

Ecclesiastes 1:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.

Analysis

The Preacher concludes his opening observations: 'There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.' The Hebrew 'zeker' (זֶכֶר, remembrance) indicates lasting memory or historical consciousness. Human memory is selective and limited—previous generations are forgotten, and our generation will likewise fade from memory. This isn't denying all historical memory but observing that comprehensive longer remembrance fades with time. Even significant events, achievements, and people become obscure. The verse reinforces human mortality and life's transience 'under the sun.' Only what is done for God's glory endures eternally. Christ taught storing treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:20), and Paul emphasized pursuing eternal weight of glory (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

Historical Context

Ancient cultures attempted to preserve memory through monuments, inscriptions, and oral traditions. Egyptian pharaohs built pyramids; Mesopotamian kings erected victory steles. Yet many once-famous names are now forgotten. Israel's Scripture itself preserves some memory while countless others fade into obscurity. This verse anticipates the biblical teaching that God alone has perfect memory and will judge all things justly (Ecclesiastes 12:14). The Reformers emphasized that believers' works are remembered by God even when forgotten by humans, and will receive appropriate reward at Christ's return (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does accepting that you will likely be forgotten by future generations reshape your priorities?
2. What motivates faithful service when human memory fails—and how does God's perfect memory provide hope?

Interlinear Text

אֵין	זֶכֶר	וְ	בְּרִאָשָׁן	יִם	בְּגַם	לְאַחֲרָנָה:
H369	There is no remembrance		of former	H1571	of things that are to come	
	H2146		H7223		H314	
לֹא	שִׁיחָיו	וְ	לֹא	זֶכֶר	וְ	שִׁיחָיו
H1961	H3808	H1961	H1992	There is no remembrance	H2146	H5973
						H1961
לְאַחֲרָנָה:						
of things that are to come						
H314						

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 9:6 (Parallel theme): O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end: and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them.

Ecclesiastes 2:16 (Parallel theme): For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool.

Ecclesiastes 9:5 (Parallel theme): For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

Isaiah 42:9 (Parallel theme): Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.

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