

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 (אֲשֶׁר עוֹד בִּקְשָׁה נַפְשִׁי וְלֹא מָצָאתִי, 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 (אָדָם אֶחָד מֵאַלְף מָצָאתִי וְאִשָּׁה בְּכָל־אַלֶּלֶה לֹא מָצָאתִי, adam 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

אֶשׁ ר	עוֹד	בִּקְשׁ ה	נִפְשׁ י	וְלֹא
H834	H5750	seeketh H1245	Which yet my soul H5315	H3808
מִצָּאתִי:	אֶד ד	אֶד מ	מִאֶלֶף	
among all those have I not found H4672	man H120	not one H259	among a thousand H505	
מִצָּאתִי:	וְאִשָּׁה	בְּכָל	אֵלָּה	לֹא
among all those have I not found H4672	but a woman H802	H3605	H428	H3808
מִצָּאתִי:				
among all those have I not found H4672				

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.