Chapter 3:
Read Ecclesiastes chapter 3. As you do try to answer the following questions to help you understand what Solomon is saying.

(1) **Vv. 1—8** were composed into music by Pete Seeger in 1959 and made into a popular song\(^1\) by the folk-rock band *The Byrds* in the mid-1960’s. Do these verses teach/imply that everything is pre-determined (leading to the philosophy\(^2\) of “fatalism”)? Or does Solomon have something else in mind here? {Compare and relate to Romans 8:28-32}.

(2) Related to v.14; God is the creator of all things, including the cyclic processes we see on the earth and in the universe. What role does God, the LORD Christ Jesus (Colossians 1:14-19), have in the cyclic nature of life? {See also Psalms 102:25-27 and Hebrews 1:10-12; 13:8}.

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\(^1\) “Turn! Turn! Turn! (to Everything There is a Season)”, often abbreviated to “Turn! Turn! Turn!”, is a song adapted entirely from the Book of Ecclesiastes and composed to music by Pete Seeger in 1959. Seeger waited until 1962 to record it, releasing the song on his album *The Bitter and The Sweet*. Then “Turn! Turn! Turn!” was the third single by the American Folk-rock band The Byrds which was released on October 1, 1965. The song was also included on the band's second album, *Turn! Turn! Turn!*, which was released on December 6, 1965. The Byrds' version distinguishes the song as the #1 pop hit with the oldest lyrics, dating back to the Book of Ecclesiastes (~1000 BC), thus giving Solomon lyrical credit for a number one hit!

\(^2\) Fatalism is a philosophical belief system emphasizing the conformity of all events or actions to an inevitable, pre-determined outcome (referred to as ‘fate’). Fatalism generally refers to the following two ideas: (a) **Determinism**: promotes the idea that free will does not actually exist and therefore history has progressed in the only manner possible and that no decision or action a person can make will alter the final outcome and (b) **Defeatism**: the belief that acceptance rather than resistance to the inevitability of an outcome is the appropriate response. Can you cite any scriptural evidence that contradicts this philosophy? Hint: 2 Sam. 12:21-23; 24:10-16.
(3) What do you think v. 11 means when Solomon says that God has "set eternity in the hearts of men"? ({See e.g., Romans 1:19-23; Acts 17:22-34; Psalm 19:1-4 and the example in Acts 14:11-18}).

(4) In vv. 18—21 Solomon seems to be questioning the nature of life after death, comparing the fate of animals and man and concluding it was the same. Is this conclusion an 'absolute' one, that is, is there something missing in this assessment? {Reminder: Solomon is frustrated and cynical and he is discussing the issues pertaining to those things "done under the sun"). How does this compare with the conventional Darwinian teaching that man is nothing more than a highly evolved animal? However, God made man as a special creation "... in His own image ..." and given man responsibility and authority to rule over the animals (Genesis 1:26-28). And King David sings a Psalm of praise to the LORD for crowning man with glory and honor above the animals (Psalm 8:4-9) which is quoted in Hebrews 2:5-8).
(5) Read vv. 19-21. Related to this; Job asked, "If a man dies, will he live again?" and yet Job knew he would be "changed" (Job 14:14). Job was also somehow aware of the concept of a bodily resurrection (Job 19:25-27). Do you think Solomon did not know of these scriptures or perhaps did he choose simply to ignore them? Does it matter from a practical viewpoint? What does this teach us about our own attitude towards God Word? What is the answer to this issue?—God’s Word clearly teaches that there will be life after death in a resurrected body. {See Daniel 12:1-3; John 3:16; 5:25-29; 11:25-26; 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, 51-57; and Revelation 20:4-15}.

(6) Related to v.22; Notice that Solomon repeats his idea that man can only find satisfaction and enjoyment in the toil and labor of this life (i.e., ‘under the sun’) and he qualifies it by saying this is from the hand of God. See also Ecclesiastes 2:24 and 5:18-20 noting especially vv.19-20. Consider Solomon’s statements here in contrast with those in Ecclesiastes 2:17-18 and what it says in Genesis 3:17-19; Job 5:6-7; 7:1-10; 14:1-2. How does the focus and priorities of our life influence the "quality" of our enjoyment? What should the motivation and source of our joy be? (See Psalm 128:1-6; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17; Philippians 1:21; 4:4-7 and John 15:9-14).