

Ecclesiastes 1:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

Analysis

The Preacher reaches a sobering conclusion: 'The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.' The repeated formula emphasizes historical repetition. Human experience, wisdom, folly, sin, suffering—all repeat across generations. The phrase 'no new thing under the sun' doesn't deny innovation but asserts that fundamental human nature, problems, and patterns remain constant. Technology changes but human hearts don't; circumstances vary but core issues persist. This realism counters both naïve progressivism (humanity constantly improving) and novelty-seeking (the next thing will finally satisfy). Only God can create genuinely 'new' things—new covenant, new creation, new heavens and earth (Isaiah 65:17; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Revelation 21:5).

Historical Context

Solomon's era witnessed significant technological and cultural developments—advanced architecture (Temple), international trade, literary achievement. Yet the Preacher insists these don't constitute fundamental novelty. Ancient empires rose and fell exhibiting the same patterns: pride, conquest, oppression, judgment. Human nature remained constant despite changing circumstances. Post-exilic readers, having experienced Babylon's fall after defeating Jerusalem, recognized historical patterns repeating. The New Testament affirms this: Jesus warned that false christs and wars would continue until the end (Matthew 24:6-11). Church

history confirms the pattern—heresies recycling, moral failures repeating, same temptations appearing in new guises.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What supposedly 'new' trends are actually repetitions of ancient patterns, and how does recognizing this provide wisdom?
2. How does God's promise of making 'all things new' (Revelation 21:5) provide hope that transcends the repetitive cycles Ecclesiastes describes?

Interlinear Text

וְיָמָה שֶׁהָיָה הָ וְאֵל שֶׁהָיָה הָ
H4100 H1961 H1931 H1961 H4100

וְיָמָה שֶׁהָיָה הָ וְאֵל שֶׁהָיָה הָ
The thing that hath been it is that which shall be and that which is done H1931
H6213

וְיָמָה שֶׁהָיָה הָ וְאֵל שֶׁהָיָה הָ
The thing that hath been it is that which shall be and that which is done H369 H3605
H6213

וְיָמָה שֶׁהָיָה הָ וְאֵל שֶׁהָיָה הָ
and there is no new H8478 thing under the sun
H2319 H8121

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 3:15 (Parallel theme): That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.

Ecclesiastes 6:10 (Parallel theme): That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is man: neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he.

Revelation 21:1 (Parallel theme): And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

Ecclesiastes 7:10 (Parallel theme): Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.

Ecclesiastes 2:12 (Parallel theme): And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done.

Jeremiah 31:22 (Parallel theme): How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.

Isaiah 43:19 (Parallel theme): Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.

2 Peter 2:1 (Parallel theme): But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.