

Exegesis Project

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Ling 230
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APPENDIX A

Title

The name of the book “Ecclesiastes”—“The Preacher” in some translations of the Bible or Kohelet¹, in Hebrew is related to the Hebrew root קהל which means “to gather”. The Book of Ecclesiastes is a collection of wise sayings and advice that have been *gathered* for the instruction of the people.



Author

The author of the book is found under a veil of uncertainty. The book begins by saying: “The words of the Preacher (better translated gatherer), the son of David, king in Jerusalem” (Ecc1:1) letting us believe that Solomon wrote it. Modern day scholars tend to agree that it was written either by Solomon himself or by a wise poet at his court. The poet may have gathered wisdom and shared it with his audience from Solomon’s point of view.

Timeframe

The time frame in which the book was written is not certain either. According to some scholars, mid-to-late-third-century B.C. is the given date, and according to other scholars, this book is attributed to early-or mid-second-century B.C.

Historical Background

Solomon inherited from his father, David, great wealth and prosperity. All the treasuries were filled with precious metals. The neighboring countries paid tribute to the

¹ A (female) assembler (i.e. lecturer); abstractly preaching (used as a "nom de plume", Koheleth) in KJV it is translated as preacher.

Jewish nation. Solomon first married the daughter of the Pharaoh. This brought an allegiance toward Egypt that made Israel even more powerful.

Tone

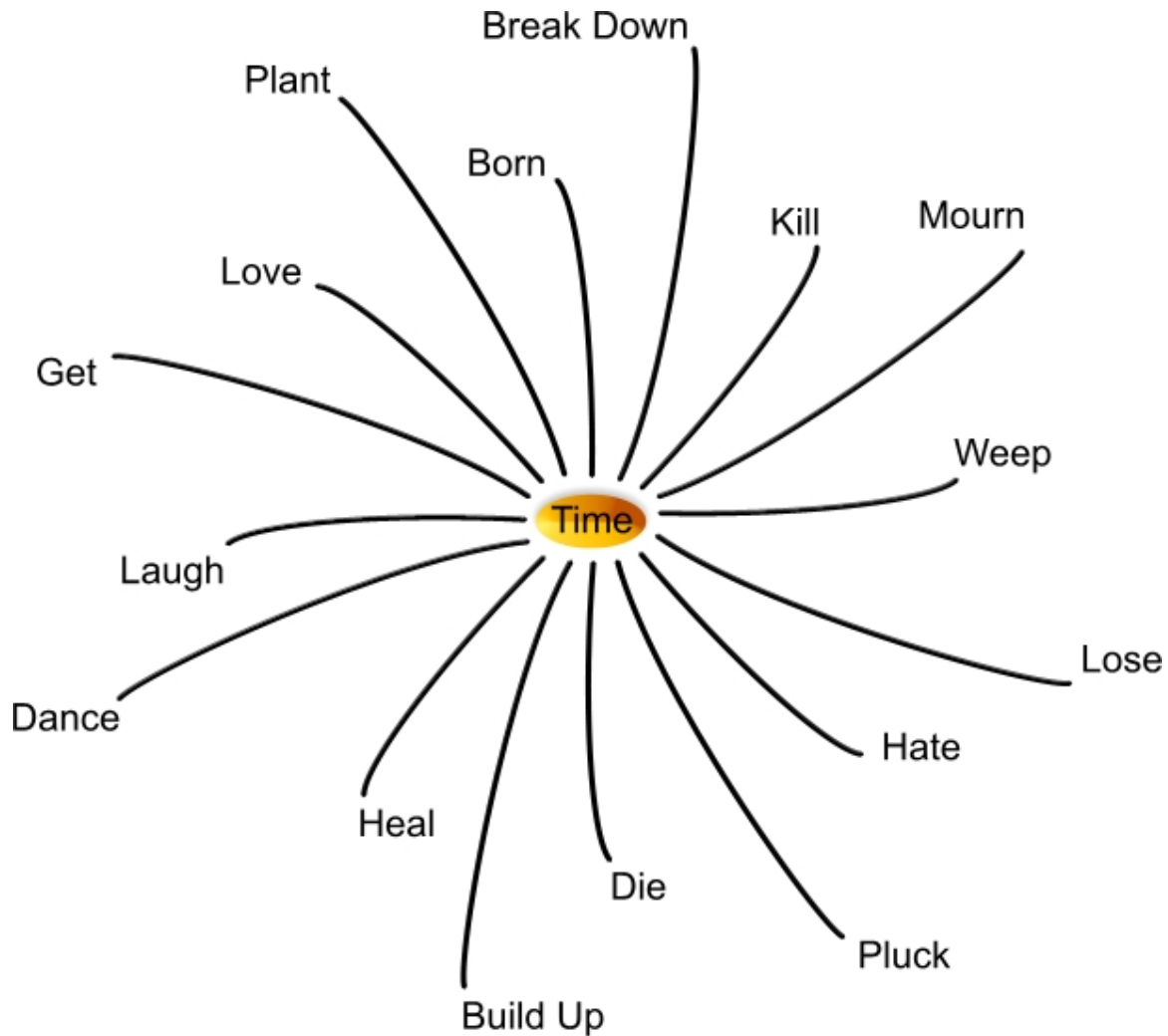
The book of Ecclesiastes has a dark tone of voice expressing the apparent futility of life. In contrast, life is not actually futile according to Ecclesiastes. The book seen under a more careful eye is quite positive. The bible dictionary has this to say about the tone of the book:

