

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

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

- ## Interlinear Text

וַיֵּשׁוּ׃	וְתַחַת	הַשָּׁמַיִם	כָּל	יְמֵי	חַיֵּיהֶם׃
which they should do	H8478	under the heaven	all	the days	of their life
H6213		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.