

Ecclesiastes 7:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found.

Analysis

Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not אשר עד בקשָׁה נַפְשִׁי וְלֹא מִצְאָתִי (asher od biqshah nafshi velo matsati)—'which still my soul seeks, but I have not found.'

One man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found אֶחָד מֵאֶלֶף מִצְאָתִי וְאֶשֶּׁה בְּכָל-אֶלֶה לֹא מִצְאָתִי (echad me'elef matsati ve'ishah vekhol-eleh lo matsati)—'one man in a thousand I found, but a woman among all these I have not found.'

This is Scripture's most controversial gender statement, requiring interpretive care. What is Qoheleth seeking? Context (v. 25-29) suggests moral integrity or true wisdom. His finding: among a thousand people examined, he found one man meeting the standard, but no women. Several interpretations exist:

1. Solomon's specific historical context with 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3)—none were righteous influences
2. a patriarchal context where women had less access to education/wisdom roles
3. hyperbole expressing rarity of true wisdom generally.

Verse 29 provides the interpretive key: 'God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions'—the problem is universal human sinfulness, not gender-specific failing. The numbers may be proverbial for extreme rarity (like 'one in a million'), not literal statistics.

Historical Context

Solomon's harem of foreign women explicitly led him into idolatry (1 Kings 11:4-8), providing specific historical context for finding no righteous woman among his thousand-plus wives and concubines. His experience was exceptional, not normative.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How should this verse be understood in light of Scripture's abundant examples of righteous women (Ruth, Esther, Mary, Priscilla, etc.)?
2. What dangers arise from applying Solomon's unique situation as a universal principle?
3. How does verse 29's emphasis on universal human depravity prevent misuse of this verse?

Interlinear Text

ר אֲשֶׁר יְדִעָה בְּקַשׁ נֶפֶשׁ אֵל

H834 H5750 seeketh Which yet my soul H3808
H1245 H5315

מִצְאָתִי אֲלֹהִים אֲלֹהִים מִצְאָתִי

among all those have I not found man not one among a thousand

H4672 H120 H259 H505

מִצְאָתִי אֲלֹהִים אֲלֹהִים מִצְאָתִי

among all those have I not found but a woman

H4672 H802 H3605 H428 H3808

Additional Cross-References

Job 33:23 (Parallel theme): If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness:

Psalms 12:1 (Parallel theme): Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.

Isaiah 26:9 (Parallel theme): With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.