The book of Ecclesiastes seems permeated with a pessimistic flavor, but must be read in the light of one of its key phrases: “under the sun” (Eccl. 1: 9), meaning “from a worldly point of view.” [...] Thus the Preacher laments that as things appear from the point of view of the world, everything is temporary and soon gone - nothing is permanent.

Thus the passages that I have chosen for this analysis have to be read very carefully and understood from a worldly perspective, but with optimism that in the next life things will be more positive and governed by justice – something that is not found on the earth.

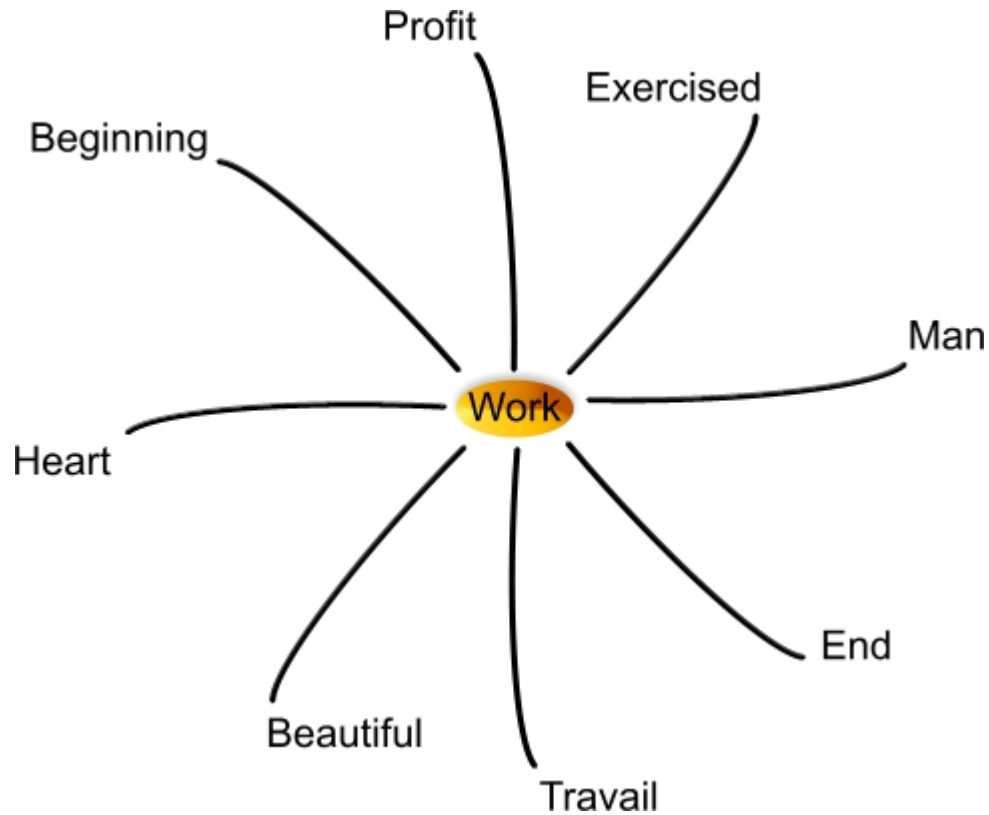
I have created these semantic illustrations to follow to show the opposites throughout these passages. Passing through one branch to the opposite branch, through the keyword, will show the antithesis.

