

ECCLESIASTES 2

written and compiled by Gary Kukis

Ecclesiastes 2:1–26

Pleasure, Production, Possessions, and Progeny

These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall be have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God.” (John 3:16–18). “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!” (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10).

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These exegetical studies are *not* designed for you to read each and every word. For instance, the Hebrew exegesis is put into greyish tables, so that if you want to skip over them, that is fine. If you question a translation, you can always refer back to the appropriate Hebrew tables to sort it all out. The intent is to make this particular study the most complete and most accurate examination of Ecclesiastes 2 which is available in writing. The idea is to make every phrase, verse and passage understandable and to make correct application of all that is studied.

Besides teaching you the doctrinal principles related to this chapter, this commentary is also to help bring this narrative to life, so that you can understand the various characters, their motivations, and the choices that they make. Ideally, you will be able to visualize the peoples, their temporal and spiritual leaders, and their armies as they move across the landscape of the Land of Promise. I hope to provide not only an accurate exegesis of the chapter in view, but to also quote many of the great insights that past commentators have offered us.

Although much of this chapter is based upon narrative from the book of Kings, I will make every attempt possible to provide enough historical information and theological context so that you will have a sufficient background to understand what is going on.

Preface: Ecclesiastes 2 continues Solomon’s search for happiness, where he tries pleasure, the construction of buildings and parks, and the accumulation of possessions. Nothing brings him any sustained happiness. In fact, in this chapter, he even questions whether wisdom itself is inherently superior to foolishness, as the wise man and the fool have the same end. This chapter is up-to-date, appropriately studied by man today.

This should be the most extensive examination of Ecclesiastes 2 available, where you will be able to examine in depth every word of the original text.

Quotations:

Google dictionary: *Definition of summum bonum: the highest good, especially as the ultimate goal according to which values and priorities are established in an ethical system.*¹

Unknown: *You have reached the pinnacle of success only to find you are stranded there.*²

Of unknown origin: *If it feels good, do it.*³

The Grass Roots: *Let's live for today!*⁴

Dr. Bob Utley: *St. Augustine said there is a God-shaped hole in every person. Nothing can fill that hole except God. Only when we know Him can physical things and life experiences have meaning.*⁵ I must admit to being surprised this thought goes all the way back to Saint Augustine; I had always assumed 19th or 20th century origin for this phrasing.

Pascal (1623–1662): *There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of all men that only God can fill.*⁶

Pascal: *Being unable to cure death, wretchedness and ignorance, men have decided, in order to be happy, not to think about such things.*⁷

“Men have a secret instinct driving them to seek external diversions and occupation. It makes a man happy to be diverted from contemplating its private miseries by making him care about nothing else, but dancing well.”
(Pascal)

Pascal on man’s secret instinct (a graphic); from [Slide Player](#) (slide #40); accessed September 7, 2018.

G. K. Chesterton: *Meaninglessness does not come from being weary of pain. Meaninglessness comes from weariness of pleasure.*⁸

¹ From [Google Dictionary](#); accessed July 23, 2018.

² Paraphrased from Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:17.

³ From [hippy.com](#), accessed July 22, 2018.

⁴ From [hippy.com](#), accessed July 22, 2018.

⁵ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](#); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:4–11.

⁶ From [Slide Player](#) (slides 36–37); accessed September 7, 2018.

⁷ From [Slide Player](#) (slide #39); accessed September 7, 2018.

⁸ From [Pinterest](#); accessed September 7, 2018.

Gerlach: *If God has disappeared from the efforts of men, a disgust of life appears sooner or later.*⁹

John 6:27 [Jesus is speaking] **“Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on Him God the Father has set His seal.”** (ESV; capitalized)

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *God mercifully spares His children the sad experiment which Solomon made, by denying them the goods which they often desire. He gives them the fruits of Solomon’s experience, without their paying the dear price at which Solomon bought it.*¹⁰

Human viewpoint on death and dying:

Aeschylus: *A single path leads all unto the grave.*¹¹

Bertrand Russell (noted atheist and humanist): *One by one as they march, our comrades vanish from our sight seized by the silent orders of omnipotent death. Brief and powerless is man’s life. On him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls, pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way. For man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little days.*¹²

Flamboyant millionaire Malcolm Forbes: *He who dies with the most toys wins.*¹³

Outline of Chapter 2:

Preface

Introduction

vv. 1–3	Solomon experiments with pleasure
vv. 4–6	Solomon experiments with building buildings and parks
vv. 7–10	Solomon experiments with consumerism
vv. 11	It is all empty and meaningless
vv. 12–17	Solomon compares wisdom and folly, light and darkness
vv. 18–21	Whatever Solomon does, he will leave it behind to his heir
vv. 22–23	What does man really have, after a lifetime of work?
vv. 24–26	Does man have only the basic pleasures of life as his reward?

Chapter Summary

Addendum

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines:

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⁹ *The Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:17–23 (suggestive comments).

¹⁰ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:25.

¹¹ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:14.

¹² From www.raystedman.org/ accessed July 27, 2018. Copyright © 2010 by Ray Stedman Ministries

¹³ The quote is attributed to Forbes, but we really don’t know. From [online literature](#); accessed July 23, 2018.

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Chapter Outline

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Exegetical Studies in Ecclesiastes

Doctrines Covered or Alluded To			
			Laws of Divine Establishment

Chapters of the Bible Alluded To or Appropriately Exegeted with this Chapter			
		Song of Solomon	

Many who read and study this chapter are 1st or 2nd generation students of R. B. Thieme, Jr., so that much of this vocabulary is second nature. One of Bob’s contributions to theology is a fresh vocabulary along with a number of concepts which are theologically new or reworked, yet still orthodox. Therefore, if you are unfamiliar with his work, the definitions below will help you to fully understand all that is being said. Also included are various technical terms from Christian theology along with a few new terms and concepts which I have developed.

Sometimes the terms in the exegesis of this chapter are simply alluded to, without any in-depth explanation of them. Sometimes, these terms are explained in detail and illustrated. A collection of all these terms is found here: ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). Often, the terms below are linked to complete doctrines.

Definition of Terms	
Cosmic Vortex	The cosmic vortex appears to be a synonym for the cosmic system, with an emphasis on it pulling you into its grasp. Doctrine of the Cosmic System .
Human Viewpoint	Man’s thinking apart from Bible doctrine. See Human Viewpoint versus Divine Viewpoint (HTML) (PDF) (WPD).
Laws of Divine Establishment	These are the laws, principles and morality which God has designed to perpetuate every society or government in such a way that freedom to evangelize, freedom to teach doctrine and the freedom to send out missionaries are maximized. See the Laws of Divine Establishment (HTML) (PDF) (WPD).
Rebound (Restoration to fellowship with God)	In the New Testament, this is naming your sins to God, so that you are both restored to temporal fellowship with God and are then filled with the Spirit of God. In the Old Testament, naming your sins to God would result in a restoration of fellowship and, in some cases, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit once again (the Holy Spirit was not given to all Old Testament believers). The Doctrine of Rebound (HTML) (PDF).
The Revealed God (or, the Revealed Lord)	We all come to a time of God-consciousness where we understand the concept and possibility of the existence of God. At that point, we face 2 great questions: (1) do we want to know this God and (2) are will willing to believe in God as He has revealed Himself or do we make a god in our own image and worship that? In both the Old and New Testaments, God will make Himself known (He reveals Himself) to those who will believe in Him and to others as well. We know Him firmly and concretely as Jesus Christ; and in the Old Testament, He is known as the God of the Jews, the Creator of the Universe, the God of Moses (or of Abraham), etc.
Reversionism	Reversionism describes either a believer who reverts back to his unbelieving ways; or an unbeliever who, when faced with establishment thinking, returns to ideas he may have rejected in the past (like a dog returning to his vomit). (Reversionism —Ken Reed) (Reversionism —Jim Rickard) (Reversionism —divine viewpoint)

Definition of Terms	
Scar tissue	Scar tissue is what develops on the soul as a result of negative volition toward God and/or Bible Doctrine. The heart becomes hardened toward God. Tyree uses the term <i>soul cauterization</i> . See (Bible News) (Robert R. McLaughlin) (Makarios) (Grace Notes)
Some of these definitions are taken from https://www.gotquestions.org/ http://rickhughesministries.org/content/Biblical-Terms.pdf http://www.gbible.org/index.php?proc=d4d http://www.wordoftruthministries.org/terms-and-definitions/ http://www.theopedia.com/	
Chapter Outline	Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

An Introduction to Ecclesiastes 2

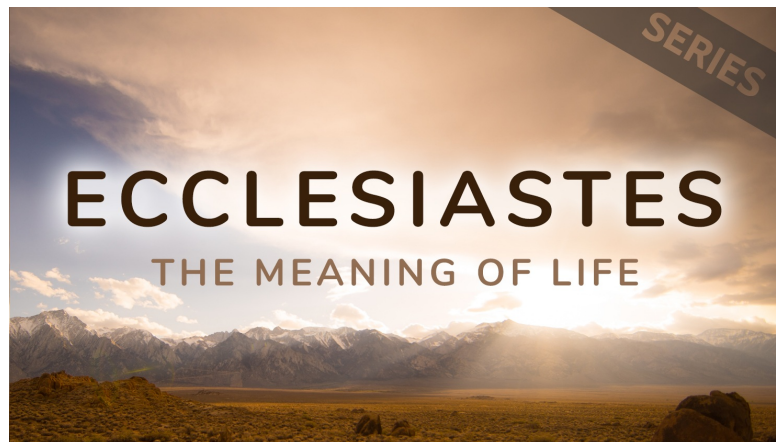
Introduction: One of the first things that Solomon discusses in Ecclesiastes 2 is, various things which make men happy or seem to stimulate men in some way. He is searching for this life of contentment, this life of balance, this life guided by human wisdom. It is clear in this life that people laugh, people have fun, people enjoy a variety of stimulations; how do we take that universal truth and perpetuate it into a life of contentment and happiness? That is what Solomon explores in this chapter.

Solomon observes Charley Brown telling Lucy Van Pelt a joke, and they both laugh. He wants to somehow isolate that experience and perpetuate it into a lifetime (into a lifestyle or into a life of similar experiences and feelings).

The problem with Solomon's search in this chapter, as well as in the others, he generally does not take into consideration man's relationship with God. He does not recognize the importance of Bible doctrine in the soul. Apart from man's relationship to his Creator, his life will be difficult, frustrating and/or unhappy at best; and a train wreck at worst.

Solomon does mention God from time to time; but does not seem to understand God or his own place in the world, as he did when writing Proverbs. This suggests that Solomon reached a point in his life where his divine wisdom has been reduced to virtually nothing. He still possesses great wisdom and understanding, but it is not enough to pull all of it together.

Ecclesiastes—the Meaning of Life (a graphic); from [Prettygate Baptist Church](#); accessed September 7, 2018.



No doubt, you have come across frustrating circumstances in your life, and you think about them, and you continue to think about them; and sometimes, you go over the same ground several times. That appears to be what Solomon is doing in his writing. He seems to cover the same ground many times, but often expressing the same basic frustration.

Throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, I will assume that Solomon is the author and refer to him as such. I believe that this point was thoroughly discussed in the introduction. Many writers will speak of author using the name Qoheleth (or some similar spelling), which is the Hebrew word which refers to the teacher (or, *communicator*) of this book (who is Solomon).

Could Ecclesiastes be written hundreds of years later and inserted into the canon? Liberal theologians have come up with a plethora of weird authorship theories, one of them being that some author hundreds of years after Solomon pretended to be Solomon, and wrote this book. These various theories are little more than a Satanic attempt to undermine the accuracy and divine nature of the Scriptures.

The Hebrew people had a long-standing tradition of reading various portions of Scripture either at holy celebrations or just for regular public readings. The participants knew the Bible. The reason that we know this is, Jesus stood up in a synagogue and read some portions of Isaiah and then sat down. The narrative tells us that every eye was *fixed upon Him*. Why would that be? It is because Jesus stopped in the middle of the passage and sat down. Everyone knew that He stopped in the middle of the passage, and it is reasonable to assume, most everyone in the synagogue knew something about Jesus and His deep understanding of the Bible. So they look at Him, quizzically, wondering why He sat down after reading a verse and a half, and He says, **“Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”** Why did He sit down? The passage in Isaiah prophetically spoke of the 1st and 2nd advents together; but Jesus stopped before the prophecy of the 2nd advent and sat down. (This is Luke 4:16–21.)

My point is not to give the explanation for that passage, but to show you that the people in the synagogues knew the Scriptures that they were reading, and you could not vary from what was expected without getting some very questioning looks.

Now, allow me to make my original point. No one could take a book written 200 or 300 years after the fact, haul it into the synagogue (or wherever Scripture was read at that time), and pretend that this new book—never having been heard of before—was 200 or 300 years old. And this had to not just occur at one place, but all over Israel, and each time, the people who knew the Scriptures were to be somehow sold on the idea that this forgery was the real thing and 200 or 300 years old. People knew Scripture too well for that.

It would be as if you opened up your brand new Bible, and there, after the book of Exodus, was the book of Bob, Moses’ best friend, who saw things from a different perspective and this was his book and it was holy and everything. How exactly do you think that would go over? Do you think thousands of churches, that next Sunday would just start teaching from the book of Bob, as if it has been there all along? Of course not! And for that exact same reason, no one could introduce a book, hundreds of years after an author has died, and say, “You know that dead author? We have a book he wrote way back then.” It would not work; no one would accept it.

The people of Israel knew their history; they knew about those who wrote Scripture. They knew their background and they knew their written works. And these writings were not in just one place, but they were scattered throughout Israel (and outside of Israel).

Furthermore, without the attachment of the name of Solomon to the book of Ecclesiastes, this would have been a real hard sell. We have studied the previous chapter; we are about to launch in a study of this second chapter, and it is not a straightforward book of clearly expressed Bible doctrine. Solomon will say and do a lot of things in this book which do not line up with other Scriptures.

