

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 (בְּאִתִּי, ra'iti)—'I have seen,' from experiential observation rather than revealed truth. **That a man should rejoice in his own works** (שְׂשִׂמְחָה) (שְׂשִׂמְחָה, she-yismach ha'adam bema'asav)—finding contentment in present labor, acknowledging that **that is his portion** (צְלָקָה, 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

מְאֹשֶׁר רֹאֶה וְתַּּתְּרִא כִּי טוֹב

Wherefore I perceive H3588 H369 **that there is nothing better** H2896

H7200

H2896

הַיְלָדָן כִּי בְּמַעַשׂ יְהוָה יְשִׁים כִּי

should rejoice H8055 **than that a man** H120 **in his own works** H4639

H3588

H1931

בְּמַה הַלְּקָדָן כִּי יְבִיא אֶל לְרֹא וְתַּּתְּרִא כִּי

for that is his portion H3588 H4310 **for who shall bring** H935 **Wherefore I perceive** H7200

H2506

H935

H4100

שָׁהִи הַאֲחַתְּיָה

what shall be after

H1961 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.