APPENDIX B1



The semantics theme of **TIME** shows how everything has a time and an antithesis. To *birth* there is *death*, and to all the other important events in our life there is an *opposite*. This passage of scripture goes on to list several other opposites. The schematic above shows many of these opposites that we experience throughout life. These opposing events are seen as *wisdom* given to us because they teach preparation for the future when our lives won't be as cheery as they are now. *Preparation* is a wonderful principle and a constant theme in the book of Ecclesiastes.

APPENDIX B2



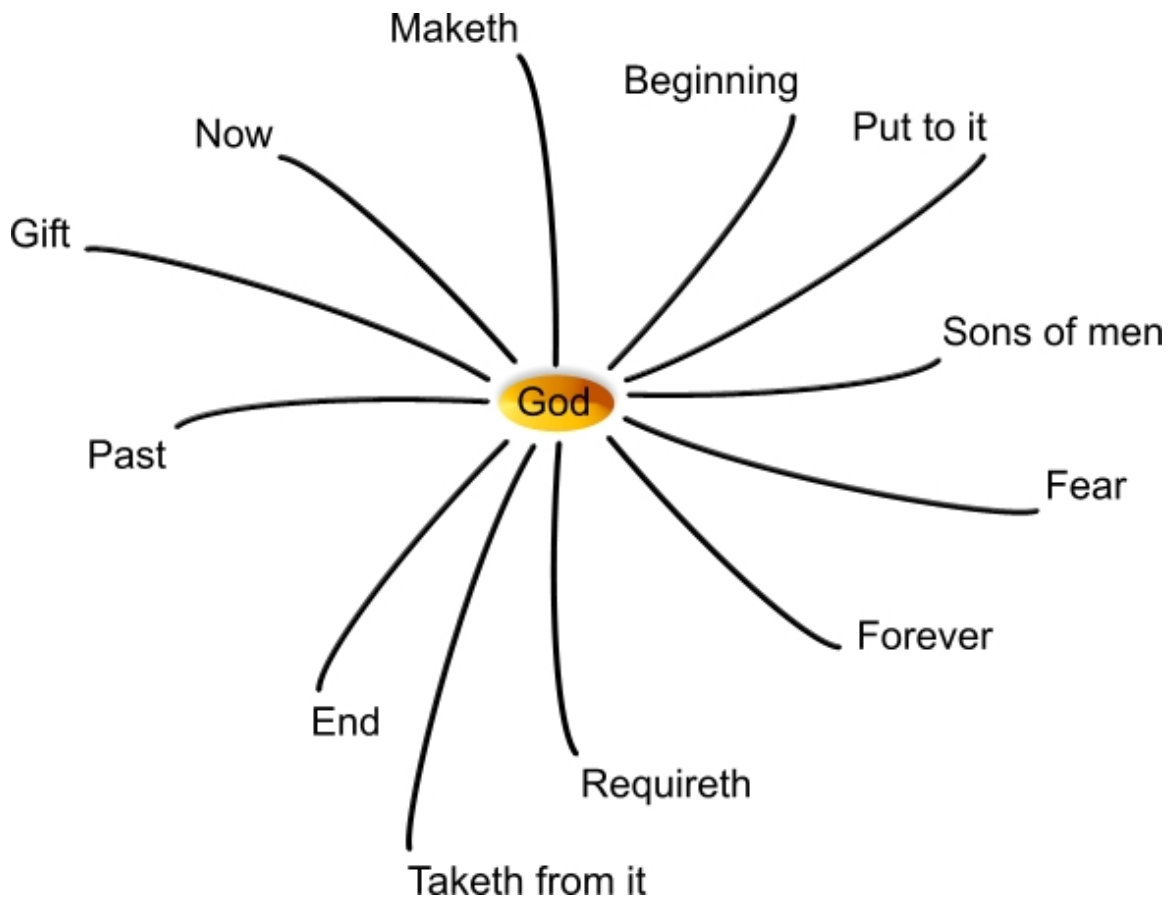
WORK is another theme of great importance in this passage. Working provides food and shelter for our lives. It gives us a purpose for existence. Many people dream of a life without work, but as soon as they have the opportunity to retire, they feel that they would rather work. The Lord has set *work* in our hearts to teach us to be more like him. God works, and man must work also (Genesis 2:2). Work is beautiful because it fulfills our lives and makes us of worth. Also, from the *beginning* of our lives to *the end*, we will *work* in one form or another.