It is quite easy today to flippantly say, “Some unknown author write this book 300 years after the time of Solomon, and he pretended to be Solomon. And it became a part of the accepted canon of Scripture.” It is quite another thing to provide some kind of logical explanation as to how this was accepted into the canon of Scripture—something which would have had to have occurred in multiple places simultaneously, dealing with people who knew the Scriptures at that time. Furthermore, it would have had to have been accepted by copyists whose entire life had been given over to copying books—particularly books of the Old Testament. Suddenly you shove a new book in front of their faces, a book they have never read and seen before, and somehow, they don’t notice?

There is also a problem in this chapter with Eccles. 2:16, which reads: **For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just**

like the fool! (ESV). An author writing 100 or 200 years later would never make this statement. After Solomon died, his writings were soon recognized as important and they were preserved and studied (I do not believe that they had a well-developed understanding of canonicity at that time). At some point—not too far after his death—his writings were recognized as inspired. So, a fake author, pretending to be Solomon, would not say something like this, which is clearly wrong. He would have said almost the exact opposite thing. *The wise and the foolish may both be dead, but at least, the words of the wise man live on.*¹⁴

V. 16 made sense to Solomon at that time—he truly believed it. It makes a lot less sense to us who are, right at this very moment, studying Solomon’s very words, 3500 years after his death.

James Burton Coffman looks at this from a different perspective, but coming to the same conclusion: *It seems absolutely incredible that any writer, centuries after Solomon's reprobate life had ended, could possibly have put into Solomon's mouth the conceit that all of his debauchery was committed while he still retained his great wisdom, a notion diametrically opposed to the facts.*¹⁵

If you have studied canonicity, you know that there are a plethora of New Testament phony books—books which some author claimed was written hundreds of years earlier by an author of that previous era. What happened to these books? They were rejected—every single one of them—when assembling the canon of Scripture. As far as I know, there are 4 or 5 ancient translators for the New Testament, there are church councils; there are a large number of individuals, all of whom weighed in on the books of the New Testament. This plethora of witnesses, who lived over a period of 300 years or so, determined which books were canonical in the first 3 centuries after the canon had been completed. Take a guess as to how many of these phony books found their way into the New Testament canon? Zero! None of them! They were rejected as phony; and no one—no translator, no accepted scholar, no church council—ever said, “The Apocalypse of Peter belongs in the canon of Scripture.” (Or any of the other books). Most of these books were rejected for the simple reason that they were not written during the 1st century, and therefore did not have the authority of an Apostle or close associate of the Apostles.

Anyone could write a book or essay in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th centuries, and it could be reasonably accurate and even studied by many of that person’s contemporaries. But, if someone *pretended* to be the Apostle Bartholomew writing in the 3rd century A.D., that book was automatically rejected as worthless on all levels.

Some people read and study the books which I have read, despite the fact that they are exclusively online. They recognize that I am making an honest effort to determine what is meant in the chapters that I exegete. However, if I were to, at some point, pretend to be Saint Thomas, and produce the epistle of Saint Thomas to Galatia; and if I were to pretend that this was written 2000 years ago, not only would this be rejected out of hand by virtually every scholar today, but they would similarly reject everything else I have written.

My point being, someone cannot come along a few hundred (or thousand) years later and produce a body of work which will be accepted as being written before its time. That is a near impossibility. To those determining which books belong in the canon, the age of the book and author were two of the most important considerations. So this particular theory that someone wrote this book, a few hundred years after the fact, pretending to be Solomon—it is a very silly and illogical theory.

Solomon had it all. He was king, so he had power and fame. He was the king of a wealthy country, and so he was also wealthy. He lived in a beautiful and secure palace, which he built himself to his own specifications. He was admired and respected all over the world. But, he was not happy.

¹⁴ The essence of this argument is made in From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-2.html> by James Burton Coffman, accessed September 2, 2018.

¹⁵ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 2, 2018.

Solomon is going to come to some conclusions in this book—particularly at the end of this chapter—and the Christian may find himself thinking, *now, is that right? Should I understand life to be this way?* There are several things to bear in mind as we study this chapter:

Through Solomon's Eyes

- 1) Solomon speaks as a man *under the sun*. Ecc 1:14 2:11 3:16. This means that he is operating under **human viewpoint**, not divine viewpoint.
- 2) Solomon, although inspired to write the book of Ecclesiastes, and guided by God the Holy Spirit—this does not mean that every conclusion that he comes to is accurate. Refer back to point #1.
- 3) At one time, Solomon will be filled with divine viewpoint, as is recorded in the book of Proverbs. However, at this time in his life, he has retrogressed in his spiritual life. He has lost the divine knowledge that he knew before. Solomon is in **reversionism**.
- 4) Very often in this book, Solomon is guided by his human viewpoint wisdom and his observations.
- 5) God the Holy Spirit allows Solomon to write down these various conclusions which Solomon has come to in life, as they are reflective of a very intelligent man who lacks divine wisdom.
- 6) Human intelligence cannot get you to divine knowledge.
- 7) It can be very instructive for believers to, on occasion, view things from the human perspective.
- 8) Therefore, we need to always bear in mind what Solomon is observing lacks the guidance of God's point of view.
- 9) Solomon oversees a great many building projects; and, although he works hard at what he does, the workers before him work even harder.
- 10) Solomon appears to enjoy the lion's share of the completed work. Sure, he has engaged in some public works projects, and there may be some buildings and roads and gardens built here or there; but most of the stuff which he has designed and built are things which he, as king, will have full disposition of.
- 11) Part of Solomon's problem is, despite him receiving the bulk of the things to enjoy, he is not really enjoying his life any more than any one of his slaves.

Keeping these points in mind as we study this chapter (and future chapters) will help us to understand how Solomon comes to the conclusions which he does.

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[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

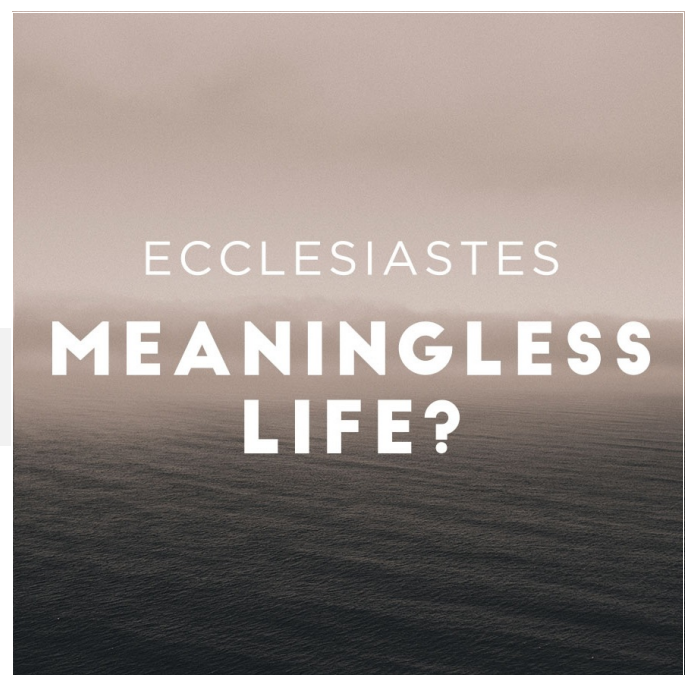
What we will find is, Solomon is going to come to this or that conclusion; and then, admit, in the very end, that it is all empty and chasing after wind. So he considers this and then he considers that; and he thinks about it and writes about it—and eventually concludes, *now, that theory is not any good either*.

Ecclesiastes—A Meaningless Life? (a graphic); from [Mark Driscoll.org](http://MarkDriscoll.org); accessed September 7, 2018.

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We have to be careful about trying to draw some conclusions from the text of Ecclesiastes too early on. We have to travel along with Solomon, moving at his pace in this piece of literature. Solomon is not going to come to a full-blown version of the truth in the first or second or even third chapter of this book. We have to stay with the



context and allow the text to guide us, moving with Solomon in his logical and methodical search for contentment, despite the fact that he is clearly fallen from grace.

As believers in Jesus Christ and as believers with Bible doctrine, we understand the basics of the truth. And, if you have spent enough time studying the Old Testament, then you know the basics of truth for that era. However, as we study the actual words and phrasing used by Solomon, it is clear that whatever level of spiritual knowledge that he once had, that is now gone, likely buried under a mound of **scar tissue**.

A title or one or two sentences which describe Ecclesiastes 2. Some of these titles only apply to the first few verses.

Titles and/or Brief Descriptions of Ecclesiastes 2 (by Various Commentators)

Easy-to-Read Version–2008 Does “Having Fun” Bring Happiness?

NIRV Pleasure Is Meaningless

HCSB The Emptiness of Pleasure

New RSV The Futility of Self-Indulgence

New Living Translation The Futility of Pleasure

The Amplified Bible The Futility of Pleasure and Possessions

Ray C. Stedman Life in the Fast Lane Ecclesiastes 2:1-26¹⁶

Dummelow Epicureanism and Wisdom alike Profitless¹⁷

Kukis Pleasure, Production and Possessions¹⁸

929 Chapters: *Qohelet reflects upon the futility of pleasure, wealth, wisdom, and hard work. He believes that people should enjoy life if they can.*¹⁹

Thomas Coke: *The vanity of human courses in the works of pleasure. Though the wise be better than the fool, yet both have one event. The vanity of human labour in leaving it they know not to whom. Nothing better than joy in our labour; but that is God's gift.*²⁰

J. Vernon McGee: *In this chapter we will find Solomon following another course to find satisfaction in life. This is a popular route for modern man who seeks satisfaction in pleasure.*²¹

J. Vernon McGee: *This is living for the now, and this should be understood by the people today because we say we are the "now generation." It is a materialistic concept. It is a living for the here and now, living for self, selfishness. Each of these words describes a facet of this type of living.*²²

Dr. Peter Pett: *The Preacher now brings out that he has made further enquiries and has come up with nothing. He first considers the search for intellectual knowledge (Eccles. 1:12–18), and then he considers the search for pleasure (Eccles. 2:1–26), but he concludes that both lead nowhere.*²³

¹⁶ From www.raystedman.org accessed July 27, 2018. Copyright © 2010 by Ray Stedman Ministries

¹⁷ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcb/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 6, 2018.

¹⁸ I include myself only because preachers are well-known for alliteration and I am surprised if this is original with me.

¹⁹ From <https://929chapters.com/2012/06/17/ecclesiastes-2-reflections/> accessed September 1, 2018.

²⁰ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/tcc/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 8, 2018.

²¹ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt (chapter 2) accessed September 3, 2018.

²² From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt (chapter 2) accessed September 3, 2018.

²³ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:26.

Titles and/or Brief Descriptions of Ecclesiastes 2 (by Various Commentators)

Expositor's Bible Commentary: *Oppressed by his profound sense of the vanity of the life which man lives amid the play of permanent natural forces, Coheleth sets out on the search for that true and supreme Good which it will be well for the sons of men to pursue through their brief day; the good which will sustain them under all their toils, and be "a portion" so large, and enduring as to satisfy even their vast desires.*²⁴

Gary Everett, summing up Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:11: *The Preacher Finds Vanity in the Pursuits of Mental, Spiritual, Physical, and Financial Gratification.*

Everett continues: *Throughout the book of Ecclesiastes the Preacher will attempt to answer the question, "What profit does a man have of all of his labours in this life?"*²⁵

This is the question on Solomon's mind throughout much of his life—but it is a question he most often addresses in this book from the view of *a man under the sun*.

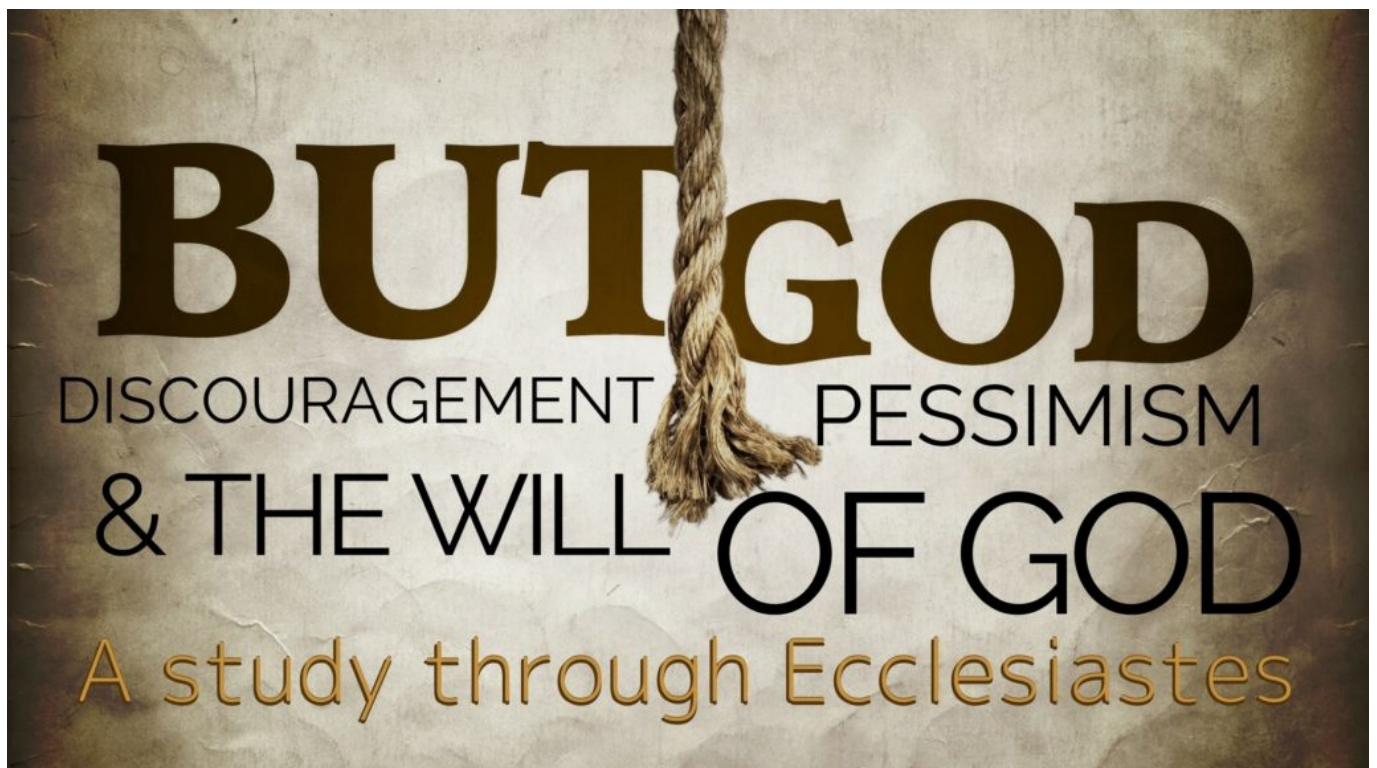
John Griffith: *Chapter Two - If it feels good do it!!*²⁶

Hawker: *In this Chapter the Preacher prosecutes still further the doctrine of the emptiness of creatures, to give happiness. Having in the former Chapter stated the subject in general, he here enters into particulars, in proof that all is vanity.*²⁷

The actual emphasis upon pleasure is really just the first 3 verses of this chapter.

