

Ecclesiastes 2:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.

Analysis

I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine—Solomon describes a controlled experiment in hedonism with methodological rigor. He didn't become a drunkard but carefully explored whether wine (representing sensual pleasure) could provide meaning while simultaneously **acquainting mine heart with wisdom**—maintaining intellectual sobriety. The phrase **to lay hold on folly** means deliberately embracing what he knew was foolish to test it empirically.

His purpose: **till I might see what was that good for the sons of men**—discovering what truly benefits humanity during our brief life **under the heaven**. The experiment required his unique position: sufficient wealth and power to pursue any pleasure, sufficient wisdom to evaluate results objectively. His conclusion (developed through chapter 2): pleasure pursued as ultimate good proves futile.

Historical Context

Solomon's legendary wisdom (1 Kings 4:29-34) enabled this philosophical experiment. His international trade brought exotic wines from across the ancient world. The phrase 'sons of men' (benei ha-adam) emphasizes human mortality—what's worth pursuing in our brief earthly existence? Solomon's systematic testing

anticipated modern empiricism, though his method was experiential rather than observational.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. What attempts have you made to 'balance' worldly pleasure with godly wisdom, and how has that experiment proven unsustainable?
2. How does Solomon's discovery that controlled hedonism still proves meaningless challenge the idea that 'moderation in all things' guarantees satisfaction?

Interlinear Text

I sought	in mine heart	to give	unto wine	H853	myself	in mine heart
H8446	H3820	H4900	H3196		H1320	H3820
yet acquainting	with wisdom	and to lay hold	on folly	H5704	H834	
H5090	H2451	H270	H5531			
till I might see	what was that good	for the sons	of men	H834		
H7200	H335	H2088	H2896		H120	
which they should do	under the heaven	all	the days	of their life		
H6213	H8478	H8064	H4557	H3117	H2416	

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 20:1 (Parallel theme): Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

Ecclesiastes 1:17 (Parallel theme): And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit.

Ephesians 5:18 (Parallel theme): And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

Ecclesiastes 6:12 (Good): 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?

Ecclesiastes 12:13 (Parallel theme): Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

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