

Ecclesiastes 1:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits.

Analysis

The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north— Qoheleth observes natural cycles with scientific precision. The Hebrew ruach (רוּחַ, wind/spirit/breath) circles endlessly in its savivim (סְבִיבִים, circuits/courses). Ancient observers noted seasonal wind patterns: winter winds from the north, summer from the south. Yet despite constant motion, the wind returneth again according to his circuits—ceaseless activity producing no ultimate change.

This continues verse 4's theme: generations come and go, yet earth remains. Wind exemplifies perpetual motion without progress, illustrating life 'under the sun' as wearisome repetition. Unlike the Spirit's regenerating work (John 3:8, same Greek word pneuma), natural wind merely recycles. Only divine intervention breaks the cycle of futility.

Historical Context

Solomon wrote during Israel's apex (970-930 BC) when international trade brought him knowledge of meteorology, geography, and natural philosophy from across the ancient world. His scientific observations (1 Kings 4:33) informed Ecclesiastes' nature poetry. The 'circuits' language reflects pre-modern understanding of atmospheric circulation, remarkably accurate for its era while serving theological purpose: even majestic natural phenomena ultimately go nowhere without God.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What areas of your life feel like wind circuits—constant motion but no meaningful progress toward purpose?
2. How does Ecclesiastes' observation of repetitive natural cycles contrast with the Spirit's transforming, linear work in redemption history?

Interlinear Text

אֵלֹהִים הַזָּהָר וְאֵל הַזָּהָר
goeth H413 toward the south and turneth about H413 unto the north
H1980 H1864 H5437 H6828

סְבִבָּה סְבִבָּה הַזָּהָר בְּרוּם: עַל
and turneth about and turneth about goeth The wind H5921
H5437 H5437 H1980 H7307

סְבִיבָת יְהִי בְּרוּם: שׁ בְּרוּם:
according to his circuits returneth again The wind
H5439 H7725 H7307

Additional Cross-References

John 3:8 (Parallel theme): The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.