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²⁴ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:26.

²⁵ Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:11.

²⁶ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_05.html accessed September 1, 2018.

²⁷ Robert Hawker *The Poor Man's Commentary*; ©1805; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:1.

But God—Discouragement, Pessimism & the Will of God (a graphic); from [Westminster Calvary](#); accessed September 7, 2018.

Sometimes, a commentator will begin with a good observation of this chapter of the Bible.

Brief, but insightful observations of Ecclesiastes 2 (various commentators)

Dr. Dan Hill: *As Solomon discovers that education is not the panacea for significance, he turns to pleasure. This is on the other extreme.*

Hill continues: *Principle: When we are seeking significance in human effort we will find ourselves living a life out of balance and a life of extremes.*

Hill continues: *APPLICATION: That is why mild mannered middle age me sometimes go crazy. They quit their jobs, leave their families, and go nuts.*²⁸

Matthew Henry: *Solomon here...adjourns out of his study, his library, his elaboratory, his council-chamber, where he had in vain sought for it, into the park and the playhouse, his garden and his summer-house; he exchanges the company of the philosophers and grave senators for that of the wits and gallants, and the beaux-esprits, of his court, to try if he could find true satisfaction and happiness among them.*²⁹

College Press Bible Study: *What good is there for the sons of men to do under heaven? This is the question that troubles Solomon (Eccles. 1:13; Eccles. 2:3). His desire to know the answer is insatiable.*³⁰

College Press Bible Study: *The motivation behind Solomon is one of personal gratification. Nothing of the loving, philanthropic nature of concern colors his activities. It is indeed misanthropy. His self-centered desire is a matter of record. He states, "I said to myself, 'Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself.'" The grammatical construction "dative of interest" (for myself) appears eight times in these eleven verses. In addition, there are thirty references to the pronouns "I" and "my" in this limited summary of his pursuit of pleasure. It is manifestly evident that if the answer to his question is to be found in this area of life, he intends to discover it.*³¹

Dr. Thomas Constable: *[Solomon proceeds] to elaborate on his thesis that all human endeavor lacks permanent value-by citing evidence that he had observed personally, and then evidence that everyone has observed.*³²

Ray C. Stedman: *Whether we know it or not, all of us are engaged in a quest for something which will meet the needs of our heart. We all are looking for the secret to finding delight anytime, anywhere, and under any circumstances. What we are looking for, in other words, is the secret to contentment. That is the greatest blessing in life. That too is what King Solomon was looking for, and in the book of Ecclesiastes he describes his search.*³³

Ecclesiastes 2 covers a lot of ground. It is difficult to describe it in a paragraph.

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As I study a chapter, questions will occur to me—some of them important and many of them minor. Not all of these questions will be satisfactorily answered.

²⁸ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> accessed September 1, 2018.

²⁹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1–11.

³⁰ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:1–11 (comments).

³¹ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:1–11 (comments).

³² Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 1:12-6:9.

³³ Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 2.

Fundamental Questions About Ecclesiastes 2

1. V. 3 seems to connect drinking with wisdom. What exactly is Solomon saying about that?
2. Many times, Solomon seems to be speaking from human viewpoint rather than divine; what's up with that?
3. Should all we expect from life is to eat and drink? (v. 24)
4. Solomon seems to come up with several conclusions. Which of these should be take seriously?

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It is important to understand what has gone before.

The Prequel of Ecclesiastes 2

Solomon was king over Israel. Given this discussions of this particular chapter, he had already completed his building projects. He apparently had some time to ponder life and contentment of life

Keil and Delitzsch: *Solomon's...reign was a period of undisturbed and assured peace. The nations far and near stood in manifold friendly relations with him.*³⁴

Whereas, David's reign was marked by constant aggression by foreign armies, Solomon's reign benefitted by David's strong response to his enemies, consistently destroying his enemies (something which David did, going back to his military career when Saul was king).

It was prophesied that Solomon would be a man of rest. 1Chron. 22:8–9 *But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'You have shed much blood and have waged great wars. You shall not build a house to My name, because you have shed so much blood before Me on the earth. Behold, a son shall be born to you who shall be a man of rest. I will give him rest from all his surrounding enemies. For his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days. (ESV; capitalized)*

I believe that much or all of Ecclesiastes is a series of essays or lectures given by Solomon, perhaps gathered over a period of time.

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We need to know who the people are who populate this chapter.

The Principals of Ecclesiastes 2

Characters	Biographical Material
Solomon	Although Solomon is never actually named in this book, he is accepted as the author of this book by most. Only he clearly can be identified with the description, riches and building projects found in this book.
The wise man	This is Solomon.
The fool	This is someone other than Solomon; and most often applied to the man who would succeed him.

³⁴ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 2:4–6.

The Principals of Ecclesiastes 2

Characters	Biographical Material
Solomon's successor	This person is never carefully described or even identified as Solomon's son. Solomon may or may not have had someone in mind; but he does not reveal who that someone is.
God	God is mentioned in vv. 24 & 26, but with limited details.

I should do a doctrine on the Person of God as found in Ecclesiastes.

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We need to know where this chapter takes place. I may need to eliminate this one.

The Places of Ecclesiastes 2

Place	Description
Jerusalem	This is the capitol of Israel established by King David. It is mentioned 5x in the book of Ecclesiastes; all in chapters 1–2. Solomon does not tell us where these houses, gardens and orchards are to be found.

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By the Numbers

Item	Date; duration; size; number
Date of the Book	B.C. 977 (Benson ³⁵).
Date of the Book	Written during the reign of Solomon about 1000 years before the birth of Christ (Keith Simons ³⁶).
Date of the Book	<i>Date of Writing: Solomon's reign as king of Israel lasted from around 970 B.C. to around 930 B.C. The Book of Ecclesiastes was likely written towards the end of his reign, approximately 935 B.C. (Got Questions)</i>

Not many facts and figures found in this book.

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At this point, we begin to gather up more details on this chapter.

³⁵ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2 (Chapter comments).

³⁶ From [Useful Bible](#); accessed September 9, 2018.

A Synopsis of Ecclesiastes 2

Matthew Poole: Pleasure and mirth also vanity, Eccles. 2:1,2; whether in wine, or buildings and gardens, or servants, or cattle, or silver and gold, or music, Eccles. 2:3–8. This the Preacher searched out and found, and none need try after him, Eccles. 2:9–12. Wisdom excelleth folly, Eccles. 2:13,14; but the like event is to both, and both are forgotten; therefore is wisdom also vanity, and life hateful, Eccles. 2:15–17. Not labour they know not for whom, but the fool enjoyeth the wise man's pains: this rendered his toil irksome, that he reaped no fruit, and yet his days were travail and grief, Eccles. 2:18–23. There is nothing better than to enjoy contentedly what God giveth us; and this also is of God, who giveth travail to the sinner, Eccles. 2:24–26.³⁷

Morgan G. Campbell: *Turning from the pursuit of knowledge to the pathway of pleasure, the king had given himself up to mirth, seeking the false stimulus of wine. In this also he had been disappointed, finding that mirth was madness, and all pleasure incompetent to satisfy. He next turned to his great possessions, attempting to make such use of them as to bring satisfaction not found elsewhere. He surrounded himself with every kind of luxury, gathered large possessions, gave himself over to music and to women, allowing full reign to all his desires. All this also he had found to be vanity, nothing but a striving after wind, and again he had been driven to the conclusion that there was no profit under the sun.*

Campbell continues: *Once again he tried a new pathway. He turned himself from the things that were almost exclusively physical to those of the mind. These were better, and he found that "wisdom excelleth folly." Yet he also perceived that "one event happeneth to all," both the fool and the wise pass on to death, so that this also ended in disappointment as keen as the others. He then summarized the results of his own experience of life "under the sun" in the terrible words: "I hated life . . . I hated all my labour . . . under the sun." The very exercise of wisdom resulted in gathering results into which the toiler did not enter, but which he left to another. Everything was vanity. The ultimate conclusion of his own experience was that there was nothing better than to eat and drink. The mental attitude to God which is not the result of direct spiritual fellowship is clearly revealed in these conclusions of the preacher. He does not deny God's existence, but recognizes Him as an intelligent Force operating purely for His own pleasure without any reference to the satisfaction of men. Everything is vanity. To live under the sun is to decide at last that the natural thing to do is to take what comes. Materialism necessarily becomes fatalism.*³⁸

John W. Ritenbaugh: *In chapter 2, Solomon launches into what he had learned about his works of building material things like houses and gardens and seeking even greater wealth. His conclusion? All of these material achievements were nothing but vanity, a grasping after wind.*

Ritenbaugh continues: *He finds no real, sustained profit in them, nothing that truly added to his quality of life, no lasting fulfillment. He does not mean they resulted in no sense of achievement or passing pleasure, but that their fruit never truly fulfilled God's purpose for man. Therefore, those things are poor substitutes for a sustained sense of well-being. He then proceeds into an exploration of wine and entertainment. These are simply another form of materialism, ways of pleasing the flesh. He concludes that they, too, are folly, a mad pursuit.*³⁹

Solomon continues the experiments which he began in chapter 1.

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This is one of the better outlines, although I don't see the title as being apt.

Guzik's Outline of Ecclesiastes 2 (David Guzik)

Ecclesiastes 2:1-26

³⁷ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1.

³⁸ Morgan G Campbell, *Exposition on Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1–26.

³⁹ From [Bible Tools.org](http://BibleTools.org); accessed September 3, 2018.

Guzik's Outline of Ecclesiastes 2 (David Guzik)

LIFE IN VIEW OF DEATH

- A. The pursuit of pleasure tested — and found lacking.
 - 1. (Eccles. 2:1) The summary.
 - 2. (Eccles. 2:2–3) The search for meaning in pleasure.
 - 3. (Eccles. 2:4–8) The search for meaning in work and accomplishments.
 - 4. (Eccles. 2:9–11) The analysis from the search.
- B. The certainty and cruelty of death.
 - 1. (Eccles. 2:12–17) Death makes equal the wise and the fool.
 - 2. (Eccles. 2:18–23) Death defeats all accomplishments.
- C. How to live life “under the sun.”
 - 1. (Eccles. 2:24–25) Keeping a good attitude despite despair.
 - 2. (Eccles. 2:26) Perhaps the seeming injustice of this world may work to one's favor.

David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Outlines and Summaries of Ecclesiastes 2 (Various Commentators)

Gary Everett's very brief outline:

Outline – Here is a proposed outline:

- | | | |
|--------|---|--|
| Intro: | The Preacher Concludes that This Life is Vanity | — Eccles. 1:1–11 |
| 1. | The Preacher Explains His Conclusion | — Eccles. 1:12 to Eccles. 2:26 ⁴⁰ |

Everett also offers up this outline:

- 1. In Pursuits of the Mind — Eccles. 1:12-18
- 2. In Pursuits of the Heart — Eccles. 2:1-3
- 3. In Pursuits of Wealth — Eccles. 2:4-11⁴¹

Then Everett offers up a third outline:

- 1. The Preacher Finds Vanity in the His Own Pursuits — Eccles. 1:12 to Eccles. 2:11
- 2. The Preacher Finds Vanity Around Him — Eccles. 2:12–26⁴²

The Pulpit Commentary:

⁴⁰ Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–2:26.

⁴¹ Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–2:26.

⁴² Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:26.

Outlines and Summaries of Ecclesiastes 2 (Various Commentators)

Eccles. 1:1 THE TITLE.

Eccles. 1:2–11 PROLOGUE. The vanity of all human and mundane things, and the oppressive monotony of their continued recurrence.

Eccles. 1:12–18 Section 1. Vanity of striving for wisdom and knowledge.⁴³

Eccles. 2:1–11 Section 2. Vanity of striving after pleasure and wealth.

Eccles. 2:12–26 Section 3. Vanity of wisdom, in view of the fate that awaits the wise man equally with the fool, and the uncertainty of the future of his labors, especially as man is not master of his own fate.⁴⁴

Arno Gaebelein:

1. His personal experience (Eccles. 2:1–11)
2. Various vanities and a conclusion (Eccles. 2:12–26)⁴⁵

Joseph Benson:

Solomon shows that there is no true happiness to be found in mirth and the pleasures of sense, Eccles. 2:1–11. He considers wisdom again, and owns it to be an excellent thing, and yet insufficient to give happiness, Eccles. 2:12–16.

He shows that business and wealth are only vanity and vexation of spirit, Eccles. 2:17–23.

And that if there be any good therein, it is only to those who sit loose to them, Eccles. 2:24–26.⁴⁶

Adam Clarke:

The vanity of human courses in the works of pleasure, planting, building, equipage, amassing wealth, etc., Eccles. 2:1–11.

