

Ecclesiastes 8:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Because to every purpose there is time and judgment,
therefore the misery of man is great upon him.

Analysis

Because to every purpose there is time and judgment, therefore the misery of man is great upon him. This verse presents a paradox: the appointed time (et, עַתָּה) and proper manner (mishpat, מִשְׁפָּט) exist for every purpose (chephets, חֶפֶץ), yet this truth increases human misery (ra'ah, רָעָה) rather than relieving it.

Why does knowing 'there is a time for everything' produce misery? Because humans cannot always discern what time it is or what the proper response requires. We know opportune moments exist but often cannot identify them until past. We recognize proper courses of action exist but lack wisdom to choose them. The gap between knowing times and judgments exist and actually possessing wisdom to discern them creates anguish. This echoes 3:11—God 'set eternity in their hearts, yet they cannot fathom what God has done.' We're aware of order and purpose but cannot fully grasp it, producing frustration. Only divine wisdom, ultimately revealed in Christ, resolves this misery (Colossians 2:2-3).

Historical Context

Ancient wisdom literature recognized human limitations in understanding timing and propriety. Despite studying omens, consulting advisors, and seeking wisdom, people still often misjudged situations. Even Solomon, wisest of men, made tragic errors in timing (1 Kings 11). The verse reflects realistic assessment of human condition: we possess enough knowledge to recognize order exists but insufficient wisdom to navigate it perfectly. This creates what moderns call 'existential

anxiety'—awareness of meaningful structure we cannot fully access. Post-exilic readers, trying to discern God's purposes amid difficult circumstances, found validation in this honest acknowledgment. The gospel resolves this misery—Christ embodies divine wisdom, revealing the Father's purposes and providing guidance through the Spirit (John 16:13).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What situations cause you misery because you recognize a right time and way exist but cannot discern what they are?
2. How does trusting God's perfect timing even when you cannot see it reduce the anxiety this verse describes?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	לְכָל	יְהִי	כִּי	עַתָּה	וּמִשְׁפָּט	כִּי
H3588	H3605					H3588
		Because to every purpose	there is	time	and judgment	
		H2656	H3426	H6256	H4941	
	רָעָה	הָאָדָם	רַבָּה	עֲלִיוֹ:		
	therefore the misery	of man	is great			
	H7451	H120	H7227	H5921		

Additional Cross-References

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

Ecclesiastes 3:17 (Judgment): 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.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 (Parallel theme): 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.

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org