APPENDIX B3



MAN is the central theme of the Bible as a whole but more particularly in the book of Ecclesiastes. The book centers on *man* to show that in his natural state there is *no good* in him. *Man* needs to *work*, and through his *travail*, obtain *the gift* of God and become a new creature. Man should also *eat* and *drink* of the fruit of *his labor* because it is the *gift of God*. This passage can sound like the passage, “eat drink and be merry for tomorrow we die” (2 Nephi 28: 7), but it is not so because this passage clearly states that man is to enjoy the fruit of *his labor* and that man deserves to *enjoy* himself and to be happy while he works and fulfils God’s plan. “Men are that they might *have joy*” (2 Nephi 2:25).

APPENDIX B4



Man and **GOD** are intertwined in every way. God seems to decide the fate of men, but man is in control of his own life. God *made* the world for man to use it righteously and rein over it. The works of God are everlasting and nothing can be added to it *nor taken away* from it by man. God gives many *gifts* to the *sons of men* and expects obedience from them. If man will not obey, God will *require* of them justice, and men *fear* this justice. Also God's name is the eternal, "alpha and omega, *the beginning and the end*" (Revelations 1:8). Men will be judged of God according to what is *past*, and God will reward them according to his justice.

APPENDIX C

Words that repeat themselves in the passage.

Antonyms.

Synonyms.

1 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

5 A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

6 A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

7 A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

8 A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

9 What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth?

10 I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.

11 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.

12 I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life.

13 And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God.

14 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.

15 That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.

APPENDIX D

D1

1 To every thing there is a **season**, and a **time** to every **purpose** under the heaven;

2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

5 A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

6 A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

7 A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

8 A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

9 What **profit** hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth?

10 I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.

11 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.

12 I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life.

13 And also that every man should **eat** and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the **gift** of God.

14 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.

15 That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.

D2

Season

זֶמַן , z%om;n ; h2165

From זמן {h2163}

Mean an *appointed* occasion

KJV season, time

Application: The seasons have a temporary and cyclic appearance. We should expect life to have cyclic and temporary periods of happiness and sadness.

Time

עֵת , '©th ; h6256

From עַד {h5703}

Mean *time*, especially (adverb with preposition) *now, when, etc.*

KJV + after, [al-] ways, X certain, + continually, + evening, long, (due) season, so [long] as, [even-, evening-, noon-] tide, ([meal-], what) time, when

Application: Time is part of the season. It is a portion of it, and it shows the frequency of the application. I like the meaning *tide* within the word time. Like the season, a tide comes and goes in perfect harmony.