Wisdom preferable to folly, Eccles. 2:12–14; yet little difference between the wise and the foolish in the events of life, Eccles. 2:15–17.

The vanity of amassing wealth for heirs, when whether they will be foolish or wise cannot be ascertained, Eccles. 2:18–21.

There is much sorrow in the labor of man, Eccles. 2:22–23.

We should enjoy what the providence of God gives, Eccles. 2:25–26.⁴⁷

Matthew Henry:

Solomon having pronounced all vanity, and particularly knowledge and learning, which he was so far from giving himself joy of that he found the increase of it did but increase his sorrow, in this chapter he goes on to show what reason he has to be tired of this world, and with what little reason most men are fond of it.

⁴³ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–18.

⁴⁴ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:1–26.

⁴⁵ Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1–26.

⁴⁶ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2 (chapter comments).

⁴⁷ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2 (chapter comments).

Outlines and Summaries of Ecclesiastes 2 (Various Commentators)

- I. He shows that there is no true happiness and satisfaction to be had in mirth and pleasure, and the delights of sense (Eccles. 2:1–11).
- II. He reconsiders the pretensions of wisdom, and allows it to be excellent and useful, and yet sees it clogged with such diminutions of its worth that it proves insufficient to make a man happy (Eccles. 2:12–16).
- III. He enquires how far the business and wealth of this world will go towards making men happy, and concludes, from his own experience, that, to those who set their hearts upon it, “it is vanity and vexation of spirit,” (Eccles. 2:17–23), and that, if there be any good in it, it is only to those that sit loose to it (Eccles. 2:24–26).⁴⁸

(Eccles. 2:1–11)	The vanity and vexation of mirth, sensual pleasure, riches, and pomp.
(Eccles. 2:12–17)	Human wisdom insufficient.
(Eccles. 2:18–26)	This world to be used according to the will of God. ⁴⁹

Dr. John Gill:

Solomon, having made trial of natural wisdom and knowledge in its utmost extent, and found it to be vanity, proceeds to the experiment of pleasure, and tries whether any happiness was in that, Eccles. 2:1. As for that which at first sight was vain, frothy, and frolicsome, he dispatches at once, and condemns it as mad and unprofitable, Eccles. 2:2; but as for those pleasures which were more manly, rational, and lawful, he dwells upon them, and gives a particular enumeration of them, as what he had made full trial of; as good eating and drinking, in a moderate way, without abuse; fine and spacious buildings; delightful vineyards, gardens, and orchards; parks, forests, and enclosures; fish pools, and fountains of water; a large retinue, and equipage of servants; great possessions, immense riches and treasure; a collection of the greatest rarities, and curiosities in nature; all kinds of music, vocal and instrumental, Eccles. 2:3; in all which he exceeded any that went before him; nor did he deny himself of any pleasure, in a lawful way, that could possibly be enjoyed, Eccles. 2:9.

And yet on a survey of the whole, and after a thorough experience of what could be found herein, he pronounces all vanity and vexation of spirit, Eccles. 2:11; and returns again to his former subject, wisdom; and looks that over again, to see if he could find real happiness in it, being sadly disappointed in that of pleasure, Eccles. 2:12. He indeed commends wisdom, and prefers it to folly, and a wise man to a fool; Eccles. 2:13; and yet observes some things which lessen its value; and shows there is no happiness in it, the same events befalling a wise man and a fool; both alike forgotten, and die in like manner, Eccles. 2:15.

And then he takes into consideration business of life, and a laborious industry to obtain wealth; and this he condemns as grievous, hateful, and vexatious, because, after all a man's acquisitions, he knows not to whom he shall leave them, whether to a wise man or a fool, Eccles. 2:17. And because a man himself has no rest all his days, nothing but sorrow and grief, Eccles. 2:22; wherefore he concludes it is best for a man to enjoy the good things of this life himself; which he confirms by his own experience, and by an, antithesis between a good man and a wicked one, Eccles. 2:24.⁵⁰

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

I like the idea of 929 Chapters more than I like their execution of this idea.

929 Chapters Outline of Ecclesiastes 2

⁴⁸ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2 (chapter comments).

⁴⁹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2 (chapter comments).

⁵⁰ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2 (chapter comments).

Summary

Qohelet reflects upon the futility of pleasure, wealth, wisdom, and hard work. He believes that people should enjoy life if they can.

Outline

- 1-11. The futility of pleasure and wealth
- 12-17. The wise die just like the foolish
- 18-23. Future generations and the futility of toil
- 24-26. Enjoy life if you can

From 929chapters.com accessed July 21, 2018.

[Chapter Outline](#)

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ESV; capitalized used below:

A Synopsis of Ecclesiastes 2 from the Summarized Bible

- Contents:** Solomon shows that there is no true happiness and satisfaction to be had in mirth, pleasure and the delights of sense.
- Characters:** God, Solomon.
- Conclusion:** True and lasting happiness and satisfaction consist not in mirth, the gratifying of appetites, the spending of money or the getting of wisdom. Only he who sets God always before him and employs himself for God may find heart rest in this world and that joy which He alone can give.
- Key Word:** Vanity, Eccles. 2:1 (I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself." But behold, this also was vanity.)
- Strong Verses:** Eccles. 2:26 (For to the one who pleases Him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner He has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.)

Keith L. Brooks, *Summarized Bible; Complete Summary of the Bible*; ©1919; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 2 (chapter comments) (slightly edited).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

It is helpful to see what came before and what follows in a brief summary.

The Big Picture (Ecclesiastes 1–3) (Ray C. Stedman)

Scripture

Text/Commentary

Ecclesiastes 1

In Chapter 1 of the book we were introduced to Solomon and learned of his qualifications for this search. He was very rich, he was an astute observer of human life, and he had plenty of time and money. He also was fully aware of the difficulties involved, stemming from the fallen nature of man and the intricacies and complexities of life. We learned from him that there is nothing in and of itself that can make us content. No thing, no possession, no relationship will endure to continually yield up to us the fruit of contentment and delight.

The Big Picture (Ecclesiastes 1–3) (Ray C. Stedman)

Scripture	Text/Commentary
Ecclesiastes 2	In Chapter 2 we are introduced to the record of what Solomon found in this search, the proof of that claim that I have just stated. Here we have an examination of the various ways by which men have sought through the ages to find contentment, enjoyment and delight in life. The first way, the one that is most popular today and always has been, is his examination of what philosophers call hedonism, the pursuit of pleasure. All of us instinctively feel that if we can just have fun we will find happiness. That is what the Searcher takes up first to see whether or not that is true. ⁵¹
Ecclesiastes 3	There is an appropriate time for everything, the unpleasant as well as pleasant experiences. That is the argument of Ecclesiastes 3. ⁵²

Dr. Thomas Constable: *Thus far, Solomon had reflected on the futility of all human endeavor generally (Eccles. 1:3-11), and the futility of human achievement (Eccles. 1:12-15) and his own achievements in particular (Eccles. 2:1-17). Next, he turned to an evaluation of labor, his own (Eccles. 2:18-20), as well as that of all other people (Eccles. 2:21 to Eccles. 6:9). What he described in this section did not require a privileged position; it can be observed by anyone.*⁵³

Gary Everett: *Here is a proposed outline:*

1. *The Preacher Finds Vanity in the His Own Pursuits — Eccles. 1:12 to Eccles. 2:11*
2. *The Preacher Finds Vanity Around Him — Eccles. 2:12-26.*⁵⁴

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Ecclesiastes 1:1–2:23 (the big picture) (a graphic); from [Slide Share](#) (slide #8); accessed September 7, 2018. This slide takes a look at the first and most of the second chapters of Ecclesiastes just to give an overall view of them.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes: 1:1 – 2:23

- Chapters 1 & 2 are an exploration of what the meaning of life might be.
- The Preacher spends the rest of chapter 1 and most of 2 giving us a tour of his pursuit of the value of life apart from God.
- In: wisdom, wine, laughter, riches, delicacies, his work, his projects, sex, power, fame, and full material gluttony. Read 2:10-11.
- It was as successful at providing life with meaning and purpose as trying to grasp, the wind.
- The psychological effect of such a bleak outlook on life? 2:17 & 23
- Everything ends and everything dies.
- It's a wonder that anyone smiles!

⁵¹ Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 2.

⁵² Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 3.

⁵³ Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:18–6:9.

⁵⁴ Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:12–2:26.



Ecclesiastes 1:12–5:17 (the big picture) (a graphic); from [Slide Player](#); accessed September 7, 2018.

These are the different things which Solomon tried, hoping that they would lead to some sustained happiness in life.

Solomon's wisdom had become human wisdom rather than divine viewpoint; but he was still wise. When it came to pleasure, Solomon could enjoy virtually anything.

He worked, but bear in mind, there were slaves who worked physically much harder than he did.

At this time, Solomon was one of the most powerful rulers in the world; perhaps the most powerful. No one could compare to his wealth.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

The first chapter heading sometimes does double duty, giving an overall view of the chapter and/or telling what the first section is about. Sometimes, it strict speaks of the first section.

Paragraph Divisions of Modern Translations for Ecclesiastes 2				
Christian Standard Bible	New International Version	New Century Version	Translation for Translators	International Standard Version
The Emptiness of Pleasure vv. 1–3	Pleasures are meaningless vv. 1–3	Does “Having Fun” Bring Happiness? vv. 1–3	Pleasure does not bring happiness	A Testimony to Self-Indulgence vv. 1–3
The Emptiness of Possessions vv. 4–11	vv. 4–9	Does Hard Work Bring Happiness? vv. 4–9	vv. 1–9	A Testimony to Extravagant Works vv. 4–6 A Testimony to Extravagant Possessions vv. 7–8 A Testimony to Extravagant Position vv. 9–11
The Relative Value of Wisdom vv. 12–13	Wisdom meaningless v. 12 v. 13	Maybe Wisdom Is the Answer v. 12 v. 13	Being wise also seemed useless v. 12 v. 13	vv. 12–14
v. 14a	v. 14	v. 14	v. 14	The Pointlessness of Life
vv. 14b–17	v. 15 v. 16	v. 15 v. 16	v. 15 v. 16 v. 17	vv. 15–17
The Emptiness of Work vv. 18–23	Toil is meaningless vv. 17–23	Is There Real Happiness in Life? vv. 17–23	Working hard seemed useless vv. 18–23	The Pointlessness of Labor vv. 18–21 vv. 22–23
vv. 24–26	vv. 24–26	vv. 24–26	vv. 24–26	The Central Point of Life vv. 24–26

From [Bible Gateway](#); [eBible.org](#); [Bible Hub](#); accessed July 21, 2018; concept inspired by Dr. Bob Utley.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Changes—additions and subtractions:

I began this study with quite a number of recently added charts: Titles and/or Brief Descriptions of Ecclesiastes 2 (by Various Commentators); Brief, but insightful observations of Ecclesiastes 2 (various commentators); Fundamental Questions About Ecclesiastes 2; A Synopsis of Ecclesiastes 2; Outlines of Ecclesiastes 2 (Various Commentators); A Synopsis of Ecclesiastes 2 from the Summarized Bible; and The Big Picture (Ecclesiastes –), all added to the introduction.

In this and the previous chapter, I have begun to include the verse citation when quoting from several different commentators.

I think that the New Century Version may be the Emphasized Bible, but without all of the inserted notes. I have finally noticed this after literally years of featuring both translations.

Very often, I have come up with the same quotations from Joseph Benson, Matthew Poole, and John Wesley. One is taking from the other without attribution (at least not in the commentaries provided by E-sword). John Wesley lived in the 1700's (1703–1791). He is known as the founder of Methodism. Joseph Benson was an English Methodist minister dying in 1821. Matthew Poole was nonconformist theologian in the 1600's (1624–1679); and one who apparently strongly influenced Wesley.

I have quoted from Ray C. Stedman for awhile now (a year or so?), having no little appreciation for his sermons and writings. While studying Ecclesiastes 2, I have come to find some interesting information on his background. He graduated from Dallas Theological Seminary in 1950, about the same time that R. B. Thieme, Jr. did; and, apparently, Howard Hendricks.⁵⁵ He worked along side J. Vernon McGee, and apparently lived for a considerable time in the San Jose area (he mentions the Winchester Mystery House in one of the quotations here). R. B. Thieme, Jr., J. Vernon McGee and Ray C. Stedman all teach directly from the Bible and teach entire chapters and entire books. There is nothing wrong with having stand-alone sermons or covering this or that topic; but if a local church does not cover entire books, then it is doing something wrong.

I drew from hundreds of sources for this chapter. I literally stand on the shoulders of thousands of men in order to put this document together.

Regarding some of the pastor-teachers named above: if a pastor (radio teacher, commentator, evangelist) is doing his job, he is going to impact hundreds or even thousands of lives, and influence contemporary ministries and those in the next generation. There is nothing wrong with a pastor who grew up under R. B. Thieme, Jr.'s ministry and puts together a similar ministry. He is not being a copy-cat or derivative. Ideally speaking, he is apply Bible doctrine to his own life. So far, I am unaware of anyone who has been able to come close to Bob's output (he taught up to 9 classes a week—all different, teaching for an hour and a quarter for each class, and talking fast). Also, for that period of time, his congregation was unmatched, many of them attending 7 or more sessions a week, taking copious notes.

However, this does not mean that it is God's plan for each and every believer to directly impact hundreds or thousands of lives. Sometimes, a person's influence might extend towards his or her children, and not much further. That daily impact on just a few can be dramatic and as important as anything else in the Christian world. The key to life is, you grow spiritually, and then you do what God has placed before you. Our lives may impact a handful of people, a few hundred or a few million (I am specifically thinking of the evangelist Billy Graham). God is keeping score only in the sense of being faithful to His Word. One of the things I have observed is, there are many pastor-teachers who came out of Berachah Church and they have congregations of 10 or 20 people (and sometimes even less). One of the toughest things for such a man is, continuing to be faithful and studying and teaching, and to keep keeping on, despite having a small congregation. Many of these pastors have to supplement their income (or provide their own income). As God has said in His Word, *who has despised the day of small things?*

God provides all believers with the option of spiritual growth. We need to take it and grow; discover our spiritual gift (s) and then apply doctrine to our lives. Whatever ministry that God has placed before you, you remain faithful to that ministry, even if your ministry is primarily raising up two sons. Faithfulness to God's Word and faithfulness to the ministry that He has placed before you—those are the keys to your life.

