

Ecclesiastes 9:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me:

Analysis

This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me (גַּם־זֹה בָּאִיתִי חֲכָמָה תִּפְתַּח הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וְגַדּוֹלָה הִיא אֲלֵי) —'also this wisdom I have seen under the sun, and it was great to me.' The emphatic gedolah hi elai (great/important it is to me) introduces a parable illustrating wisdom's value yet tragic vulnerability.

After declaring humanity's ignorance of crisis timing (v. 12), Qoheleth pivots to showcase wisdom's power through narrative example. The phrase 'under the sun' maintains his empirical, observation-based approach. The assessment 'it seemed great unto me' (gedolah hi elai) reveals personal impact—this wasn't abstract theorizing but wisdom that genuinely impressed the Preacher. What follows (verses 14-16) is a parable about wisdom's effectiveness in crisis yet society's tragic ingratitude toward the wise. This sets up the book's recurring tension: wisdom is genuinely valuable, yet its earthly rewards are unreliable—anticipating Christ, whose wisdom saved yet was despised (Isaiah 53:3).

Historical Context

Wisdom literature across the ancient Near East used parables and exemplary narratives to convey principles. Qoheleth's 'under the sun' observations included both personal experience and traditional stories illustrating timeless truths.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What examples of 'great wisdom' have you observed that made lasting impact on your thinking?
2. How do you respond when wisdom proves effective yet goes unrecognized or unrewarded?
3. What does it mean that even impressive wisdom operates 'under the sun'—within earthly limitations?

Interlinear Text

הַזֶּה גַּם רִא יְתִי זֶה חֲכַם הָתְתִּת תְּשִׁמְשׁ
H1571 This H2090 have I seen H7200 wisdom H2451 H8478 also under the sun
H8121

וְגַדּוֹל הִנֵּה יְאֵן אֵלִים
and it seemed great H1419 H1931 H413

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 8:16 (Parallel theme): When I applied mine heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth: (for also there is that neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes:)

Ecclesiastes 6:1 (Parallel theme): There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men:

Ecclesiastes 7:15 (Parallel theme): 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.

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