Purpose

תִּפְיֵץ , ch©phets ; h2656

From תִּפְיֵץ {h2654}

Mean *pleasure*; hence (abstractly) *desire*; concretely a *valuable* thing; hence (by extension) a *matter* (as something in mind)

KJV acceptable, delight (-some), desire, things desired, matter, pleasant (-ure), purpose, willingly

Application: Purpose shows that for every thing there is a purpose in life. Everything is valuable in this life, regardless of whether or not it is good. The cyclic appearance of life has a purpose and is not random as some might say. God is the reason, and the purpose is learning.

Heaven

שָׁמַיִם , shimayim ; h8064

From dual of an unused singular שָׁמַיִם, shimeh *shaw-meh'*; from an unused root meaning to *be lofty*

Mean the *sky* (as *aloft*; the dual perhaps alluding to the visible arch in which the clouds move, as well as to the higher ether where the celestial bodies revolve)

KJV air, X astrologer, heaven (-s)

Application: “Under the heaven” is an expression used frequently in the book of Ecclesiastes, and it means *this life*. It talks about principles that happen only in this life and that are not related to eternity.

Profit

יְתֵרוֹן , yithrôn ; h3504

From יתר {h3498}

Mean *preeminence, gain*

KJV better, excellency (-leth), profit (-able)

Application: The author wonders whether there is any profit in working, if work is done without joy. He is right; there is no profit. Later, the author explains that work is good to give us pleasure and it profits us with food and drink.

Made

עָשָׂה , 'ah ; h6213

From a primitive root

Mean to *do* or *make*, in the broadest sense and widest application (as follows)

KJV accomplish, advance, appoint, apt, be at, become, bear, bestow, bring forth, bruise, be busy, X certainly, have the charge of, commit, deal (with), deck, + displease, do, (ready) dress (-ed), (put in) execute (-ion), exercise, fashion, + feast, [fight-] ing man, + finish, fit, fly, follow, fulfil, furnish, gather, get, go about, govern, grant, great, + hinder, hold ([a feast]), X indeed, + be industrious, + journey, keep, labour, maintain, make, be meet, observe, be occupied, offer, + officer, pare, bring (come) to pass, perform, practise, prepare, procure, provide, put, requite, X sacrifice, serve, set, shew, X sin, spend, X surely, take, X throughly, trim, X very, + vex, be [warr] ior, work (-man), yield, use

Application: Made is the broadest word in the dictionary from what I have seen. It means many things. In this instance, it refers to the creation of the world and all that is in it. It can also be understood as to organize. God is said to have organized the heavens and the earth; He did not make them.

Eat

אָכַל , 'khl ; h398

From a primitive root

Mean to *eat* (literally or figuratively)

KJV X at all, burn up, consume, devour (-er, up), dine, eat (-er, up), feed (with), food, freely, X in...wise (-deed, plenty), (lay) meat, X quite

Application: Eating is a need that we all have. In this passage, it means to feast on the labor that man has put into his work.

Gift

מַתָּה , matt;th ; h4991

From feminine of מַתָּן {h4976} abbreviated

Mean a *present*

KJV gift, reward

Application: The joy of life is the gift of God. We are here to work and to rejoice in our work. Without God and an eternal perspective, we would not have any gifts but grievances.

For ever

עוֹלָם , 'ôlîm

or עֵלָם , 'âlîm ; h5769

From עֵלָם {h5956}

Mean properly *concealed*, i.e. the *vanishing* point; generally time *out of mind* (past or future), i.e. (practically) *eternity*; frequently adverbially (especially with prepositional prefix) *always*

KJV alway (-s), ancient (time), any more, continuance, eternal, (for, [n-]) ever (-lasting, -more, of old), lasting, long (time), (of) old (time), perpetual, at any time, (beginning of the) world (+ without end).

