

# Ecclesiastes 3:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.

## Analysis

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Amid life's injustices (verse 16), the Preacher affirms divine justice: 'I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.' The Hebrew 'shaphat' (שָׁפַט, judge) indicates both legal judgment and divine governance. Despite earthly injustice, God will ultimately judge all people justly. The phrase 'a time there for every purpose and for every work' echoes 3:1—God has appointed times for judgment and justice. This verse provides theological grounding: though earthly courts fail and injustice prevails temporarily, God's judgment is certain. This anticipates 12:14: 'God shall bring every work into judgment.' The verse teaches that belief in divine justice sustains hope amid earthly injustice, calling believers to patient faith while awaiting God's vindication.

## Historical Context

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Ancient Israel's justice system was imperfect—bribery, favoritism, and oppression occurred (Isaiah 1:23; Amos 5:12). Yet prophets consistently affirmed that God would judge justly (Psalm 96:13; Isaiah 11:3-4). The New Testament confirms this: 'we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ' (2 Corinthians 5:10). Early church martyrs found comfort that God would vindicate them against oppressors. The Reformers emphasized both universal judgment (all face God's bar) and gracious justification (believers judged 'in Christ'). The doctrine of final judgment provides moral framework: justice delayed isn't justice denied; God's accounting is

thorough and certain. Modern readers struggling with unpunished evil and unrewarded righteousness find hope that God's judgment will rectify all injustices.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

## Study Questions

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1. How does believing that 'God shall judge the righteous and the wicked' sustain your hope when earthly justice fails?
2. What specific injustices in your experience or observation require faith in God's eventual judgment rather than immediate resolution?

## Interlinear Text

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אָמַרְתִּי	אֲנִי	בְּלִבִּי	אֶת	הַצְדִּיקִים	וְאֶת	הַרְשָׁעִים
<b>I said</b>	H589	<b>in mine heart</b>	H853	<b>the righteous</b>	H853	<b>and the wicked</b>
H559		H3820		H6662		H7563
יִשְׁפֹּט	הָאֱלֹהִים	כִּי	עַתָּה	לְכָל	חַפְצָם	
<b>shall judge</b>	<b>God</b>	H3588	<b>for there is a time</b>	H3605	<b>there for every purpose</b>	
H8199	H430		H6256		H2656	
וְעַל	כָּל	הַמַּעֲשִׂים	שָׁם:			
H5921	H3605	<b>and for every work</b>	H8033			
		H4639				

## Additional Cross-References

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**2 Corinthians 5:10** (Judgment): For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

**Ecclesiastes 12:14** (Judgment): For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

**Ecclesiastes 3:1** (Parallel theme): To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

**Matthew 16:27** (Parallel theme): For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

**Psalms 98:9** (Righteousness): Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.

**Ecclesiastes 11:9** (Judgment): Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.