

Ecclesiastes 6:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men:

Analysis

There is an evil which I have seen under the sun (רָעָה אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ, ra'ah asher ra'iti tachat hashemesh)—the Preacher introduces another troubling observation in his comprehensive investigation of life 'under the sun.' The Hebrew ra'ah denotes not moral evil but calamity, misfortune, or oppressive hardship. **And it is common among men** (רַבָּה הִיא עַל־הָאָדָם, rabbah hi al-ha'adam)—literally 'heavy it is upon mankind,' indicating this evil weighs heavily and affects many.

This opening formula (similar to 5:13) signals Qoheleth's empirical methodology: he observes, analyzes, and reports disturbing patterns in fallen creation. The verse prepares readers for an examination of wealth's peculiar torment—when God grants riches but withholds the capacity to enjoy them (6:2). This anticipates Jesus's parable of the rich fool who accumulated wealth but died before enjoying it (Luke 12:16-21) and James's warning to rich oppressors (James 5:1-6).

Historical Context

Ancient societies exhibited extreme wealth disparities. Solomon's era saw unprecedented prosperity for Israel's elite (1 Kings 10:14-29) while many remained poor. The Preacher's observation that wealth without enjoyment constitutes a 'common' evil suggests this pattern appeared frequently—then as now, accumulation doesn't guarantee satisfaction. The covenantal framework of Deuteronomy promised blessings including the ability to enjoy wealth as God's gift (Deuteronomy 28:1-14), making the inability to enjoy provision particularly

grievous—it suggests divine discipline or curse rather than blessing. Post-exilic readers, having lost material prosperity in exile, found this verse validating: better to have little with God's blessing than riches without His favor.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What 'common evils' do you observe in contemporary culture where people possess material abundance yet lack genuine satisfaction or joy?
2. How does this verse challenge the assumption that acquiring wealth solves life's problems or guarantees happiness?

Interlinear Text

שׁ	יְהוָה	אֶשׂר	רָאִיתִי	תַּחַת	הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ
There is	an evil	H834	which I have seen	H8478	under the sun
H3426	H7451		H7200		H8121
וְכִבְּהָ	יְהוָה	עַל	הָאָדָם:		
and it is common	H1931	H5921	among men		
H7227			H120		

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 5:13 (Evil): There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.