

Ecclesiastes 1:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.

Analysis

The Preacher warns: 'Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.' This verse reinforces verse 9's claim that there is 'no new thing under the sun.' When something appears novel, closer examination reveals precedent—'it hath been already of old time' (kebar hayah le-olamim, כְּבָר הָיָה לְעֹלָמִים). Human nature, problems, and patterns repeat across history despite superficial changes in technology or culture. The verse counsels epistemic humility: don't be naive about supposedly unprecedented developments. History provides wisdom for evaluating contemporary claims. This anticipates Ecclesiastes' conclusion: since nothing is fundamentally new under the sun, only fearing God and keeping His commandments provides lasting wisdom (12:13).

Historical Context

Ancient readers might have considered Solomon's own era 'new'—unprecedented temple, wealth, international influence. Yet even these developments had precedent in other cultures. The verse teaches historical perspective: every generation thinks its challenges unique, yet core issues persist. Early church fathers applied this to heresies: 'new' teachings were usually ancient errors repackaged. Church councils defined orthodoxy partly by demonstrating apostolic continuity versus heretical novelty. The Reformers similarly argued that Protestant theology recovered ancient biblical truth versus medieval innovations. Modern readers see technology advancing while human nature remains constant—social

media amplifies ancient sins of pride, envy, and malice. The verse counsels learning from history rather than dismissing it as irrelevant.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What contemporary developments seem unprecedented but actually repeat ancient patterns—and how does recognizing this provide wisdom?
2. How does studying history protect against both naïve progressivism ('we're beyond old mistakes') and cynical despair ('nothing ever improves')?

Interlinear Text

ה וַאֲ	חֵדָּשׁ	זֶה הָ	רְאֵה	שִׁיֵּאֲמֶר	דָּבָר	אֵשׁ
Is there	any thing	whereof it may be said	See			
H3426	H1697	H559	H7200			
מִלְפָּנָיו:	הָ הָ	אֵשׁ ר	לְעֵלְמֵ יָם	הָ הָ	כְּבָר	
which was before	of old time			it hath been already		
H6440	H5769	H834	H1961	H3528		

Additional Cross-References

Acts 7:51 (Parallel theme): Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.