

Ecclesiastes 9:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.

Analysis

All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked—the Hebrew 'mirqreh echad' (מִקְרֵה אֶחָד, one event/happening) refers to death, the universal human fate transcending moral distinctions. The Preacher lists five contrasts: righteous/wicked, good/clean vs. unclean, sacrificers/non-sacrificers, good/sinner, oath-takers/oath-fearers. Despite these significant moral and ritual differences, all experience the same biological end.

As is the good, so is the sinner—this observation troubled ancient readers expecting strict retribution theology. 'Under the sun' (temporal perspective), death equalizes everyone regardless of character or conduct. This isn't denying eternal judgment (12:14) but honestly acknowledging that physical death comes to all. The verse drives readers toward resurrection hope: since earthly life ends identically for righteous and wicked, final justice requires post-mortem judgment and resurrection (Daniel 12:2; John 5:28-29).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern cultures wrestled with death's universality—Egyptian Book of the Dead, Mesopotamian Gilgamesh Epic, and Greek philosophy all addressed

mortality's inevitability. Israel's early revelation about afterlife remained limited (shadowy Sheol), making death's universality particularly troubling. How could God's justice prevail if righteous and wicked share identical fates? Later biblical revelation progressively clarified: resurrection unto life or condemnation (Daniel 12:2), conscious existence after death (Luke 16:19-31), final judgment (Revelation 20:11-15). Jesus's resurrection demonstrated God's power over death, ensuring believers' eventual resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). The early church faced martyrdom confidently because physical death no longer represented final destiny —resurrection and eternal life awaited (Romans 8:11; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing that death comes to everyone regardless of moral character affect your perspective on earthly success and righteousness?
2. In what ways does resurrection hope transform death from final equalizer into temporary transition?

Interlinear Text

מִלְכָנָה	לְכָל	כִּאֵשׁ	רֹבֶל	אֶחָד
H3605	H3605	H4745	H259	
and to him that	event	All things come alike to all there is one		
H834				
לְאָצָקִים	וְלְבָשָׁע	כְּפָתֹב	וְלְפָתָה	
to the righteous	and to the wicked	not as is the good	and to the clean	
H6662	H7563	H2896	H2889	
וְלְטָמֵא	זָבֵחַ	אֵין כָּא	זָבֵחַ	
and to the unclean	sacrificeth	and to him that	H369	sacrificeth
H2931	H2076	H834		H2076
כְּפָתֹב	כְּחַטָּאת	פְּנַשְׁבָּע	כִּאֵשׁ	שְׁבֹועַת
not as is the good	so is the sinner	and he that sweareth	and to him that	an oath
H2896	H2398	H7650	H834	H7621
וְלָא:				
H3372				

Additional Cross-References

Malachi 3:18 (Righteousness): Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

Psalms 73:3 (Evil): For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

Job 9:22 (Evil): This is one thing, therefore I said it, He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked.

Malachi 3:5 (Parallel theme): And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