On a semi-related note: I read a great many commentaries when preparing this document. Probably too many. I came across one which had the insightful observation: *If Solomon was depicted as an animal it sure wouldn't be an Ostrich. Maybe a raccoon, or a cat, because of his curiosity.*⁵⁶ No doubt, you think I include too much

⁵⁵ Most of the information is from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ray_Stedman accessed July 27, 2018.

⁵⁶ Brian Bell from <https://www.studyight.org/commentaries/cbb/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 8, 2018.

commentary—and I probably do—but I leave a lot more stuff out. So many commentaries are near incomprehensible; and a considerable number suggest little or no theological training. The same commentator just noted *gave John Candy the last word*, using some incident from a movie he was in. Quite frankly, I saw no relationship between Ecclesiastes 2 and that final word from a John Candy character. There is such a thing as being too topical; or trying to be too cool.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Solomon experiments with pleasure

In the previous chapter, Solomon determined that he could discover how to be happiness by means of his great wisdom. Solomon was well-studied in a variety of human viewpoint philosophies and approaches to life, and he was able to come to quite a number of legitimate observations—particularly about his own wisdom. But he was unable to reach a place of personal satisfaction and contentment. Life to him seemed empty and that his scientific and philosophic pursuits were nothing more than chasing after wind.

The Expositor's Bible Commentary on Solomon's first experiment: *This experiment also the Preacher has tried, tried on the largest scale and under the most auspicious conditions. Wisdom failing to satisfy the large desires of his soul, or even to lift it from its depression, he turns to mirth.*⁵⁷

Delitzsch sums up what is to come in the first half of Eccles. 2: *After having proved that secular wisdom has no superiority to folly in bringing true happiness to man, he [the writer] seeks his happiness in a different way, and gives himself up to cheerful enjoyment.*⁵⁸

All Earthly Endeavors Are Vanity

☞ Wants (pleasure). Ecc. 2:1-11

- ☞ Stimulate body with wine (v. 3),
- Houses, vineyards (v. 4),
- gardens and parks (v. 5),
- ponds for a forest (v. 6),
- slaves and flocks (v. 7),
- collected silver and gold, (v. 8)
- provided entertainment (v. 8).
- ...All his eyes desired he did. (v. 10)
- ☞ All was vanity and striving after the wind. V. 11

All Earthly Endeavors Are Vanity (a graphic); from **Slide Player**; accessed September 7, 2018. Sometimes, viewing a graphic can give you a better feel for what is coming up in the first 11 verses. What will Solomon's experiments consist of; and to what conclusion will he be led?

I came across several graphics which I found to be outstanding for this chapter. This one gives you a good view of what is to come. There is another one, called **the "I" factor**, which makes it painfully obvious as to Solomon's focus throughout the experimentation of this book.

This is for the believer (or even the unbeliever) who thinks that he can find happiness in things apart from God. It is a vain task and one which will lead you nowhere. No doubt, in this world of technology, you may think you have found a new approach to happiness, but you haven't. There are drugs today that Solomon did not have;

⁵⁷ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 2:1-11.

⁵⁸ Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:1-11.

there are activities today that Solomon did not have access to. There are entertainment options today that Solomon did not have access to (such as **gaming in diapers**). Whereas, there are a plethora of external distractions in this life, not one of them (nor any combination of them) can lead you into contentment and happiness. You can enjoy a variety of pleasures, and some of these pleasures can be extended for a period of time, but there will always be trade-offs in your life.

Furthermore, at best, many of the addictive things available today (video games, various drugs) lead you into a very narrow and unhappy life.

The principle is the same—without a relationship with your Creator, there will always be something fundamental missing from your life. That is what we learn from this book, written 3000 years ago.

Quite obviously, you do not see God; nor do I. So why is a relationship with Him important? Let me suggest this analogy: let's say you are living in your house with your spouse. Is your life best if you have a warm and close relationship with your spouse or is it best if you two barely speak or acknowledge one another's presence? Similarly, you live in the world that God created and God is here—in His Word, in you and in His people. Just as your life is better if you have a good, dynamic relationship with your wife; your life in this world is better if you have a good, dynamic relationship with God.

Just as gravity is a fact, and no matter how you feel about it, you are subject to it; so is Jesus Christ a fact. He is either your Savior or your Judge. People simplistically think that God is different in the New Testament and in the Old. Some think that He is a mean, vengeful God in the Old Testament; and that He is a forgiving, loving God in the New. Whereas that is a wrong-headed over-simplification, the concept is apt. What kind of a God do you want to interact with? A loving, forgiving God; or a mean vengeful One? God gives us this choice; but He is as real as gravity and much more pertinent to our lives. Our point of contact with God is His justice. I prefer to make that contact through Jesus Christ, as I know how depraved and rebellious that I am. In Christ, I am forgiven; in Christ, I get to enjoy the loving and forgiving God. I am accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6). But, without Jesus Christ, our contact with God is still His justice and we will be judged by Him, if we do not believe in His Son.

Just so I cover all bases, the unbeliever or the believer who does not want to learn Bible doctrine does have a shot at limited happiness. God has provided the laws of divine establishment, which are designed for the preservation of the human race. Following these laws can provide you some reasonable amount of sustained happiness in life. See the **Laws of Divine Establishment** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

We begin with a wide-angle lens view, and then being examining the details.

Dividing up the first half of Ecclesiastes 2 (various commentators)

Arno Gaebelein divides the first 8 verses into the lust of the flesh (Eccles. 2:1–3, the lust of the eyes (eccles. 2:4–6) and the pride of life (Eccles. 2:7–8).⁵⁹ Although this does not perfectly match this passage, it does come close.

Gary Everett: *He then changed his pursuits to find gratification for his heart through wine and laughter (Eccles. 2:1-3). He then describes how he set out to work with his hands to construct great edifices for himself (Eccles. 2:4-6) and to gather much wealth (Eccles. 2:7-11).*⁶⁰

Ken Cayce: *As we begin (chapter 2 verses 1-11), we find that Solomon pursued fulfillment through pleasure (verse 1-2), wine (verse 3), great works (verses 4-6), wealth (verses 7-8), aesthetic and artistic pleasures (verse 8), and fame (verse 9). Yet all of these failed to bring a lasting satisfaction to the wisest man of all time. And yet, people 3000 years later are still trying them in search of enduring fulfillment.*⁶¹

⁵⁹ Paraphrased from Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1–26.

⁶⁰ Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:11.

⁶¹ From bible.studys.org accessed September 6, 2018.

Dividing up the first half of Ecclesiastes 2 (various commentators)

B. H. Carroll divides the first 11 verses into two sections: *The experiment described in Eccles. 2:1–3 is the test of worldly pleasure, with the result that it, too, was vanity. Then in Eccles. 2:4–11 he gives his experience in the pursuit of great works; he built houses, planted vineyards) made gardens and parks, planted trees, made pools of water, bought servants of all kinds, gathered silver and gold, provided a great orchestra for his entertainment, in fact, had everything his eyes desired and tried to find in them joy and comfort, but upon due reflection, he found this, too, a striving after the wind and to no profit under the sun.*⁶²

The College Press Bible Study: *In this section, Solomon turns to three additional categories of pleasure which he pursues. The first involves him with food and folly; secondly, he is engaged in aesthetic improvements; and finally he seeks cultural improvements and the pleasures of possessions.*

The College Press Bible Study then adds: *One is reminded of the admonition of John, “Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If any one loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh (food and folly) and the lust of the eyes (aesthetic improvements) and the boastful pride of life (cultural improvements and pleasures), is not from the Father, but is from the world” (1Jn. 2:15-16). Solomon does each of us a favor in that he comes to the same conclusion (Eccles. 2:11), and thus saves us the necessity of learning this lesson the difficult way.*⁶³

What a brilliant parallel!

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

At the beginning of this chapter, Solomon, an excellent observer of people and human nature, decided that perhaps he was too serious and that he needed to loosen up a bit. He needed to have some fun. Thousands of men work under him (some of them slaves), and Solomon sees many of them having a laugh from time to time. Solomon considers in this chapter that maybe he ought to focus upon the pleasures which can be found in life.

There was a caveat to this new approach—Solomon was not going to forsake his wisdom. He’s seen people who got out of balance by chasing after pleasure. No doubt Solomon knew some alcoholics in his day and time, so he knew enough not to take it to the point where the pleasures owned him. For all we know, Solomon might have been the first philosopher-hedonist. At the very least, he was the most unbridled hedonist to that point in time in human history. He never got to a point where he thought, “I’d like to give that pleasure a try, but, I just can’t afford it.” Whatever he wanted to try, money never stood in his way.

Ecclesiastes 2:1–3 I said to myself, “Let’s approach this in a different way. I will give my heart to joy and pleasure and see if that is any good. But, in the end, even that seemed to be empty and meaningless. Regarding laughter, I have said it is too often irrational; and what does pleasure really accomplish? Soon after, I decided to regularly drink alcohol, and yet retain wisdom in my thinking. Why not enjoy a bit of fun? From what I have observed, this approach to life is pleasant to the sons of man, who do whatever they can during the days God has given them to enjoy life.

Introducing Ecclesiastes 2:1–3 (various commentators)

Dr. Dan Hill: *Eat, live, and be merry...for tomorrow we die. "This is all there is so do it up to the limit." "We only go around once in life so make the most of it." "Do deny yourself any pleasure; if it feels good just do it." All the platitudes we hear today [and throughout history] were spoken by Solomon.*

⁶² B. H. Carroll, *An interpretation of the English Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 1:2-5:9.

⁶³ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:1–11 (comments).

Introducing Ecclesiastes 2:1–3 (various commentators)

Hill continues: *In his quest for significance and his seeking of knowledge and wisdom, he got burned out on the books. Too many tutors, he got tired of the teachers. So...let's party till we drop. Pleasure: but soon he discovered that, too, was folly.*⁶⁴

Sutcliffe's Commentary: *Solomon here [in vv. 1–3] attacks the Epicurean system, which places all happiness in sensual pleasure. His whole reign is a complete refutation of that theory. He sought happiness in pleasant company, and in a cheerful use of wine at the princely banquet, but he was disappointed, for the spirits unnaturally raised by wine, sink into depression; and intemperance satiates the soul.*⁶⁵

Gary Everett sums up the first 3 verses: *In Eccles. 2:1-3 the Preacher pursues mirth in order to find gratification and pleasure for his heart. But in the end he again finds only vanity.*⁶⁶

John Dummelow: *The writer makes enjoyment his quest, while aware that it is folly, and avoiding excess in a philosophic spirit.*⁶⁷

Solomon no doubt observed others having fun and laughing; and this causes him to take a new approach in his life.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

As always, 3 separate translations will be produced for each verse. The slavishly literal translation attempts to preserve word order and number, making it more literal than Young's translation (however, I do not preserve the consistency of the translation that Young does). The moderately literal translation may add or delete a definite article, change the number of a noun to correspond with the English sense of thinking, and the order is often changed in order to better represent our English sentence structure. The paraphrase is an attempt to give a thought-for-thought interpretation of what each verse tells us.

Kukis slavishly literal:

I have said in my heart, "Go now, I will test you in joy and see in good; and behold, also this [is] a breath."

Ecclesiastes
2:1

Kukis moderately literal:

I said to myself [lit., *in my heart*], "Come now, I will test you with mirth [or, *pleasure*] and see [if that is not] [lit., *in, with*] good." But, observe, that also [was] empty.

Kukis paraphrase

I said to myself, "Let's approach this in a different way. I will give my heart to joy and pleasure and see if that is any good. But, in the end, even that seemed to be empty and meaningless."

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Note: I compare the Hebrew text to English translations of the Latin, Syriac (= Aramaic) and Greek texts, using the Douay-Rheims translation⁶⁸; George Lamsa's translation, and Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton's translation as revised and edited by Paul W. Esposito, respectively. I often update these texts with non-substantive changes (e.g., *you* for *thou*, etc.). I often use the text of the Complete

⁶⁴ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> accessed September 1, 2018.

⁶⁵ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/jsc/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 3, 2018.

⁶⁶ Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 2:1-3.

⁶⁷ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/dcb/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 6, 2018.

⁶⁸ I have begun to doubt my e-sword Douay-Rheims version, so I now use www.latinvulgate.com.

Apostles' Bible instead of Brenton's translation, because it updates the English text. In Kings, I have used the [webpage](#) of Ernest C. Marsh.

The Septuagint was the earliest known translation of a book (circa 200 B.C.). Since this translation was made before the textual criticism had been developed into a science and because different books appear to be translated by different men, the Greek translation can sometimes be very uneven.

Sometimes, when there are serious disparities between my translation and Brenton's (or the text of the Complete Apostles' Bible), I look at the Greek text of the Septuagint (the LXX) to see if a substantive difference actually exists (and I reflect these changes in the English rendering of the Greek text). I use the Greek LXX with Strong's numbers and morphology available for e-sword. The only problem with this resource (which is a problem for similar resources) is, there is no way to further explore Greek verbs which are not found in the New Testament. Although I usually quote the Complete Apostles' Bible here, I have begun to make changes in the translation when their translation conflicts with the Greek and note what those changes are.

The Masoretic text is the Hebrew text with all of the vowels (vowel points) inserted (the original Hebrew text lacked vowels). We take the Masoretic text to be the text closest to the original. However, differences between the Masoretic text and the Greek, Latin and Syriac are worth noting and, once in a great while, represent a more accurate text possessed by those other ancient translators.

