

Ecclesiastes 2:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all.

Analysis

Solomon compares the fate of the wise and foolish: 'The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness.' The phrase 'eyes are in his head' means the wise person sees reality clearly, exercises discernment, and navigates life with understanding. In contrast, the fool 'walketh in darkness'—stumbling through life without perception, ignoring consequences, and making destructive choices. This proverbial wisdom affirms that wisdom provides real practical advantages: better decisions, foresight, and understanding. However, the verse's devastating conclusion follows: 'yet I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all' (miqreh echad, מִקְרָה אֶחָד, one event/fate). Both wise and fool die—the grave doesn't discriminate. This isn't denying wisdom's earthly advantages but acknowledging its ultimate limitation: wisdom cannot prevent death or secure eternal meaning on its own. The verse drives readers toward recognizing that only God can provide what transcends mortality—resurrection hope and eternal life that wisdom alone cannot achieve.

Historical Context

Proverbs extensively documents wisdom's advantages over folly (Proverbs 2-9), and daily experience confirms that wise choices generally produce better outcomes than foolish ones. Yet Ecclesiastes introduces realism that Proverbs doesn't extensively address: wisdom's advantages are real but temporary. Both wise Solomon and foolish Rehoboam died; brilliant Joseph and simple shepherds

entered Sheol. Ancient Israelite understanding of afterlife was limited—Sheol appeared as shadowy existence where distinctions disappeared (Job 3:17-19). Only later revelation clarified resurrection and eternal judgment (Daniel 12:2-3). The New Testament resolves Ecclesiastes' tension: wisdom has both temporal advantages and eternal significance when rooted in fearing God. Jesus emphasized that the wise build on the rock of His words (Matthew 7:24-27), and Paul taught that earthly wisdom proves foolish compared to knowing Christ (1 Corinthians 1:20-25; 3:18-20). True wisdom leads to eternal life, not just better earthly existence.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What practical advantages has wisdom provided in your life, and how do these benefits relate to ultimate meaning and eternal purpose?
2. How does recognizing that both wise and foolish face death affect your motivation for pursuing wisdom?

Interlinear Text

הָחָכָם	עֵינָיו	בְּרֹאשׁוֹ	וְהָכֵס יֵלֵךְ	בַּחֹשֶׁךְ	הוֹלֵךְ
The wise man's	eyes	are in his head	but the fool	in darkness	walketh
H2450	H5869	H7218	H3684	H2822	H1980
וַיֵּד עִמִּי	גַם	אֲנִי	שִׁמְקוֹהָ	אֵת	יְקוֹהָ
and I myself perceived			event	also that one	happeneth
H3045	H1571	H589	H4745	H259	H7136
כָּלֵם:					
H3605					

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 49:10 (Parallel theme): For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others.

Proverbs 17:24 (Parallel theme): Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.

Ecclesiastes 9:11 (Parallel theme): I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

1 John 2:11 (Darkness): But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

Ecclesiastes 3:19 (Parallel theme): For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity.