

Having A Basic Understanding of Some Old Testament Truths

Part 197 – What Profit In Labor Through God Requireth That Which Is Past (Ecclesiastes 3:9-15)

1. What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth (use Scriptures outside of Ecclesiastes 3:9-15 to answer this question)?

This question is worded as **Ecclesiastes 3:9** is written.

- **Ecclesiastes 3:9** is a question, not a statement saying that there is no profit at all in labor: *“In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury [poor poverty want]”* (**Proverbs 14:23**).
- Physical work for and in this world doesn’t profit you in that what you work for is temporary (**Proverbs 23:4-5**, **Isaiah 55:1-3**, and **John 6:27**).
- When you really think about it, we do have to work to provide for our physical needs (**Proverbs 13:11** and **II Thessalonians 3:10-12**). Yet, you cannot take that which you work for in this life into the life to come (**Ecclesiastes 5:14-16** and **Luke 12:13-21**).
- The beauty of our spiritual labor is that the reward is eternal (**John 5:28-29** and **Hebrews 6:9-12**).
- Truthfully, in regard to working for physical gain: *“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul”* (**Matthew 16:26**)?

2. If you do a word study on the words “travail” and “exercised” (as it is used in Ecclesiastes 3:10), how does that help you to understand this verse?

The verse says: *“I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it”* (**Ecclesiastes 3:10**).

- Strong says the word “travail” means: “employment; business” (Strong’s # 6045).
- The same Hebrew word appears in **Ecclesiastes 1:13**, **Ecclesiastes 2:23**, **Ecclesiastes 2:26**, **Ecclesiastes 3:10**, **Ecclesiastes 4:8**, **Ecclesiastes 5:3**, **Ecclesiastes 5:14**, and **Ecclesiastes 8:16**.
- Strong says the word “exercised” means: “to depress, abase, answer for a mistake” (Strong’s # 6031).
- This Hebrew word appears 84 times in the Old Testament. Outside of being translated as “exercised” (also in **Ecclesiastes 1:13**); it is translated as “afflict” (**Genesis 15:13**), “humble” (**Exodus 10:3**), “forced” (**II Samuel 13:14**), “weakened” (**Psalms 102:23**), etc.
- Therefore, the meaning of this verse is summed up here: *“(17) And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; (18) Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; (19) In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return”* (**Genesis 3:17-19**).

3. While things of God may be in your heart, can you find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end?

No: *“He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end” (Ecclesiastes 3:11).*

- God created everything beautiful (**Genesis 1:31**) and man is to blame for what is not right (**Ecclesiastes 7:29**).
- Here is a gem. The word translated “world” is Strong’s # 5769. That word means: “time out of mind; eternity”. It is translated as “ever” (272 times), everlasting (63 times), etc. This phrase therefore is teaching that God has place eternity in the hearts of man whom He has created (**Romans 1:19-20** and **Romans 2:14-15**). You just know there is the God.
- While you are born with eternity in your heart, you do not have God’s knowledge (**Job 11:7**, **Psalms 104:24**, and **Romans 11:33-36**).

4. Should we be able to rejoice [be glad] in this life?

Yes: *“I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life” (Ecclesiastes 3:12).*

- **Psalms 144:15**, **Proverbs 3:13**, **Proverbs 15:15**, **Proverbs 17:22**, and **I Peter 4:14**.

5. Should we enjoy the good of our labors?

Yes: *“And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God” (Ecclesiastes 3:13).*

- **Psalms 128:2**, **Ecclesiastes 2:24**, **Ecclesiastes 5:18-20**, and **I Timothy 6:17**.

6. If God so chooses, can He make something to last as long as He wants it to?

Yes: *“I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him” (Ecclesiastes 3:14).*

- We have to reason out that this does not mean that everything He makes is eternal, for He has made some things to be temporary (**Matthew 24:35-36** and **II Peter 3:10-14**).
- That being said, if He wants something to be everlasting, nobody can change that (**Proverbs 19:21**, **Isaiah 46:10**, and **John 19:10-11**).
- This should cause fear (**Psalms 64:9**, **Hebrews 10:26-31**, and **Revelation 15:4**).

7. Does history repeat itself?

Yes: *“That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past” (Ecclesiastes 3:15).*

- **Ecclesiastes 1:9-10**; cf. **II Peter 2:1** and **Jude 7-8**.