

## Is God Really in Control?

### Ecclesiastes 3-5

As Solomon talks about God's plan, we see **three principles** laid out that help us see how God works in this world.

- **PRINCIPLE #1: GOD HAS AN ALL ENCOMPASSING PLAN FOR OUR LIVES.**

*Everything that happens in this world happens at the time God chooses. <sup>2</sup>He sets the time for birth and the time for death . . . <sup>3</sup>the time for killing and the time for healing . . .*

*<sup>4</sup>He sets the time for sorrow and the time for joy . . .*  
Ecclesiastes 3:1-2a, 3a, 4b (Good News Translation)

*Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. <sup>35</sup>All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?" Daniel 4:34b, 35 (New International Version)*

*I say to Cyrus, "You are the one who will rule for me; you will do what I want you to do: you will order that Jerusalem be rebuilt and that the foundations of the Temple be laid." Isaiah 44:28 (GNT)*

#### Solomon draws three conclusions about God's plan:

*What do people really get for all their hard work? <sup>10</sup>I have thought about this in connection with the various kinds of work God has given people to do. <sup>11</sup>God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.*

*<sup>12</sup>So I concluded that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to enjoy themselves as long as they can. <sup>13</sup>And people should eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of their labor, for these are gifts from God. <sup>14</sup>And I know that whatever God does is final. Nothing can be added to it or taken from it. God's purpose in this is that people should fear him. Ecclesiastes 3:9-14 (New Living Translation, 1996)*

- God's plan is a good plan. (Ecclesiastes 3:11a)
- Though we try, we will never understand God's plan completely on our own. (Ecclesiastes 3:11b)
- Therefore, we must trust God and obey Him. (Ecclesiastes 3:12-14)

- **PRINCIPLE #2: GOD IS IN CONTROL THOUGH HE ALLOWS APPARENT CONTRADICTIONS TO HIS WILL.**

- Problem #1: There is injustice in the world.

*In addition, I have also noticed that in this world you find wickedness where justice and right ought to be. <sup>17</sup>I told myself, "God is going to judge the righteous and the evil alike, because every thing, every action, will happen at its own set time." Ecclesiastes 3:16-17 (GNT)*

*If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still. Ecclesiastes 5:8 (NIV)*

- Problem #2: Man experiences loneliness and isolation.

*Here is a man who lives alone. He has no son, no brother, yet he is always working . . . <sup>9</sup>Two are better off than one, because together they can work more effectively. <sup>10</sup>If one of them falls down, the other can help him up . . . <sup>12</sup>Two men can resist an attack that would defeat one man alone . . . Ecclesiastes 4:8-10, 12 (Good News Bible)*

- **PRINCIPLE #3: WORSHIP GOD, TRUST HIM, AND ENJOY LIFE AS A PART OF GOD'S PLAN.**

*Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong. <sup>2</sup>Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, let your words be few. . . . <sup>7</sup>Much dreaming and many words are meaningless. Therefore stand in awe of God. Ecclesiastes 5:1-2, 7 (NIV)*

*Then the LORD said to Job, <sup>2</sup>"Do you still want to argue with the Almighty? You are God's critic, but do you have the answers?" <sup>3</sup>Then Job replied to the LORD, <sup>4</sup>"I am nothing—how could I ever find the answers? I will put my hand over my mouth in silence. <sup>5</sup>I have said too much already. I have nothing more to say." <sup>6</sup>Then the LORD answered Job from the whirlwind: <sup>7</sup>"Brace yourself, because I have some questions for you, and you must answer them. <sup>8</sup>Are you going to discredit my justice and condemn me so you can say you are right? <sup>9</sup>Are you as strong as God, . . . Job 40:1-9 (NLT)*

*For I am convinced that neither death nor life . . . <sup>39</sup>nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38a, 39b (NIV)*

*Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him—for this is his lot. <sup>19</sup>Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and be happy in his work—this is a gift of God. <sup>20</sup>He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart. Ecclesiastes 5:18-20 (NIV)*