

Ecclesiastes 3:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?

Analysis

Wherefore I perceive (רָאִיתִי, ra'iti)—'I have seen,' from experiential observation rather than revealed truth. **That a man should rejoice in his own works** (וְיִשְׂמַח אָדָם בְּמַעְשָׁיו, she-yismach ha'adam bema'asav)—finding contentment in present labor, acknowledging that **that is his portion** (חֶלְקוֹ, chelqo), his allotted inheritance or lot in life.

After confronting mortality's leveling power, Qoheleth offers practical wisdom: since future outcomes remain uncertain (**who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?**), embrace present blessings with gratitude. This is not hedonism but realistic contentment—enjoying God's gifts in the now rather than anxiously grasping at illusory permanence. The term chelqo echoes the Levites' portion being the Lord Himself (Numbers 18:20); our 'portion' includes our daily work as divine gift. Paul's 'work heartily, as for the Lord' (Colossians 3:23) and 'godliness with contentment' (1 Timothy 6:6) reflect this mature balance between eternal hope and present faithfulness.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature often concluded with 'carpe diem' themes, but Ecclesiastes uniquely grounds joy in recognizing God as the Giver. This contrasts with Epicurean 'eat, drink, be merry' by maintaining covenant accountability.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How can you practice contentment in present work without losing eternal perspective or ambition for God's glory?
2. In what ways does accepting your 'portion' differ from fatalism or passivity?
3. What present blessings might you be missing because of excessive future anxiety?

Interlinear Text

לָרֹא וְזֶה	אֵין כֵּן	טוֹב	מֵאֲשֶׁר	
Wherefore I perceive	H3588	H369	H834	
H7200		H2896		
יִשְׂמַח	הָאָדָם	בְּמַעֲשָׁיו	כִּי הוּא	
should rejoice	than that a man	in his own works	H3588	
H8055	H120	H4639	H1931	
חֵלֶק וְ	מִי כִי	יָבִיא נֹו	לָרֹא וְזֶה	בְּמֵה
for that is his portion	H3588	H4310	for who shall bring	Wherefore I perceive
H2506		H935	H7200	H4100
שְׂהִי ה	אַחֲרָיו:			
H1961	what shall be after			
	H310			

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 2:24 (Parallel theme): There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God.

Ecclesiastes 8:7 (Parallel theme): For he knoweth not that which shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be?

Ecclesiastes 6:12 (Parallel theme): For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?

Ecclesiastes 10:14 (Parallel theme): A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him?

Ecclesiastes 11:9 (Parallel theme): Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.