Application: *Out of the mind* is the interpretation I like to give the use of forever in this passage. For ever is out of the mind because we can't even comprehend eternity. We had a beginning (birth) and will have an end (death); it is hard for us to understand something that does not have a beginning nor an end.

Fear

יָרָא , yîrâ' ; h3373

From יָרָא {h3372}

Mean *fearing*; morally *reverent*

KJV afraid, fear (-ful)

Application: A better interpretation here would be reverence. Man is nothing in comparison to God and should reverence his revelations to him.

APPENDIX E
E1

1 To every thing
 there is a season,
and
 a time
 to every purpose
 under the heaven:

2 A time
 to be born,
and
a time
 to die;
a time
 to plant,
and
a time
 to pluck up
 that which is planted;

3 A time
 to kill,
and
a time
 to heal;
a time
 to break down,
and
a time
 to build up;

4 A time
 to weep,
and
a time
 to laugh;
a time
 to mourn,
and
a time
 to dance;

5 A time
 to cast away stones,

and
a time
to gather stones together;
a time
to embrace,
and
a time
to refrain from embracing;

6 A time
to get,
and
a time
to lose;
a time
to keep,
and
a time
to cast away;

7 A time
to rend,
and
a time
to sew;
a time
to keep silence,
and
a time
to speak;

8 A time
to love,
and
a time
to hate;
a time
of war,
and
a time
of peace.

9 What profit
hath he that worketh
in that wherein he laboureth?

10 I have seen
the travail,
which God hath given
to the sons of men
to be exercised in it.

11 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.

12 I know
that there is no good in them,
but
for a man
to rejoice,
and
to do good in his life.

13 And also
that every man
should eat
and
drink,
and
enjoy the good
of all his labour,
it is the gift of God.

14 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.

15 That which hath been

is now;
and
that which is to be
hath already been;
and
God requireth
that which is past.

E2

Parallelism – the first eight verses of the chapter three are full of parallelisms. They show the antitheses of life facts. The most interesting verse in this section is verse 15. It has two parallelisms.

Word order variation – What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth? (v.9) This is a sentence that does not follow the usual way of the formation of a sentence. It makes it harder to understand but it also makes the verse more meaningful.

Pronoun reference – *That* is the first demonstrative pronoun used and it refers to that which is planted. (v.2) and also in other places it means *because of*.

I – always refers to the author (personal pronoun)

He – refers to a person that is laboring (v.9) and also to God (v.11) (personal pronoun)

Them – it refers to men (objective personal pronoun)

Passive voice – there isn't any use of the passive voice besides verse 13 (*And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God.*)

In active voice the passage would start with: the gift of God is that... etc.

Variety of Coordinators – There is not a large variety of coordinators. All the coordinators are just joining parallel sentences. They are used the same way to show the parallelism in life of the good and the not so good.

Chiasmus – there are no chiasmuses in this passage. There are some passages that get close to it but none are true chiasmuses.

APPENDIX F

F2

There are repeated sound patterns that put intentional emphasis on key verses. A TIME and AND are used repeatedly. I think that they emphasize the parallelism in the text. From a different point of view they show the firmness of God and how unchangeable He is in opposition to the constant changes of the circumstances of our lives.

In the second part of the section (v.9 – v.15) the prominent sound pattern becomes THAT and GOD. That is used to draw attention to what God desires from us to do. They are repeated sound patterns so that they might make it easier for the reader to retain the important messages that s/he can use in his/her life.

1 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

5 A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

6 A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

7 A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

8 A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

9 What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth?

10 I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.

11 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.

12 I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life.

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14 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.

15 That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.

PART II

In this section I will talk about what information I think is most important in translating this passage of scripture. For this translation to be successful the translator must regard the passage with utmost importance and should always review their work never assuming it's done on the first try.

