

Ecclesiastes 3:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

This pivotal verse asserts God's aesthetic providence—"He hath made every thing beautiful in his time" (Hebrew 'yapheh,' beautiful/appropriate). Despite life's apparent chaos catalogued in verses 1-8, divine wisdom orders all experiences toward beauty and purpose. Yet God has also 'set the world in their heart' (Hebrew 'ha-olam,' eternity/world)—giving humans awareness of transcendence while withholding complete understanding of His works 'from beginning to end.' This creates human longing for meaning beyond temporal existence. We glimpse eternity but cannot fully comprehend God's comprehensive purposes, producing both humble faith and reverent mystery before divine sovereignty.

Historical Context

The Hebrew 'olam' (world/eternity) carries rich theological freight in Jewish thought—it denotes both spatial extent (the world) and temporal duration (eternity/ages). Ancient Near Eastern wisdom traditions lacked Israel's concept of a transcendent God who orders time purposefully toward redemptive goals. This verse anticipates the New Testament revelation that God's eternal purposes, hidden for ages, are revealed in Christ (Ephesians 3:9-11). Augustine's 'Confessions' famously explored this verse: humans are restless until they find rest in God because He has placed eternity in their hearts while they exist in time.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does believing that God makes 'everything beautiful in His time' sustain hope when current circumstances seem ugly or meaningless?
2. What evidence of eternity in your heart—longings for transcendence, justice, or permanence—points you toward faith in God's ultimate purposes?

Interlinear Text

אַתָּה	בְּעֵת	כִּי	הִכַּלְתָּה	לְכַלְלָה	מִתְבָּאֵן	נָתַתָּה	בְּלִבְנֵי	מִבְּלֵלָה	רָאשָׁה	לֹא	אָמַץ	אָתָּה
H853	H1571	H853	H6256	H1571	H834	H3808	H4672					
הַכְלִיל	בְּעֵת	כִּי	הַמְבָאֵן	בְּלִבְנֵי	מִתְבָּאֵן	רָאשָׁה	אָמַץ	אָתָּה	לֹא	אָמַץ	אָתָּה	
the world	also he hath set	in their heart	so that	in his time	every thing beautiful	He hath made	can find out					
H5769	H5414	H3820	H1097	H6213	H3303	H6213	H4639	H834	H1571	H853	H1571	H853
בְּאַלְהָה	יְמִינָה	עַשְׂתָּה	הַמְעָשָׂה	אֲשֶׁר	הַמְעָשָׂה	עַשְׂתָּה	בְּאַלְהָה	יְמִינָה	עַשְׂתָּה	בְּאַלְהָה	יְמִינָה	
no man	the work	He hath made	the work	He hath made	the work	He hath made	the work	He hath made	the work	He hath made	the work	
H120	H834	H430	H834	H430	H834	H430	H834	H430	H834	H430	H834	
מִרְאֵשׁ	וְעַד	סֹוףּ										
from the beginning	to the end											
H7218	H5704	H5490										

Additional Cross-References

Romans 11:33 (References God): O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

Job 11:7 (References God): Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?

Ecclesiastes 8:17 (References God): Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea further; though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.

Job 5:9 (Parallel theme): Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number:

Genesis 1:31 (Creation): And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Mark 7:37 (Parallel theme): And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

Psalms 104:24 (Creation): O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.

Deuteronomy 32:4 (References God): He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.

Ecclesiastes 7:29 (Creation): Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

Romans 1:28 (References God): And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;