In general, the Latin text is an outstanding translation from the Hebrew text into Latin and very trustworthy (I say this as a non-Catholic). Unfortunately, I do not read Latin—apart from some very obvious words—so I am dependent upon the English translation of the Latin (principally, the Douay-Rheims translation).

Underlined words indicate differences in the text.

Bracketed portions of the Dead Sea Scrolls are words, letters and phrases lost in the scroll due to various types of damage. Underlined words or phrases are those in the Dead Sea Scrolls but not in the Masoretic text.

I will only list the translation from the Dead Sea Scrolls if it exists and if it is different from the Masoretic text.

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	I have said in my heart, "Go now, I will test you in joy and see in good; and behold, also this [is] a breath."
Dead Sea Scrolls Aramaic targum	Not even a complete verse can be found for Ecclesiastes 2 in the Dead Sea Scrolls. I said in my heart, I will go now and try mirth, and behold the good of <u>this world</u> ; and <u>when pain and affliction befell me, I said by the divine word</u> , Also this is vanity.
Revised Douay-Rheims	I said in my heart: I will go, and abound with delights, and enjoy good things. And I saw that this also was vanity.
Peshitta (Syriac)	I SAID to my heart, Come now, I will prove you with joy; therefore enjoy good <u>things</u> ; and, behold, this also is vanity.
Septuagint (Greek)	I said in my heart, Come now, I will prove thee with mirth, and behold thou good: and, behold, this is also vanity.
Significant differences:	The targum and the Syriac both add additional text.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	I said in my heart, I will give you joy for a test; so take your pleasure--but it was to no purpose.
Easy English	'I will enjoy my life', I thought. 'I will make myself happy. That will be good.' But it was not good. I enjoyed myself, but my life was not worth anything.
Easy-to-Read Version–2008	Does “Having Fun” Bring Happiness? I said to myself, “I should have fun—I should enjoy everything as much as I can.” But I learned that this is also useless.
<i>God’s Word</i> TM	The Spokesman Studies Laughter I thought to myself, “Now I want to experiment with pleasure and enjoy myself.” But even this was pointless.
Good News Bible (TEV)	I decided to enjoy myself and find out what happiness is. But I found that this is useless, too.
<i>The Message</i>	I said to myself, “Let’s go for it—experiment with pleasure, have a good time!” But there was nothing to it, nothing but smoke.
NIRV	Pleasure Is Meaningless I said to myself, “Come on. I’ll try out pleasure. I want to find out if it is good.” But it also proved to be meaningless.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

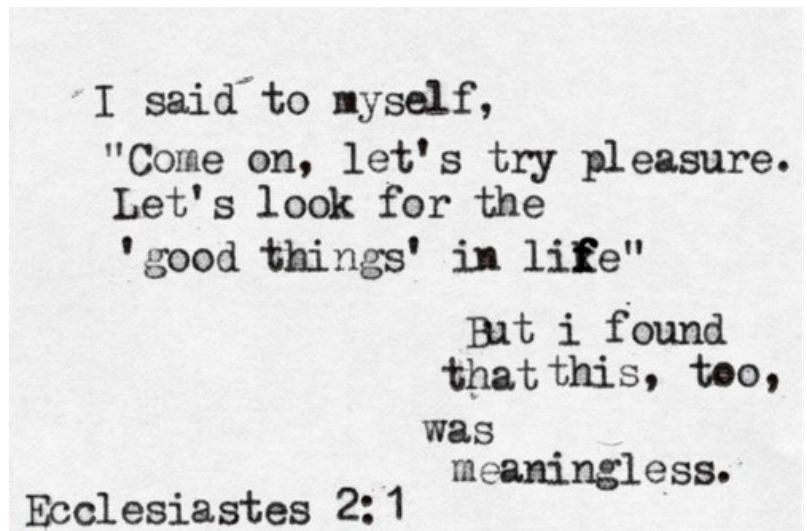
College Press Bible Study ⁶⁹	Addressing myself, I said, “Look, let me experiment with all the pleasures which appeal to my senses, and see the good that can bring me enjoyment.” What enjoyment did it bring me? That which came of it was as satisfying as feasting on the wind.
Contemporary English V. The Living Bible	I said to myself, "Have fun and enjoy yourself!" But this didn't make sense. I said to myself, “Come now, be merry; enjoy yourself to the full.” But I found that this, too, was futile.
New Berkeley Version	I said to myself, “Come now and I will test you in gladness; have a good time.” But this also is worthless.
New Century Version	Does “Having Fun” Bring Happiness? I said to myself, “I will try having fun. I will enjoy myself.” But I found that this is also useless.
New Life Version	Fun Is of No Worth I said to myself, “Come now, I will test you with things that are fun. So have a good time.” But see, this also was for nothing.
New Living Translation	The Futility of Pleasure I said to myself, “Come on, let’s try pleasure. Let’s look for the ‘good things’ in life.” But I found that this, too, was meaningless.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	Then I said to myself, “Well, I will try to do everything that I enjoy. I will find out whether doing what I enjoy can truly enable me to be happy.” But I found out that doing that was also useless.

⁶⁹ I don’t know who actually does the paraphrase for College Press Bible Study, but it is pretty good.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible Then I said to my heart, 'Well come now; I'll [fill] you with joy and then you'll know good!' But, even that was just folly.

Ecclesiastes 2:1 (a graphic); from [Missionary Nicole](#); accessed September 7, 2018.



Beck's American Translation *Pleasure*

I said to myself I'll try pleasure and enjoy myself. But that also was a vapor.

Common English Bible I said to myself, [Or *in my heart; mind*] Come, I will make you [Or *the self (or heart; mind)*] experience pleasure; enjoy what is good! But this too was pointless!

International Standard V ***A Testimony to Self-Indulgence***

I told myself, "I will test you with pleasure, so enjoy yourself." But this was pointless.

New Advent (Knox) Bible Next, I thought to give the rein to my desires, and enjoy pleasure, until I found that this, too, was labour lost.

Translation for Translators **Pleasure does not bring happiness**

Then I said to myself, "Okay, I will try to do everything that I enjoy. I will find out whether doing what I enjoy can truly enable me to be happy." But I found out that doing that was also useless/senseless.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Alpha & Omega Bible I SAID IN MY HEART, COME NOW, I WILL PROVE YOU WITH MIRTH, AND BEHOLD YOU GOOD: AND, BEHOLD, THIS IS ALSO VANITY.

Awful Scroll Bible I am to have ventured in the sensibility my heart, "Be coming, assert to be the tester of joyfulness, even be considering that agreeable." It is to be vapor!

Conservapedia Translation I said to myself, "Go and amuse yourself, enjoying the pleasure it brings: and see, this too is selfishness.

Ferrar-Fenton Bible **Lecture 2**

On the Pursuit of Happiness

I consequently said to my heart, 'Come, now, I will try you with pleasure and seek happiness.' —But I discovered that, also, was vanity.

God's Truth (Tyndale) Then said I thus in mine heart: Now go to, I will take mine ease and have good days. But lo, that was vanity also:...

HCSB **The Emptiness of Pleasure**

I said to myself, "Go ahead, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy what is good." But it turned out to be futile.

Lexham English Bible **Qohelet's Investigation of Self-Indulgence**

I said {to myself}, "Come! I will test pleasure {to see whether it is worthwhile}." But look, "This also [is] vanity!"

NIV, ©2011 **Pleasures Are Meaningless**

I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless.

Peter Pett's translation	I said in my heart, "Go at it now, I will test out merriment. Therefore enjoy pleasure (or 'good things'). " And behold this also was vanity..
Tree of Life Version	Futility of Human Pleasures I said within myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to see what is good."
Unlocked Literal Bible	I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with happiness. So enjoy pleasure." But look, this also was just a temporary breeze.
Urim-Thummim Version	I said in my heart, go to now, I will test you with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and observe, this also is vanity.
Wikipedia Bible Project	I said to myself, please go, try your hand at happiness, and see the good, and here it is also a mirage.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)	I said in my heart, "I will try pleasure! taste happiness!" But I found that was useless.
The Heritage Bible	I said in my heart, Walk, please; I will test you with joy, and see good. And behold, it also is vanity.
New American Bible (2011)	<i>Study of Pleasure-seeking.</i> I said in my heart, "Come, now, let me try you with pleasure and the enjoyment of good things." See, this too was vanity. [2:1–11] The author here assumes the role of Solomon who, as king, would have had the wealth and resources at his disposal to acquire wisdom and engage in pleasurable pursuits. Verses 4–8 in particular, with their description of abundant wealth and physical gratifications, parallel the descriptions in 1 Kgs 4–11 of the extravagances of Solomon's reign.
New English Bible	I said to myself, 'Come, I will plunge into pleasures and enjoy myself'; but this too was emptiness.
New Jerusalem Bible	I thought to myself, 'Very well, I will try pleasure and see what enjoyment has to offer.' And this was futile too.
New RSV	The Futility of Self-Indulgence I said to myself, 'Come now, I will make a test of pleasure; enjoy yourself.' But again, this also was vanity.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	I said to myself, "Come now, I will test myself with pleasure and enjoying good things"; but this too was pointless.
The Complete Tanach ⁷⁰	I said to myself, "Come now, I will mix [wine] with joy and experience pleasure"; and behold, this too was vanity.

I said to myself: since that is so, I will refrain from wisdom, and I will constantly engage in drinking.

I will mix: Heb. הִקְסַגְּ, an expression of mixing wine to drink, like (Prov. 9:2): "she has mingled (הִקְסַגְּ) her wine," the mingling of wine with water to improve it or the mingling of spices with wine for conditum (spiced wine).

and experience pleasure: Heb. הִאָרָה, like תוֹאָרָה בִּטְבָב.

and behold, this too was vanity: For I saw through prophecy that many misfortunes come about through laughter. Belshazzar died through a banquet, and the people of the Generation of the Flood were inundated because of the abundant goodness that You lavished upon them.

exeGesés companion Bible	I said in my heart, Go to, I beseech, I test you with cheerfulness; see the good:
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⁷⁰ With Rashi's [Commentary](#).

JPS (Tanakh—1985)	and behold, this also is vanity. I said to myself, "Come, I will treat you to merriment. Taste mirth!" That too, I found, was futile.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	I said in mine lev, Come now, I will test thee with simchah, therefore enjoy tov; and, hinei, this also is hevel.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	The Futility of Pleasure and Possessions I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure <i>and</i> gratification; so enjoy yourself <i>and</i> have a good time." But behold, this too was vanity (futility, meaninglessness).
The Expanded Bible	Does "Having Fun" Bring Happiness? I said to myself [^L in my heart], "I will try having fun [^L Come now, I will test you with pleasure]. I will enjoy myself [experience the good life; ^L see good]." But I found that [^L Behold] this is also useless.
Pastor John Griffith	I said to myself, (speaks of inner resolve) "Come now, I will test you, with pleasure (simchah - mirth, joy, gladness) in today's terms whatever one thinks will make him/her feel good, just do it and forget the consequences. The satisfaction with this pursuit was so fleeting that he quickly pronounced the result of the test. And behold, it too was futility. (hebel) -- It was just another empty experience
Kretzmann's Commentary	Verses 1-19 Solomon's own Example I said in mine heart, in considering carefully the possibility of enjoyment, Go to, now, I will prove thee with mirth , to find out whether he would feel happy and contented in enjoyment of the senses; therefore enjoy pleasure , sensual delights of every kind; and, behold, this also is vanity , it affords no true happiness.
NET Bible®	<i>Futility of Self-Indulgent Pleasure</i> I thought to myself, "Come now, I will try self-indulgent pleasure ⁴ to see if it is worthwhile." ⁶ But I found that it also is futile. ^{4sn} The statement I will try self-indulgent pleasure is a figurative expression known as metonymy of association. As 2:1-3 makes clear, it is not so much Qoheleth who is put to the test with pleasure, but rather that pleasure is put to the test by Qoheleth. ^{6sn} The phrase "to see what is good" (רָאָה, ra'ah, "to see" + טוֹב, tov, "good") is repeated twice in 2:1-3. This is the key phrase in this section of Ecclesiastes. Qoheleth sought to discover (רָאָה) whether merry-making offered any value (טוֹב) to mankind.
The Pulpit Commentary	Dissatisfied with the result of the pursuit of wisdom, Koheleth embarks on a course of sensual pleasure, if so be this may yield some effect more substantial and permanent. I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth. The heart is addressed as the seat of the emotions and affections. The Vulgate misses the direct address to the heart, which the words, rightly interpreted, imply, translating, <i>Vadam et offluam delieiiis</i> . The Septuagint correctly gives, <i>Δευρο δη πειράσω σε ε'ν ευ'φροσύνη</i> . It is like the rich fool's language in Christ's parable, "I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry" (Luke 12:10). Therefore enjoy pleasure ; literally, see good (Eccles. 6:6). "To see" is often used figuratively in the sense of "to experience, or enjoy." Wright compares the expressions, "see death" (Luke 2:26), "see life" (John 3:36). We may find the like in Psalm 34:13; Jer. 29:32; Oba. 1:13 (comp. Eccles. 9:9). The king now tries to find the summum bonum in pleasure, in selfish enjoyment without thought of others. Commentators, as they saw Stoicism in the first chapter, so read Epieureanism into this. We shall have occasion to refer to this

idea further on (see on Eccles. 3:22). Of this new experiment the result was the same as before. **Behold, this also is vanity.** This experience is confirmed in the next verse.