A good process for translation is to translate the passage into the target language, keeping in mind the above appendices, and then to ask someone else to do the translation of your text in the input language. Then a third person, in a meeting with the two translators, compares the original document with the two translations and check to see where meaning was lost. The changes should be documented and discussed. Remedies should be found so the meaning of the translation can stay as close as possible to the original. If the original meaning cannot be retained, it can be documented in the footnotes of the translation giving additional information on alternate meanings.

The translator should keep in mind that the input language of the document is not a modern day language, so it could be proper to try to use an older style language for the translation also.

The information that can easily be lost in this passage is the antitheses from the beginning of the passage. The one in charge of translating should pay close attention at the graph I have made in appendix B1. The words find their opposites on the other side of the branch passing in the middle through the key work "time". These words should maintain their antithesis in the final translation. Also, the key word "time" should be translated. A translation of "A time to be born, and a time to die;" should not be

translated in this fashion *A time to be born and die*. This translation loses the symmetry and parallelism of the original passage making it less strong.

The words “worketh” and “laboreth” (v.9) are very similar and in the translation they should be translated as different synonymic words and not the same word. The pronoun reference should be checked every time a demonstrative pronoun or a personal pronoun is found.

Also of a difficulty of translation is verse 11, care should be taken so that the meaning is not lost. A translator that speaks more than one language should see how other language translators have translated the same passage and see if that will help them.

The hardest things to translate are structures that don't exist in the target language or expressions that do not transfer.

The stylistic patterns that should be used should be as close to the input text. Repetitions, parallel structures and chiasmus should be kept the same if possible in the target language. For a more detailed look at the parsing for this passage the translator can look at appendix E1. The parsing of the translated text should look fairly similar to the parsing above. This is another safeguard against the loss of meaning.

The verses that seem hard to understand are the hardest verses to translate. To better understand those verses the translators should take a break from translating and inform themselves as much as possible about the historical background of the author of the text. A short historical background with information about the author of the passage can be found in appendix A. All that information is pertinent because it can make a great difference in the translation of this passage. An understanding that the passage is pessimistic can help the translator render a more accurate translation.

In appendix C we see a color map of the passage. The colors represent the words that repeat themselves, the synonyms and antonyms in the passage. These words are important because they show visually some of the words that the translator should pay attention to. These words should be translated preserving their original functions. They are the voice of the text and if they are not translated right they make the passage bland.

The words that repeat themselves should be kept repeating in the translated document. Stylistically it is bad to have repetitions in a passage, but these repetitions are intentional and very important. These repetitions provide a constant in a world where everything changes. They might represent God's firmness compared to a world that is in the like gale of wind.

The passive voice in the passage should be kept in the translation also. Passive voice keeps the subject hidden and lets the reader interpret it. This is important. I argue to say that the fact that the scriptures have many interpretations is a good thing. They make us think and ponder the messages that are harder to understand. While in this meditation the spirit can guide us to know something personal and relevant only to us. If the passages would be unquestionable we would have little to learn from them and little to learn on our own.

In the appendix D1 I have circled the most meaningful words. These words are also difficult to translate because they offer a wealth of interpretations. Appendix D2 shows the roots of those words in Hebrew and the multiple interpretations they could have. Verse one of the passage is full of meaning. *Season, time, purpose and under the heaven* are the key words here. They are all related to each other. *Season* shows the greater time scale when events happen in our life, *time* is the specific moment when we

see the changes. *Season* shows the general way of things while *time* is more specific. *Purpose* is the reason why all these events happen in our life. There is a *purpose* in our life and we should attribute that purpose to learning to be more like God. *Under the heaven* is an expression that whenever used it refers to this earthly life only. It is here where these changes happen and where we are supposed to learn. In the life to come things will be different and for that we need to prepare now.

The translation of an ancient text is not easy but it is not without rewards. It is most wonderful to know that you have translated something and that you have kept the true meaning of that passage. The scriptures are the word of God and because of that it is so important that the meaning is kept. On a personal note the translator will have become an expert on that passage and will be able to teach it to others, which is a great privilege.