

Ecclesiastes 2:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.

Analysis

I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces—the Hebrew 'segullah' (סְגֻלָּה, peculiar treasure) denotes special, prized possessions reserved for royalty. First Kings 10:14-22 records that Solomon's annual gold income reached 666 talents (approximately 25 tons), with additional silver so abundant it was considered common. International trade made Jerusalem a commercial hub accumulating unprecedented wealth.

I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men—musical entertainment of the highest caliber, with professional performers of both genders. The phrase **the delights of the sons of men** (תַּעֲנוּגֹת בְּנֵי אָדָם, ta'anugot bene adam) is enigmatic. The final phrase **as musical instruments, and that of all sorts** likely refers to extensive instrumental variety, though some translations suggest concubines. Regardless, Solomon exhausted every avenue of sensory pleasure—wealth, music, entertainment, luxury—yet found none ultimately satisfying. Paul later warned: 'they that will be rich fall into temptation' (1 Timothy 6:9), and Jesus taught storing heavenly rather than earthly treasures (Matthew 6:19-21).

Historical Context

First Kings 10:23 declares 'King Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom.' The Queen of Sheba's visit (1 Kings 10:1-13) demonstrates Solomon's international reputation. Archaeological discoveries confirm extensive 10th-century BC trade networks. Solomon's fleet brought exotic goods from Ophir (1 Kings 9:26-28). His palace featured golden shields, an ivory throne overlaid with gold, and golden drinking vessels (1 Kings 10:16-21). Yet despite unparalleled wealth and refined pleasures, Ecclesiastes retrospectively pronounces it all 'vanity.' Church history confirms this pattern—wealthy rulers from Nero to Louis XIV discovered that luxury cannot satisfy the soul. Augustine's Confessions articulates the timeless truth: 'Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee.'

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What luxuries, entertainments, or refined pleasures have you pursued hoping they would provide lasting satisfaction?
2. How does Solomon's comprehensive experiment with every conceivable pleasure challenge the assumption that you simply haven't found the right pleasure yet?

Interlinear Text

כָּנִי סְתִי I gathered H3664	לִי H0	גַּם H1571	כֶּסֶף me also silver H3701	וְזָהָב and gold H2091	וְסִגְלִית and the peculiar H5459	מֶלֶךְ יָם treasure of kings H4428
וְהַמְּדִינֹת and of the provinces H4082	אֲנִי I gat H6213	לִי H0	וְנָשִׁים and women singers H7891	וְנָשִׁים and women singers H7891		
וְתַעֲנוּגֹת and the delights H8588	בְּנֵי י of the sons H1121	הָאָדָם of men H120	שְׂדֵדוֹת: as musical instruments H7705			
	שְׂדֵדוֹת: as musical instruments H7705					

Additional Cross-References

1 Kings 10:10 (Kingdom): And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon.

1 Kings 9:28 (Kingdom): And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to king Solomon.

2 Samuel 19:35 (Kingdom): I am this day fourscore years old: and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king?

1 Kings 10:14 (Parallel theme): Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold,