them?

a) Pharaoh asked a similar question,

- b) although he was not contemplating adding to or
- c) taking away from God's works.
 - (1) He challenged Moses as why he should listen to the God of Israel.
 - (2) God enrolled him in a ten-lesson correspondence course.

1 Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.'" 2 And Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, nor will I let Israel go."

– Exodus 5.1–2

- C. As Solomon said before, so he said again (v. 15),
 - 1. that which exists now,
 - 2. already existed in the past, and
 - a) what shall be in the future,
 - b) already existed in the past and in the present.
- D. How does God deal with all the things of man?
 - 1. God requires an account
 - 2. of what men and women have done.
- E. Ecclesiastes 3.14–15 take us right up to
 - 1. the two great things I have been talking about,
 - a) that there is something we do and
 - b) that there is something coming,
 - (1) giving meaning and purpose
 - (2) to everything we do under the sun.
 - 2. However, since Solomon did not identify them as such,
 - a) we did not know realize

b) that he gave us some hints of what his conclusion will be at the end.

II. Ecclesiastes 3.16–17 • Everything Has a Judgment

16 Moreover I saw under the sun:

**In the place of judgment,
Wickedness was there;
And in the place of righteousness,
Iniquity was there.**

17 I said in my heart,

**“God shall judge the righteous and the wicked,
For there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.”**

A. Man corrupts and reverses everything God does or wants.

1. Isaiah 5 revealed a couple centuries later this same problem, and

- a) pronounced a woe upon those
- b) who reverse the things God puts in order.

**20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;
Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness;
Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!**

– Isaiah 5.20

2. We need to be attuned to God’s thinking and way, because

- a) right now in our generation,
 - (1) especially in the past year or two,
- b) we are fulfilling Isaiah’s words again.

B. Notice the way Solomon began verse 16.

- 1. This is how it looks “*under the sun*.”
- 2. Looking at life under the sun,
 - a) it appears that justice fails.
 - b) However, remember what Solomon just said in verse 15.
 - (1) God will require an account.

(2) Listen to what he said in verse 17.

- (a) Even when it appears that justice has not been carried out,
- (b) God will carry it out at the Judgment.

C. At the Judgment every purpose and every work will have its time.

- 1. God will do something about wickedness and iniquity.
- 2. Do not despair.

D. Even as

- 1. there is a season for everything under heaven and
- 2. a time for every purpose under the sun,
 - a) there will be a season and a time
 - b) for every wickedness and every iniquity
 - (1) above the sun
 - (2) before God
 - (3) at the Judgment.

III. Ecclesiastes 3.18–21 • Why God Allows Death

18 I said in my heart, “Concerning the condition of the sons of men, God tests them, that they may see that they themselves are like animals.” 19 For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity. 20 All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust. 21 Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, which goes down to the earth?

A. Solomon addressed the issue of death back in 2.12–16.

- 1. The wise and the fool both alike die.
- 2. Why does God allow death for all people?

B. 3.18 says that God allows death to test the sons of men

- 1. that we might learn

2. that in many respects we are like animals.
 - a) Even as both the wise and the fool die,
 - b) so both man and the animals die.
 - (1) Even as the common death of the wise and the fool
 - (2) makes us think temporarily that they both end up the same, yet,
 - (a) we have just heard Solomon say that such is not the case,
 - (b) so the common end of the sons of men and of animals
 - i) makes us think temporarily
 - ii) that they both end up the same, yet,
 - (1) we heard Solomon say (3.16–17),
 - (2) that man does not end at death.

3. Therefore, looking at life from under the sun only,
 - a) makes us think that all is vanity, because
 - b) we just end up like the animals.
 - (1) Like the animals we return to the dust, because
 - (2) we were made from the dust.

C. From our vantage point under the sun,

1. can you tell me what happens to either man or beast after death?
2. Nothing on this earth makes us think
 - a) there is a spirit of man or of beasts and
 - b) which direction each goes.
 - (1) We need communication
 - (2) from above the sun to know.

D. The same narrative in Genesis

1. that says we were made from the dust of the earth,

2. also says that we are made in the image of God:

26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

– **Genesis 1.26**

a) Several sentences later, Moses wrote:

7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

– **Genesis 2.7**

b) Knowing then that we are made in the image of God,

(1) how is it that our fate on earth

(2) does not rise above the animals who have not been made in God’s image?

IV. Ecclesiastes 3.22 • Live Life to the Fullest

22 So I perceived that nothing is better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his heritage. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?

A. Again, life looks despairing, but

1. hang on because

2. Solomon will show us

a) that there is more to life

b) than what we see on the earth under the sun.

B. Therefore, it is good to rejoice in your works.

1. Your heritage is

- a) to enjoy life and
- b) to enjoy what you do.

17 [God] gives us richly all things to enjoy.

– 1 Timothy 6.17

- 2. Make the most of
 - a) everything and
 - b) every opportunity.
- C. Who can bring a man to see what will happen after him?
 - 1. Man cannot do that for
 - 2. he is not God.
 - a) Only the one true and living God can.
 - (1) God knows who your successors will do.
 - (2) God knows what will happen to you after your death.
 - b) Does it not make sense then to make God number one in your life?

Exhortation:

I. If that is true,

- A. does it not make sense then
- B. to place your life in God's hands and
- C. to live your life with an awareness of
 - 1. his existence and of
 - 2. the Judgment?

II. Are you ready to do something about it now?