

Ecclesiastes 7:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

All this have I proved by wisdom: I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me.

Analysis

All this have I proved by wisdom (kol-zoh nissiti bachokhmah)—'all this I have tested/examined through wisdom,' from *nasah* (to test, try, prove). **I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me** (amarti echkamah vehi rechokah mimmenni)—'I said I will become wise, but it was distant from me.' The verb *echkamah* is the reflexive form, 'I will make myself wise.'

After chapters of wisdom observations, Qoheleth confesses his own project's ultimate failure: despite rigorous examination (*nissiti*, systematic testing), true wisdom remained elusive. This isn't false modesty but epistemological honesty—human wisdom has limits. The phrase 'I will be wise' reveals the ambition; 'it was far from me' acknowledges the gap between aspiration and achievement. This anticipates Paul's 'the foolishness of God is wiser than men' (1 Corinthians 1:25). The wisest man concludes by admitting wisdom's depths exceed human grasp, preparing for the ultimate revelation: 'Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God' (1 Corinthians 1:30).

Historical Context

Solomon pursued wisdom more systematically than perhaps any figure in history (1 Kings 4:29-34), yet concluded wisdom's essence remained elusive. This reflects the biblical pattern that human achievement, however great, cannot reach God's level.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does acknowledging the limits of human wisdom protect against intellectual pride?
2. In what areas might you be pursuing 'wisdom' through self-effort rather than seeking God's revelation?
3. What difference does it make that Christ is wisdom incarnate (1 Corinthians 1:30) for those pursuing understanding?

Interlinear Text

וְהִיא אָחַת מֵהַזֶּה נִתְּנָהָרָתִי בְּחִכְתִּים הַזֶּה

H3605

All this

have I proved

by wisdom

I said

I will be wise

H1931

H2090

H5254

H2451

H559

H2449

רְחוּקָה מִתְּפִינָה

but it was far

H4480

H7350

Additional Cross-References

Romans 1:22 (Parallel theme): Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

1 Corinthians 1:20 (Parallel theme): Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?