

Ecclesiastes 7:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness.

Analysis

All things have I seen in the days of my vanity (אָתְּ-הָכֵל בָּאִיתִי בִּימֵי הַבָּלִי) — 'All things' (hakol) signals comprehensive observation. 'Days of my vanity' uses hevel, Ecclesiastes's key term meaning 'vapor,' 'breath,' or 'futility' — life's temporary, perplexing nature under the sun.

There is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness — This observation confronts the simplistic prosperity theology critiqued throughout Ecclesiastes and Job. Righteous Job suffered while his 'friends' prospered; wicked Babylon flourished while godly Judah languished in exile. The verse acknowledges life's moral paradoxes without explaining them. Yet Scripture consistently affirms eventual justice: 'Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God' (8:12). The New Testament reveals final judgment (Revelation 20:11-15) resolving all earthly inequities.

Historical Context

This tension between retribution theology (righteousness brings prosperity; wickedness brings ruin) and observed reality permeates wisdom literature. Psalm 73 articulates the anguish of seeing the wicked prosper, resolved only by entering God's sanctuary and recognizing their final end (Psalm 73:2-3, 16-20). Habakkuk questioned God about Babylon's triumph over Judah (Habakkuk 1:13). Jeremiah

asked why the wicked prosper (Jeremiah 12:1). The patriarchs died without receiving promises (Hebrews 11:13, 39-40). Church history includes martyrs cut down young while persecutors lived long. This verse refuses easy answers, pointing toward eternal rather than temporal justice. The cross itself epitomizes this paradox: the Righteous One perished while the guilty were freed.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What experiences of suffering righteousness or prospering wickedness have challenged your understanding of God's justice?
2. How does the promise of final judgment and eternal justice sustain your faith when present circumstances appear unjust?

Interlinear Text

אָתָּה	לְ	כִּי	בַּיּוֹם	בְּאַתִּי	לְ	שָׁבֵל	וְ	צָדִיק
H853	H3605	All things have I seen	H7200	H3117	of my vanity	H1892	H3426	a just
אָבֶד	בְּצִדְקָה	וְ	בְּשָׁעָה	וְ	בְּשָׁעָה			
man that perisheth	in his righteousness	there is	and there is a wicked					
H6	H6664	H3426	H7563					
מְאֹרֶךְ	בְּרִצְחָנוֹן							
man that prolongeth	his life in his wickedness							
H748	H7451							

Additional Cross-References

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?

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