



"Cross Connection"

Radio Ministry of Hope Wesleyan Church and Wells of Salvation Ministries
Ultimate Oldies Radio – FM 97.7 and 101.5, Huber Heights, Ohio



Series: Christian Messages In Secular Music

10/09/07

Program 2 – “Turn, Turn, Turn” by King Solomon and © Pete Seeger

Talk about “Ultimate Oldies”! The lyrics for this one come primarily from Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 in King James version of the Bible – an English translation of words written by King Solomon approximately 935 BC!¹ Little did Solomon know that over 2,800 years later, Pete Seeger would put music to the text, or that a group called “The Byrds” would record it and take it to #1 on the charts in 1965!² To the words from Scripture, Seeger tagged a single line with reference to “a time for peace” – i.e., “...I swear it’s not too late”. Ecclesiastes explains that there is a time and place for all things -- laughter and sorrow, healing and killing, war and peace, etc. While many debate the meaning of the Scriptural text, listeners generally view the song as a plea for world peace, based on Seeger’s added line.³

“Turn, Turn, Turn” is one of just a few mainstream popular songs that put music to a significant portion of scripture. It has been recorded by several groups and artists, including Pete Seeger himself, The Limelites (which included sideman Roger McGuinn, who later co-founded The Byrds, and became a born-again Christian in 1977), Judy Collins, Mary Hopkin, The Seekers and Dolly Parton.^{3,4}

To everything (turn, turn, turn)
There is a season (turn, turn, turn)
And a time for every purpose, under heaven

A time to be born, a time to die
A time to plant, a time to reap
A time to kill, a time to heal
A time to laugh, a time to weep

To everything (turn, turn, turn)
There is a season (turn, turn, turn)
And a time for every purpose, under heaven

A time to build up, a time to break down
A time to dance, a time to mourn
A time to cast away stones, a time to gather
stones together

- Context: King Solomon seeks the meaning of life
- Ecclesiastes = from Greek word meaning “preacher” – NIV translates as “teacher”
- Solomon was disturbed by futility of life – “Everything is meaningless”
- Solomon essentially describes all the peaks and valleys of life we encounter in search for meaning
- Describes cycles of activities in terms of opposites
- “Turn, turn, turn...” suggests rotation, and things / seasons repeating over and over again
- What was context on the world scene when this was written in the ‘50s and recorded in the ‘60s?

¹ <http://www.gotquestions.org/Book-of-Ecclesiastes.html>

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Byrds

³ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turn!_Turn!_Turn!_\(to_Everything_There_Is_a_Season\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turn!_Turn!_Turn!_(to_Everything_There_Is_a_Season))

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_McGuinn

To everything (turn, turn, turn)
There is a season (turn, turn, turn)
And a time for every purpose, under heaven

A time of love, a time of hate
A time of war, a time of peace
A time you may embrace,
A time to refrain from embracing

To everything (turn, turn, turn)
There is a season (turn, turn, turn)
And a time for every purpose, under heaven

A time to gain, a time to lose
A time to rend, a time to sew
A time to love, a time to hate
A time for peace, I swear it's not too late

- Some disturbing portions include – “a time to kill”, “a time of war”, “a time of hate”
- A time of war?? Yet consider this passage from the book of 2 Samuel --
 - *“In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah...”* -- 2 Sam. 11
- It is interesting to consider the words “...under heaven” -- i.e., here on earth, for in heaven, killing, war, and hatred will simply not be around

Potential discussion points:

- Do you interpret this passage to mean that God sanctions all the behaviors mentioned, including hate, losing, rending (i.e., “tearing”), and war? Why or why not?
- Can you think of any examples of a “time” for these things?

Final Thoughts:

While much change has taken place in the 2800+ years since Solomon wrote the words that Pete Seeger transformed into a song, a few things remain unchanged – human nature, our yearning for peace on earth, our need to find meaning in life... As such, the lyrics to “Turn, Turn, Turn” are still as current and relevant as they have ever been. People today long to find meaning in life, but find their search just as futile as Solomon did, this side of relating to and serving God.

Our world will not know true and lasting peace until it knows the Prince of Peace – Jesus Christ. As Pete Seeger notes in his solitary added line to this song – “...it's not too late”. The Apostle Peter's second letter indicates that *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance”* – 2 Peter 3:9. The passage responds to those who ask “Why hasn't the Lord returned yet as He said He would?” The answer is simply that He is giving mankind every opportunity to turn from sin and trust Him for salvation. Thankfully it's not too late to accept and serve the Prince of Peace.

At the end of Ecclesiastes, after a lifetime of futile searching, Solomon finally concludes that we all must –

“...Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” – Ecclesiastes 12:13b

Simply put, our purpose and fulfillment in life can only be found in fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.