Syndein/Thieme	{2nd Experiment of Solomon - From Academics to Pleasures to find Happiness in the Cosmic System} I thought in my 'right lobe'/heart, Come now, I will test you with pleasure {to find out what is satisfying thru the 'feel good technique!'} . . . what makes happiness. But that also proved to be meaningless.
The Voice	Teacher: I said to myself, "Let me dabble and test you in pleasure and see if there is any good <i>in that.</i> " But look, that, too, was fleeting.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

C. Thompson (updated) OT	I said in my heart, Come now let me try you with pleasure. Take a view of that considered as a good. But behold this also is vanity.
Concordant Literal Version	I said in my heart: Come then, Let me probe you with rejoicing; Now see what is good. But behold, even this is vanity."
<i>Emphasized Bible</i>	Said, I, in my heart, Come now! I will prove thee with gladness, and look thou on blessedness,—but lo! even that, was vanity.
English Standard Version	I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself." But behold, this also was vanity.
Green's Literal Translation	I said in my heart, Come now, I will test you with mirth. Therefore, consider with goodness. And behold, this also <i>is</i> vanity.
Modern English Version	The Vanity of Pleasure And I said in my heart, "Come, and I will test you with selfish pleasures to experience desires." And notice that this too is vanity.
New American Standard B.	The Futility of Pleasure and Possessions I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself." And behold, it too was futility.
New European Version	The Preacher Seeks for Satisfaction in Pleasure I said in my heart, Come now, I will test you with mirth: therefore enjoy pleasure; and behold, this also was vanity.
New King James Version	The Vanity of Pleasure I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure"; but surely, this also was vanity.
Niobi Study Bible	The Vanity of Pleasure Is Vain I said in mine heart, "Go now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure." And behold, this also is vanity.
Webster's Bible Translation	I said in my heart, Come now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and behold, this also <i>is</i> vanity.
Young's Updated LT	I said in my heart, "Pray, come, I try you with mirth, and look you on gladness;" and lo, even it is vanity.

The gist of this passage: Solomon decides to test himself with fun and pleasure, to see if that may give him happiness in life.

At the end of the previous chapter, Solomon searched out human wisdom; but that ended up being empty and without meaning. He will begin this chapter by searching out pleasure and stimulation, but without setting his wisdom aside.

Ecclesiastes 2:1a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
'āmar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
lêb (לֵב) [pronounced lay ^b v]	<i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking; midst</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #3820 BDB #524

BDB gives the following definitions: *inner man, mind, will, heart, understanding; inner part, midst; midst (of things); heart (of man); soul, heart (of man); mind, knowledge, thinking, reflection, memory; inclination, resolution, determination (of will); conscience; heart (of moral character); as seat of appetites; as seat of emotions and passions; as seat of courage.*

The NET Bible: “I said, I, in my heart” (אָמַרְתִּי בְלִבִּי, 'amarti 'ani b'ylibbi). The term “heart” (לֵב, lev) is a synecdoche of part (“heart”) for the whole (the whole person), and thus means “I said to myself” (see E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 648).⁷¹

Solomon speaks to himself a number of times in Ecclesiastes: Eccles. 1:16 2:1,15 3:17,18.

Translation: I said to myself [lit., in my heart],... Here, Solomon is simply thinking to himself. Solomon tried human knowledge and wisdom in his previous experiment, and he came up short there. So, he thinks to himself—literally, *he says to his heart*.

Mark Dunagan: *This type of statement reveals something very important about human beings. We can talk to ourselves, we are very aware of the choices we are making, and we often are also just as aware of the motivation behind those choices. Solomon knew exactly what he was looking for, he knew exactly what this search was all about.*⁷²

Throughout Solomon's inquiry, we have a repetition of 1st person singular verbs, 1st person singular suffixes, and the pronoun *I, me*. Solomon's search involves himself and whatever there is around him that he thinks might be helpful to his desire for personal satisfaction and contentment. At the same time, this is the problem—his focus is on himself. Any religion or philosophy which focuses on you is evil.

The emphasis throughout this book is, these are Solomon's direct experiments. He is not depending upon the philosophies of others in order to come to these conclusions. He thinks of a good idea, tries it out, and then discovers, *maybe it was not the good idea I thought it was*.

Solomon is considering various approaches in life; and this seems to be a good option that he has come up with. Recall that Solomon knows thousands of people; he has talked to many people and he no doubt has read the great books of his era. In this chapter, he will begin with a different approach.

⁷¹ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 15, 2018.

⁷² Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1.

Application: I can certainly relate to this. I came into a world with many established norms and ways of doing things. We might understand most of these to be the laws of divine establishment. I cannot tell you how many times, as a believer and an unbeliever both, I recognized society’s approach to things and said, *let me try this new and different way*. This was in my DNA—being so hard-headed—and then living in the generation which proclaimed, *do your own thing*. For my bad choices, I can only blame myself; but this seems to be inherent in the sin nature.

Application: The importance of the book of Ecclesiastes is, Solomon is telling us, *you think you know the answer; well, I have tried that, and it did not work*.

Application: At the same time, I am not advocating against original thinking or always taking the same approach. R. B. Thieme, Jr., under whose ministry I grew up spiritually, was certainly an original thinker, and a maverick in the Christian community—and yet, he remained true to the orthodox faith.

Seems like Bob had a saying which he often repeated, *remain inflexible with regards to the essentials of the faith, and flexible with regards to the non-essentials*.⁷³

Ecclesiastes 2:1b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
hâlak ^e (הלך) [pronounced haw-LAHK ^e]	<i>go, come, depart, walk; advance</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperative; with the voluntative hê	Strong’s #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229
James Rickard: “Go” [is]...the Qal Imperative of the Hebrew verb HALAK, הלך, which means, “go or walk.” The basic idea carried by the word is movement of some type, usually of people. As such, it is the opposite of sitting or lying down, or sleeping; a body without movement or taking no action in life. So right away we are told to take action that is the opposite of being lazy. ⁷⁴			
The hê at the end is called a voluntative hê and the verb itself is known as a cohortative and is often translated with the additional word <i>let, may, might, ought, should</i> .			
The NET Bible: <i>The Hebrew verb הִלַּךְ (lÿkhah, “Come!”) is a weakened imperative, used merely as an introductory word, e.g., Gen 19:32; 31:44; Judg 19:11; 1 Sam 9:9-10; 11:14; 2 Kgs 3:7; Ps 66:5; Song 7:12; Isa 1:18; 2:3; Mic 4:2 (HALOT 246 s.v. הלך 2; BDB 234 s.v. הלך I.5.f.2). Whenever הִלַּךְ introduces an exhortation, it functions as an invitation to the audience to adopt a course of action that will be beneficial to the addressee or mutually beneficial to both the speaker and the addressee. Here, Qoheleth personifies his “heart” (לב, libbi) and addresses himself. The examination of self-indulgent pleasure is designed to be beneficial to Qoheleth.</i> ⁷⁵			
nâ’ (נא) [pronounced naw]	<i>now; please, I pray you, I respectfully implore (ask, or request of) you, I urge you</i>	a primitive particle of incitement and entreaty	Strong’s #4994 BDB #609
Nâ’ is used for a submissive and modest request. It is used to express a wish (Job 32:21: “Oh, that I may not respect any man’s person”); to incite or to urge (Jer. 5:24); it is depreciatory when affixed to the 2 nd person with a particle of negation (do not, I implore you—see Gen. 33:10 19:18); with the it expresses a wish or request (Psalm 124 129:1 SOS 7:9), a challenge (Jer. 17:15), asking leave (Gen. 18:4), and depreciation with a negation (Gen. 18:32). In many of these examples, we would express this with the addition of the word <i>let</i> .			

⁷³ This is close to an accurate quote. I will have to fix this, if I ever come across the correct quotation.

⁷⁴ From <http://gracedoctrine.org/proverbs-chapter-6/> accessed September 21, 2015.

⁷⁵ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 15, 2018.

Translation: ...“Come now,... I think the idea here is, Solomon is going to try a new approach. *Listen*, he says to himself; *come now, let’s try a different approach*, is the gist of what Solomon is saying to himself. The person that Solomon is addressing is his own heart.

Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said to myself, “Let’s approach this in a different way. I will give my heart to joy and pleasure and see if that is any good.

The Meaning of “Come Now” (Ecclesiastes 2:1b) (various commentators)

College Press Bible Study: *The “Come now” of this verse indicates a new direction.*⁷⁶

Mark Dunagan: *“Come now”-indicates a new direction.*⁷⁷

Lange: *come on now...denotes another trial with an ironical intimation of its failure.*⁷⁸

Matthew Poole: *...being disappointed of my hopes from knowledge, I resolved in my own mind to try another course.*⁷⁹

Similar phrasing is found in Gen. 11:3–4 11:7 2Kings 5:5 Psalm 34:12 46:8 66:5, 16 Isa. 5:5 James 4:13 5:1.

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Ecclesiastes 2:1c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
nâçâh (נָסָה) [pronounced naw-SAWH]	<i>to test, to try, to attempt, to try to do a thing; to practice doing a thing</i>	1 st person plural, Piel imperfect with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong’s #5254 BDB #650
The NET Bible: Or “test.” The cohortative נִסֶּהְךָ (<i>’anassýkhah</i>) emphasizes the resolve of the speaker. The term נָסָה (<i>nasah</i> , “to test”) means “to conduct a test,” that is, to conduct an experiment (Judg 6:39; Eccl 2:1; 7:23; Dan 1:12, 14; see HALOT 702 s.v. נָסָה 3; BDB 650 s.v. נָסָה 1). The verb נָסָה is often used as a synonym with בָּחַן (<i>bakhan</i> , “to examine”; BDB 103 s.v. בָּחַן and 650 s.v. נָסָה 1) and תַּעֲדָל (<i>lada’at</i> , “to ascertain”; Deut 8:2). ⁸⁰			
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong’s # BDB #88
sim ^e châh (שִׂמְחָה) [pronounced sim ^e -KHAH]	<i>joy, gladness, mirth, great joy, rejoicing, enjoyment, pleasure</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong’s #8057 BDB #970

⁷⁶ The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:1–11 (comments).

⁷⁷ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1 (slightly edited).

⁷⁸ The Rev. Dr. John P. Lange, *Lange’s Commentary*; 1857–1864; in the Public Domain; from E-sword; Eccles. 2:1.

⁷⁹ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1.

⁸⁰ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 15, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:1c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
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The NET Bible: *"I will test you with pleasure."* The term שִׂמְחָה (*simkhah*, "pleasure") has a two-fold range of meanings: (1) it can refer to the legitimate enjoyment of life that Qoheleth affirms is good (5:17; 8:15; 9:7; 11:8, 9) and that God gives to those who please him (2:26; 5:19); or (2) it can refer to foolish pleasure, self-indulgent, frivolous merrymaking (2:1, 2; 7:4). The parallelism in 2:2 between שִׂמְחָה and שִׂיחֹק (*sykhoq*, "laughter, frivolous merrymaking"), which always appears in the context of banqueting, drinking, and merrymaking, suggests that the pejorative sense is in view in this context.⁸¹

Dr. Bob Utley: *Pleasure (BDB 970) is used in Ecclesiastes in two different senses:*

1. *gaiety, laughter (Eccles. 2:1–2; Eccles. 2:10; Eccles. 7:4), where periods of pleasure briefly dull the mind and heart of humanity's existential existence in a fallen world, but it does not last; it does not satisfy!*
2. *daily pleasure in life's personal relationships and activities (Eccles. 8:15; Eccles. 9:7). Here pleasure is not the goal, but the result of a regular attitude of trust in God (cf. Eccles. 2:26; Eccles. 5:19) and thankfulness about common life experiences (food, drink, family, friends, work, cf. Eccles. 2:24; Eccles. 3:12–13; Eccles. 3:22; Eccles. 5:8; Eccl. 8:15, 19; Eccles. 9:7–9).⁸²*

Translation: ...I will test you with mirth [or, pleasure]... Solomon thinks, *let me try this approach: let's just have some fun.* All of this study has made me a dull person; and my problem is, I am not getting out enough and partying and hanging out, and having some fun.

Solomon has no doubt watched his workers, and sometimes, they had a laugh; sometimes he could see them smiling. *Perhaps I am being a stuffed-shirt,* Solomon thinks. *I just need to get out there and have a bit of fun.*

Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said to myself, "Let's approach this in a different way. I will give my heart to joy and pleasure and see if that is any good."

Ecclesiastes 2:1c Solomon tests his heart with mirth (various commentators)

Matthew Poole: *I will determine whether or not I can make myself happy with mirth; by allowing to myself the free enjoyment of the present and sensible delights of human life.⁸³*

David Guzik: *Solomon tested life's meaning in mirth and pleasure. He tested the theory many live under today; that the meaning of life is found in more and varied pleasures, entertainments, and excitements.⁸⁴*

John Dummelow: *Wisdom, whether sought in nature or in human things, having proved unsatisfying, he now makes a cast in another direction. Increase of knowledge is increase of sorrow; but what, if he were to try the fascination of enjoyment?⁸⁵*

Ken Cayce: *Pleasure, although not necessarily evil, has its shortcomings, much like human wisdom. Solomon reflected upon his tragic experiences in attempting to draw satisfaction purely out of pleasure.*

⁸¹ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 15, 2018.

⁸² Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:1.

⁸³ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1 (edited).

⁸⁴ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

⁸⁵ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/dcb/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 6, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:1c Solomon tests his heart with mirth (various commentators)

Cayce continues: *We see that Solomon was so dissatisfied with life the way he had experienced it, that he decides to try pleasure of the flesh. He is like so many who look for peace in all the wrong places. He has plenty of money and fame, but that does not satisfy the hungry soul. I have heard so many people say, they thought great riches would make them happy. When they acquired the great riches, they were still unhappy. Some of them searched for fame, thinking that would satisfy them.*

Cayce concludes: *True satisfaction comes from a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing else in life can fill that void. In verse one, Solomon finds that fleshly happiness does not bring satisfaction either.*⁸⁶

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary warns: *It is a dangerous Moral Experiment. Solomon's trial of the resources of human wisdom ended in the grief of failure. Now he plunges into pleasure to determine if that will fill his soul, and drown the anxiety of painful thought. But such an experiment is dangerous.*

The Preacher's Commentary warning is threefold: (1) *All his real convictions were against the hope of success in this trial...Worldly men feel in their heart of hearts that sensual pleasures do not satisfy—that they leave a sting behind, and fret and wear the mind with long regrets. It is dangerous to submit ourselves to what we must confess, in moments of calm reflection, is a delusion.*

The Preacher's Commentary continues: (2) *All pleasure and amusement are not forbidden. But if we make these the end of life,...we forget the claims of duty. Whatever lies in the path of the Commandments is ours to enjoy, but we must not stray from that path in search of tempting pleasures. Duty and service claim our first regard. We were not sent into this world by our Maker...It is dangerous to run the risk of forgetting the claims of duty, and the high destiny of the spiritual part of our nature.*

The Preacher's Commentary continues: (3) *The health of the soul is impaired, and the symmetry of it destroyed, by draining off its vital force in one direction, just as the body is deformed and its strength consumed by malignant tumours.*⁸⁷ R. B. Thieme, Jr. calls this **scar tissue** of the soul.

