

Nasty, Brutish, and Short

Commentary for October 16, 2013 — ... Is the Natural State of Man

The title phrase is from Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan, or the matter, forme, and power of a commonwealth, ecclesiasticall and civill*, published in 1651. Specifically, Hobbes wrote his essay commenting on the civil war that engulfed England for the years 1642–1651. *Leviathan* described the situation of life for his fellow Englishmen during the mid-1600s because of that great social upheaval.

In fact, the phrase described the natural state of life for human beings within God's creation. It is accurate. The full quote by Hobbes in some phrases seems to be a description of our day (without the civil war):

“Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man; the same is consequent to the time, wherein men live without other security, than what their own strength, and their own invention shall furnish them withall. In such condition, there is

**no place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no culture of the earth;
no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea;
no commodious building;
no instruments of moving, and removing such things as require much force;
no knowledge of the face of the earth;
no account of time; no arts; no letters;
no society;**

and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”

• *Hobbes, Leviathan*

Hobbes thought that a complete societal breakdown was threatening to occur during this period. Many commentators on the state of the world today talk about an economic collapse which would result in social chaos.

This phrase **“solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short”** describes the condition of most human beings since the flood of Noah.¹ These lives all end in death. And you will die — alone.² As you read this in October of the year 2013, your death will occur. It is assured. This is because at this stage in history of God's plan, it is very unlikely anyone alive today will live to see Christ's return (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18).

Yes, the condition of most people in the world and throughout history since the flood has been, is now, and will continue to be **“solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”** Wealth, and

¹ People before the flood of Noah lived much longer lives compared to those after. However, people before the flood had lives that were **“poor, nasty, brutish ...”** Great evil was the reason God sent the flood to wipe out almost all children of Adam (Genesis 6:5–8).

² See my August 19, 2013 Commentary, [“You Are Alone.”](#)

the partial improvement it can bring from poverty, evil, and cruelty, can even help prolong life (if God allows it). Most people do not realize that wealth is a gift of God (Deuteronomy 8:18; Ecclesiastes 5:19, 6:2).³ Yet the preacher, Solomon, concludes (repeated several times throughout Ecclesiastes):

“There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labor. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto, more than I?

For God gives to a man that [who] is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he gives travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.”

• *Ecclesiastes 2:24–26*

Note that the situation of life was no different in Solomon’s day, it was no different in the day of Thomas Hobbes, and it is no different for us in our day. It is the condition of life into which God has placed us and all of mankind: travail, hard work, and striving without any apparent reason. There will be no change in this situation this side of the grave.

“I have seen the travail, which God has given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.”

• *Ecclesiastes 3:10*

The word **“travail”** is rendered by various translations as “business,” “task,” “burden,” and “employment,” while in the Greek LXX this word is translated as “trouble.” You get the idea. The word **“to be exercised”** is also interesting. It is translated “to be busy with,” “to occupy themselves,” “to be concerned with,” “to work therein,” “to be troubled with.” The one translation I think is most useful is “to be humbled by it” (Young’s Literal Translation). Put together it reads like this:

“I see the experience that Elohim gives to the sons of humanity to humble them by it.”

• *Ecclesiastes 3:10, Concordant Literal Version*

For all children of Adam, life gives us experience in humility. That experience will be gained without any relationship with God, even without any knowledge of God. After death, in the resurrection, for the mass of humanity there will be a much better situation. God will make Himself known to everyone through Christ. He will not be an absentee Father. The real education of most of the human race will begin with the great white throne judgment.

Before that time, I hope soon, God will begin to move in society, culture, politics, and in history. He will begin to reveal Himself to the world in all realms of life. All human beings will then gladly acknowledge that God exists and requires you to love your neighbor as yourself. This will occur before Christ returns. It will give a period of prosperity.

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³ If you are not wealthy, it does not mean God does not love you, because He has not given you that gift. If you are a believer in Christ’s resurrection God has given you a gift to be cherished more than any other — His Holy Spirit. The full importance of that gift will be realized when Christ returns.