

# Ecclesiastes 2:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.

## Analysis

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**So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem**—the Hebrew 'gadal' (גָּדַל, was great) and 'yasaf' (יָסַף, increased) emphasize progressive expansion of wealth, power, and influence. Surpassing all predecessors meant exceeding even King David's considerable achievements. First Kings 4:29-34 describes Solomon's incomparable wisdom, while 1 Kings 10:23 declares him the wealthiest and wisest of all earthly kings.

Yet crucially, Solomon adds: **also my wisdom remained with me** (chokmati amadah li, חִכְמָתִי עִמָּדִי). Unlike those who lose rational faculties through indulgence, Solomon maintained intellectual clarity throughout his experiments with pleasure. This is critical—he didn't descend into drunkenness or debauchery that clouded judgment. Rather, with full mental acuity, he systematically tested every avenue of human fulfillment and found them wanting. This makes his verdict more credible—it's not the regretful confession of a dissolute man who wasted his life, but the sober conclusion of history's wisest person who pursued everything and found it empty apart from God.

## Historical Context

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Solomon reigned during Israel's united monarchy's golden age (970-930 BC). First Kings 4:20-21 describes vast territorial extent and prosperity: 'Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry.' International visitors sought Solomon's wisdom (1 Kings 10:24). Yet

this external success masked spiritual decline. First Kings 11:1-13 records how foreign wives turned Solomon's heart toward idolatry in his later years. Ecclesiastes likely represents Solomon's retrospective wisdom after experiencing the bitter consequences of pursuing pleasure apart from undivided covenant loyalty. Church history echoes this pattern—apparent success while maintaining religious forms can coexist with spiritual emptiness. The Reformers emphasized that true wisdom means fearing God and keeping His commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13), not merely accumulating knowledge while neglecting covenant faithfulness.

## Related Passages

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**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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1. How do you measure 'greatness' and success—by comparison with others, or by faithfulness to God's purposes?
2. What does it mean that Solomon maintained his wisdom throughout his pursuit of pleasure, and why didn't wisdom alone prevent emptiness?

## Interlinear Text

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וַיֵּדָהּ לִי	וְהוֹסֵף כְּתִי	מִכָּל ל	שֶׁהָיָה	לְפָנַי
So I was great	and increased	H3605	H1961	more than all that were before
H1431	H3254			H6440
בִּירוּשָׁלַם	אֲף	חִכְמָתִי	עָמְדָה	לִי:
me in Jerusalem	H637	also my wisdom	remained	H0
H3389		H2451	H5975	

## Additional Cross-References

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**Ecclesiastes 1:16** (References Jerusalem): I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.

**1 Chronicles 29:25** (Parallel theme): And the LORD magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel.

**1 Kings 10:23** (Parallel theme): So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom.

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