

Ecclesiastes 9:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

Analysis

This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all—the Preacher identifies death's universality as 'ra' (רָע, evil/calamity), not morally evil but tragically unfortunate. The fact that righteous and wicked share identical earthly fate appears unjust within temporal perspective. This 'evil' results from the fall—death entered through sin (Genesis 3:19; Romans 5:12).

The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead—knowing they will die regardless of moral conduct, people's hearts fill with 'ra'ah' (רָעָה, evil) and 'holelot' (הוֹלָלוֹת, madness/folly). Death's inevitability either drives people toward God (wise response) or into reckless living (foolish response). The phrase 'achar moto' (אַחֲרָיו, after that to the dead) indicates the transition from life to death without specifying post-mortem existence—leaving readers to seek further revelation about judgment and resurrection.

Historical Context

Israel's historical experience confirmed this observation: wicked kings like Manasseh enjoyed long reigns while righteous kings like Josiah died young in

battle (2 Kings 21-23). Such apparent injustices troubled faithful Israelites. The phrase 'heart full of evil' echoes Genesis 6:5 and Jeremiah 17:9, describing humanity's deep-seated wickedness. Post-exilic Judaism developed clearer resurrection theology partly to resolve this tension (Daniel 12:2). Jesus taught extensively about post-mortem judgment (Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 16:19-31), clarifying that death isn't the final event—resurrection and judgment follow. Paul emphasized that physical death's universality stems from Adam's sin, but resurrection's universality comes through Christ (1 Corinthians 15:21-22). Church fathers like Augustine argued that death's apparent injustice demonstrates humanity's fallen state and need for redemption.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does death's inevitability affect your daily choices—does it produce wisdom (fear of God) or folly (reckless living)?
2. In what ways does resurrection hope counter the 'madness' that death's universality might otherwise produce?

הַיִּמְתִּים:
that they go to the dead
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Titus 3:3 (Parallel theme): For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

