

Ecclesiastes 2:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:

Analysis

I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house—the Hebrew 'avadim' (עֲבָדִים, servants) and 'shefachot' (שִׁפְחוֹת, maidens) describe a large household staff. The phrase 'servants born in my house' (bene bayit, בְּנֵי-בַיִת, literally 'sons of the house') refers to slaves born into household servitude, indicating multi-generational employment. This represented significant wealth and power—one's household size demonstrated social status.

Solomon then adds: **I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me.** The Hebrew 'miqneh' (מִקְנֶה, cattle/livestock) includes both 'baqar' (בָּקָר, large cattle/oxen) and 'tso'n' (צֹאן, small cattle/sheep and goats). Surpassing 'all that were in Jerusalem before me' means exceeding even King David's substantial holdings. First Kings 4:22-23 records Solomon's daily provisions requiring vast herds. Yet despite commanding unprecedented human and animal resources, none of this produced lasting satisfaction. Jesus later warned: 'a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth' (Luke 12:15).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern monarchs measured greatness by household size and livestock holdings. Abraham's 318 trained servants (Genesis 14:14) demonstrated his wealth. Job's pre-trial prosperity included 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke

of oxen, and 500 female donkeys (Job 1:3). First Kings 4:26 records Solomon maintained 40,000 stalls for horses—though 1 Kings 10:26 gives 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, suggesting the 40,000 may be a textual variant or include trading stock. Regardless, Solomon's holdings vastly exceeded his contemporaries. Yet Deuteronomy 17:16-17 explicitly warned against kings multiplying horses, wives, and wealth—prohibitions Solomon violated, leading to spiritual compromise (1 Kings 11:1-13). Ecclesiastes reveals the futility of such accumulation.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What possessions, positions, or people under your influence have you accumulated hoping they would provide significance or security?
2. How does Solomon's verdict challenge the assumption that expanding your resources, influence, or household will bring fulfillment?

Interlinear Text

קָנִי יְתִי	עֲבָדֵי יָם	וְשָׁפְחֹת וְתִ	וְבָנֵי	בֵּיתִי	הָיָה
I got	me servants	and maidens	and had servants born	in my house	H1961
H7069	H5650	H8198	H1121	H1004	
לִי	מִקְנָהּ	בְּקָר	וְצֹאֵן	הַרְבֵּה	לִי הָיָה
H0	H1571	possessions	of great	and small cattle	also I had great
	H4735	H1241	H6629	H7235	H1961 H0
לִפְנֵי יְשׁוּעָהּ	מִכָּל ל	בִּירוּשָׁלַם:			
H3605	H1961	before	above all that were in Jerusalem		
		H6440	H3389		

