

Ecclesiastes 1:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose.

Analysis

The Preacher observes nature's cyclical patterns: 'The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose.' The Hebrew verb 'shoeph' (שׁוֹפֵף, hasteth/pants) creates the image of the sun panting or gasping as it rushes back to its starting point, only to repeat the same circuit the next day. This personification portrays nature's wearying repetition—even the majestic sun engaged in endless, monotonous cycles. The observation introduces verses 6-7's pattern: wind circuits endlessly, rivers flow perpetually to the sea yet the sea never fills. These natural phenomena illustrate the book's central theme: all earthly existence operates in repetitive cycles producing no ultimate advancement or permanent change. 'Under the sun' life appears as endless routine without final purpose. Yet this very observation drives readers toward the God who transcends nature's cycles, who works linearly in redemptive history toward definitive consummation.

Historical Context

Ancient peoples closely observed celestial movements—agricultural societies depended on solar and lunar cycles for planting and harvest. The sun's daily journey across the sky and return to its starting point (from human perspective) was universal experience. Solomon's era had sophisticated astronomical knowledge enabling calendar calculation and festival observance. The observation that natural cycles continue endlessly without net change resonated with ancient agricultural experience—seasons repeat annually, generations succeed one

another, yet nothing fundamentally advances. This cyclical view contrasts with biblical theology's linear movement: creation, fall, redemption, consummation. The Reformers emphasized that while nature exhibits cycles, redemptive history moves linearly toward Christ's return and new creation.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What areas of your life feel like endless, wearisome cycles—and how does faith in God's linear redemptive purposes provide hope beyond repetition?
2. How does this verse challenge modern assumptions about progress and advancement?

Interlinear Text

זֹרֵחַ	הַשֶּׁשׁ הַשֶּׁשׁ	וְכֵן	הַשֶּׁשׁ הַשֶּׁשׁ	וְכֵן	מְקוֹמוֹ	שׁוֹאֵה
also ariseth	The sun	goeth down	The sun	H413	to his place	and hasteth
H2224	H8121	H935	H8121		H4725	H7602
זֹרֵחַ	שָׁמַיִם:	הָאֵל				
also ariseth						
H2224						