

Ecclesiastes 4:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I considered all the living which walk under the sun, with the second child that shall stand up in his stead.

Analysis

I considered all the living which walk under the sun (רָאִיתִי אֶת־כָּל־הַחַיִּים הַמְהַלְכִים תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ, ra'iti et-kol-hachayim hamehalkhim tachat hashemesh)—the Preacher's empirical survey of humanity. **With the second child that shall stand up in his stead** (עַם הַלֵּיד הַשֵּׁנִי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲמֹד תַּחְתָּיו, im hayeled hasheni asher ya'amod tachtav)—'the second youth who stands in his place,' referring to the successor who replaces the old king.

Qoheleth now broadens the lens from the specific parable to universal observation: populations gravitate toward new leadership, abandoning the previous generation. The 'second child' represents fresh hope, the promise of change that each generation invests in its successors. Yet verses 13-16 form a cycle: today's celebrated reformer becomes tomorrow's obsolete ruler. This captures the fickleness of public opinion and the transitory nature of political power. No earthly kingdom endures through human leadership alone—only the eternal kingdom where Christ's throne is established forever (Luke 1:33) breaks this cycle.

Historical Context

The rapid succession of Israelite and Judean kings after Solomon's death (Rehoboam, Jeroboam, Abijam, Asa, Nadab, etc.) within decades illustrates this pattern of rise and fall, popular support and abandonment.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does this verse guard against investing ultimate hope in political leaders or movements?
2. What does the recurring pattern of generational replacement teach about seeking lasting legacy?
3. How should Christians balance civic engagement with recognition that earthly kingdoms are temporary?

Interlinear Text

הָשָׁךְ מִשֶּׁשׁ	תַּחַת	הַמְהַלְכִּים	הַחַיִּים	כָּל	אֶת	כִּי יִתִּי
under the sun	which walk	all the living	I considered			
H8121	H1980	H2416	H3605	H853	H7200	
תַּחְתִּיּוֹ:	יֵעָמֵד	אֲשֶׁר	הַשֵּׁנִי	הַיֶּלֶד	עִם	
that shall stand up	child	with the second				
H5975	H8478	H834	H3206	H8145	H5973	

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org