

NEW KID IN TOWN ECCLESIASTES 4:13-16

The music group, the Eagles, wrote a song titled “New Kid in Town.” One of the band members said the song is “...about the fleeting nature of fame, especially in the music business. We were basically saying, ‘Look, we know we’re red hot right now but we also know that somebody’s going to come along and replace us...’” (Eagles: *The Ultimate Guide*. **Rolling Stone**, 2016. p. 86). In Ecclesiastes 4:13-16 Solomon talks about the short-lived nature of being a celebrity. One day you are on the top, people love you and sing your praises, before you know it, there is a new kid in town who the people love and has taken your place.

THE NEW KIDS: THE TYPES OF PERSONALITIES (4:13-15)

There have been many interpretations put forth regarding this passage. Example: Saul is the old foolish king who refuses to take counsel, David is the poor wise child that became king and Solomon is the second child who became king. Instead of going through exegetical gymnastics that we would need a score card to know who’s who, I would like to present the various personalities described and their connection to fame, prestige and influence. Several of these individuals have risen to a place of prominence and leadership and have had great followings. Over the course of time, there was a new generation of people who came along and were not be happy with them. As a result, they were ousted for a younger wiser leader.

The Poor Wise Child (4:13a)

Better is a poor and a wise child. The first personality we see is the **poor and a wise child** (Hebrew word for child is *yeled* and it means “youth”). It is said that he is better off than the old foolish king who will not receive instruction. The reason he is better off is because, even though he is poor, he is wise and listens to instructions. He is better off for two reasons—he is wise and has a teachable spirit and he has not experienced the transitory nature of fame.

The Old Foolish King (4:13b)

...an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished. In this personality we see one who has risen to a place of fame and power yet he refuses to listen to counsel. There is a good possibility that he was like the youth in the preceding verse, poor yet wise and open to counsel. Somehow stubbornness settles in his heart. Maybe he has been reigning too long and his time is up and he refuses to let go of the throne. Most likely, his stubbornness is due to pride; he feels like he knows everything and refuses to listen to wise counsel. Solomon describes this man’s plight in the Book of Proverbs when he says, “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18).

The Man Who Came out of Prison (4:14a)

For out of prison he cometh to reign. This man came out of prison to reign. Many believe this is a veiled reference to Joseph, who came out of prison to be second in command in the land of Egypt. The idea here is one who basically came out of obscurity and disgrace and rose to renown to sit on the throne as king. If we refer back to the poor wise youth, he has risen to this

position through wisdom. In a sense, by wisdom, he went from the outhouse to the White House; whereas, by foolishness, the king who would not listen went from the White House to the outhouse.

The Man in the Kingdom Who Became Poor (4:14b)

...**whereas also he that is born in his kingdom becometh poor.** This person was next in line to rule but because of his father's foolishness and declining popularity, another man became king. This man became poor because he lost his right to rule after his father and he never rose to a position of fame and power.

The Second Child Who Replaced the King (4:15)

I considered all the living which walk under the sun, with the second child that shall stand up in his stead. When Solomon meditated on the scenarios of life for people under the sun, he observed a king who lost his popularity, as a wise child rose up to take his place. This young king would also lose his popularity and be replaced by someone more popular than him. See verse 16.

THE PEOPLE CALL FOR A NEW KID (4:16a)

There is no end of all the people, even of all that have been before them: they also that come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

While kings work carefully to fortify their leadership, whether through wisdom or foolishness, eventually the citizens cry out for change and reform. This shows the fickleness of people—today's hero is tomorrow's hobo. In this verse we see three groups of people:

The Current Group of Citizens Call for Change

There are endless number of people, **no end to all the people** who loved the past king and were very much in his corner but they shifted their loyalties when a new king came to the throne.

The Past Group of Citizens Called for Change

These individuals were before the previous group of citizens. Notice Solomon says, **even of all that have been before them.** These were individuals who lived in the past and rejoiced in the king of their day. But because of their fickleness, his popularity declined and they wanted to replace him with a younger king.

A Future Group of Citizens Will Call for Change

Solomon talked about a group who would **come after.** There is a future generation coming, who will **not rejoice in** the king on the throne and will call for a younger man to rule. The statement, **shall not rejoice in him** means they were no longer happy with his leadership. This statement is also applied to the first two groups, they came to a point where they were no longer pleased with the king.

CONCLUSION (4:16b)

There is a strong possibility that Solomon saw himself somewhere in this scenario when he says, **I considered all the living which walk under the sun** (4:15). Out of frustration he concludes this consideration with the thought that this is emptiness and chasing after the wind.