The Preacher's Commentary offers 4 consequences of scar tissue of the soul: (1.) *The understanding is impaired. (2.) The affections are blunted. The indulgence in worldly pleasures, both coarse and refined, tends to make the life artificial. Beneath apparent gentleness and goodwill, the heart is often hard and cold. (3.) The will is enfeebled. The sirens of pleasure paralyze the will. (4.) The sensibility of the conscience is injured.*⁸⁸

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary later warns: *It is in vain that reason and conscience point out to us one path when the affections urge us in another. If the heart inclines to worldly pleasures, the mind soon becomes a willing captive. A man's moral position is determined by what he says in his heart. The heart must have some object to fasten on; the pleasures of the world, or the joy which God gives. Language bears witness to the vanity of earthly pleasures. We call them diversions, for they divert the attention from our real miseries. They only serve to make us forget that we are unhappy.*⁸⁹

Eaton: *The Preacher is not testing pleasure so much as himself.*⁹⁰

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⁸⁶ From bible.studys.org accessed September 6, 2018.

⁸⁷ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:1–2.

⁸⁸ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:1–2 (edited).

⁸⁹ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:1 (Suggestive Comments).

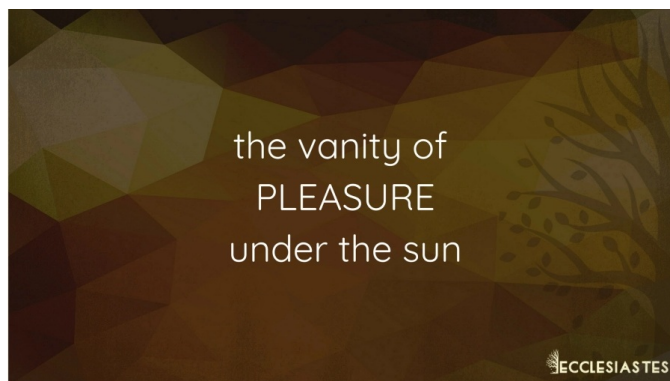
⁹⁰ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

Is this not a very natural choice? Solomon has found something which has given him pleasure—why not pursue that? *If there is a pleasurable result, surely that is the key to happiness.* The slogan of my place and time in my youth was, *if it feels good, do it.*⁹¹

Bear in mind, whatever Solomon wanted to do, it was right there for him to do it. He owned it, he could buy it, he could send people out to get it. Could you imagine Solomon in this era? There are so many things to do; so many avenues of fun and enjoyment to pursue—he is ready, after all of this studying, to get it on; to get his party on. To hang with friends a shoot the breeze. He was ready to kick back, hear a few jokes and tell a few jokes.

Perhaps he observed some of his slaves, in the little amount of time when they were not working—perhaps they were sharing a joke or having a drink and laughing. Maybe Solomon observed that and thought, *you know, I have been such a stuffed shirt as of late; I need to loosen up; I need to have a little fun.*

Many generations of Americans, given our wealth and free time, have pursued the pleasure of so many of the 5 senses.



The Vanity of Pleasure Under the Sun (a graphic); from [B. C. Newton](#); accessed September 7, 2018.

Although Dr. John Gill tells⁹² us that Solomon did not pursue the sordid lusts, we actually do not know all that Solomon did. Solomon is not very explicit in what he actually did, apart from mentioning wine, pleasure and folly. In the book of Kings, Solomon's 700 wives and 300 mistresses are mentioned, suggesting that he enjoyed that sort of physical encounter.

However, this lack of an explicit list of behaviors is at the explicit guidance of God the Holy Spirit. Solomon may have one set of things which gives him great pleasure, I may have another set, and you may have a third set. Now, if we followed Solomon around, and he did A, B and C—and found no lasting pleasure, we may be thinking, well, what about X, Y and Z, which are the pleasures that are more to my liking? The Bible, by being very general here, deals with every set of pleasurable acts that come to mind. 2 things may come to my mind, 8 things may come to yours (you being far more imaginative than me); but Solomon's conclusion covers all sets of pleasurable activities.

Ecclesiastes 2:1d			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
râ'âh (רָאָה) [pronounced raw-AWH]	<i>look, see, watch; behold, view, see here, listen up; observe</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperative	Strong's #7200 BDB #906
In the imperative, this can also mean, <i>regard, look after, see after, learn about, observe, watch, look upon, look out, find out; to see, observe, consider, look at, give attention to, discern, distinguish; to look at, gaze at.</i>			

⁹¹ The origin of that maxim is unknown, but one might make an argument for Eccles. 2:1–3 as its literary origin.

⁹² Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1.

Ecclesiastes 2:1d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
ṭōwb (טוב) [pronounced toh ^{bv}]	<i>pleasant, pleasing, agreeable, good, better; approved</i>	masculine singular adjective which can act like a substantive	Strong's #2896 BDB #373

As a noun, this can mean *the good thing, that which is good [pleasing, approved, kind, upright, right]; goodness, uprightness, kindness, right; that which is fair [beautiful]*. Owens translates this very well in 1Kings 2:18.

The NET Bible: "See what is good!" The volitive sequence of the cohortative (הַקְסִיחָ, 'anassÿkhah, "I will test you") followed by vav + imperative (וּרְאֵה, urÿ'eh, "and see!") denotes purpose/result: "I will test you...in order to see..." The verb רָאָה (ra'ah, "to see") has a broad range of meanings (e.g., in the Qal stem 16 categories are listed in HALOT 1157–1160 s.v.). In this context it means "to discover; to perceive; to discern; to understand" (HALOT 1159 s.v. הָאָר 13; BDB 907 s.v. הָאָר 5).⁹³

Dr. Bob Uteley: [This is a] Qal imperative (literally, "and look on goodness." The UBS Handbook for Translators says this can be understood as "see what good there is in it?" or "see what pleasure can offer?"⁹⁴

Translation: ...and see [if that is not] [lit., in, with] good." I believe that idea here is, Solomon is looking to see if this mirth, joy and fun is any good. After I have a bit of fun, will that be actually a good thing, he asks himself.

Other translators understand Solomon to me that he is going to see some pleasure; he will enjoy the good things of life. That might be a better approach than mine.

Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said to myself, "Let's approach this in a different way. I will give my heart to joy and pleasure and see if that is any good.

The Two Views of Ecclesiastes 2:1d (Enjoy yourself)

This phrase is also translated:

New American Standard Bible	So enjoy yourself.
World English Bible	...therefore enjoy pleasure...
Good News Translation	...and find out what happiness is.

New International Version	...to find out what is good.
New Living Translation	Let's look for the 'good things' in life.
NET Bible	...to see if it is worthwhile.

The first view has the most adherents, because this is the translation of the KJV (and many translators follow the lead of the KJV, if not given strong reason to go another way⁹⁵).

I believe that the second view is more accurate, that Solomon is out there to find the *good*, also known as, the *summum bonum* of life.

⁹³ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 15, 2018.

⁹⁴ Dr. Bob Uteley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:1.

⁹⁵ Many translations are nothing more than an updating of the KJV.

The Two Views of Ecclesiastes 2:1d (Enjoy yourself)

Google dictionary: *Definition of summum bonum: the highest good, especially as the ultimate goal according to which values and priorities are established in an ethical system.*⁹⁶

I believe this understanding also guides us better to understand Solomon's approach.

Solomon is saying, *This is the approach I am going to try, to find out if this is the good path.* I think that this understand better tells us what Solomon is doing; what path he is on.

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Dunagan understands this to mean *so enjoy yourself: And this is exactly what the world tells us to do, "You deserve a break today, you only go around once, live it up, don't worry, be happy". Solomon is leaving no stone unturned, maybe the meaning of life can be found in having fun, living it up. How many people "just want to have fun" or think that "having fun all the time" will bring happiness?*⁹⁷

Ecclesiastes 2:1e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
hinnêh (הִנֵּה) [pronounced hin-NAY]	<i>lo, behold, or more freely, observe, look here, look, listen, note, take note, duly note [that]; pay attention, get this, check this out</i>	interjection, exclamatory particle, demonstrative particle	Strong's #2009 (and #518, 2006) BDB #243
<p>This seems to attempt to take others and put them in the place of the person saying this (so that they see the same thing); or to grab the attention of the reader. From the many times I have seen this word used in a narrative, I believe that we may update the translation to, <i>he observed [that]; he saw; suddenly, unexpectedly, dramatically.</i> This goes along with the idea that this word is to cause us to see things from the viewpoint of someone in the narrative.</p>			
<p>The NET Bible: <i>The particle הִנֵּה (vÿhinneh, literally "Behold!") occurs after verbs of perception to introduce what was seen, understood or discovered (HALOT 252 s.v. הִנֵּה 8). It is used to make the narrative graphic and vivid, enabling the reader to enter into the surprise of the speaker (BDB 244 s.v. הִנֵּה c). This is an example of the heterosis of the deictic particle ("Behold!") for a verb of perception ("I found"). See E. W. Bullinger, Figures of Speech, 510-34.</i>⁹⁸</p>			
gam (גַּם) [pronounced gahm]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, as well; even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168
hûw' (אוּה) [pronounced hoo]	<i>he, it; him, himself as a demonstrative pronoun: that, this (one); same</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> , is implied	Strong's #1931 BDB #214

⁹⁶ From [Google Dictionary](#); accessed July 23, 2018.

⁹⁷ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1.

⁹⁸ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 15, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:1e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
hebel (הֶבֶל) [pronounced HEH ^B -vel]	vapor, breath; mist, darkness; unsubstantial, emptiness, empty, vanity, meaningless, vacuous; vain, vainly; idol	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1892 BDB #210

Used figuratively for something transitory and unsatisfactory. Often used of things which are transitory, evanescent or frail.

John W. Ritenbaugh: "Vanity" (Hebrew hebel) is a vivid metaphor used 33 times in the book. Literally, it suggests a breath, something akin to vapor, like one's breath on a cold day, or a puff of smoke rising from a fire. Smoke and breath not only disappear quickly, but neither can they be grasped and held on to. Thus, vanity aptly portrays life as being insubstantial, rather flimsy, and passing.⁹⁹

The NET Bible: This use of הֶבֶל (hevel) denotes "futile, worthless, fruitless, pointless" (HALOT 237 s.v. I הֶבֶל 2; BDB 210–11 s.v. I הֶבֶל 2). It is a synonym to לְלוֹהֵם (mÿholal, "folly") in 2:2a and an antonym to טוֹב (tov, "worthwhile, beneficial") in 2:1b and 2:3c.¹⁰⁰

Translation: But, observe, that also [was] empty. We have no idea how long that Solomon pursued fun, parties, joking around and hanging out; but, after a few weeks or a few months or maybe even a year or 3, he decided that this approach to life is also empty (it is empty, just as his search for secular wisdom came up short).

Here, Solomon is telling us, up front, that this search would be unfruitful.

Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said to myself, "Let's approach this in a different way. I will give my heart to joy and pleasure and see if that is any good."

Ecclesiastes 2:1e: This was also empty (various commentators)

Mark Dunagan: Solomon says, "pay attention here---a life devoted to pleasure is a hollow life". I found no lasting happiness, values or meaning in such a pursuit.¹⁰¹

David Posey: [Y]ou can almost hear him saying, 'Are we having fun yet?'¹⁰²

College Press Bible Study: As in the other experiment, he states his conclusion at the beginning. Futility marks his pursuit. He should not have been surprised, for from his own pen had previously come the words, "Even in laughter the heart may be in pain, and the end of joy may be grief" (Prov. 14:13). He declares the reality of this.¹⁰³

Matthew Poole: [This life] is vain, and unable to make men happy, because sensible pleasures are mean and unsuitable to the noble and heaven-born soul of man, and if excessively used, apter to cloy and glut men than to satisfy them, and are frequently mixed with, and most commonly end in, bitterness, as being the great instruments and occasions of sin, and of all its fatal consequences.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ From [Bible tools](#) accessed June 17, 2018.

¹⁰⁰ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 15, 2018.

¹⁰¹ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1.

¹⁰² Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1.

¹⁰³ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:1–11 (comments).

¹⁰⁴ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1.

Ecclesiastes 2:1e: This was also empty (various commentators)

Dr. Peter Pett: *The writer summarises his findings from his next venture, the search for pleasure, for good things. Perhaps meaning could be found in that. But it failed. That also was empty and meaningless. That also did not finally satisfy the heart and the mind.*¹⁰⁵

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Trapp: *For though these hogs may grunt out their "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die," yet, if death but draw the curtain, and look in upon them, all the mirth is marred, and they put into as great an agony as Belshazzar was at the sight of the handwriting that was against him.*¹⁰⁶

Soon after trying pleasure, laughter and fun, Solomon begins to question it.

To laughter, I have said, is praised; and to mirth, what is this one doing? Ecclesiastes 2:2 **I said, regarding laughter, [it] is mad; and regarding mirth [or, *pleasure*], what does it do?**

Regarding laughter, I have said it is too often irrational; and what does pleasure really accomplish?

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	To laughter, I have said, is praised; and to mirth, what is this one doing?
Revised Douay-Rheims	Laughter I <u>counted error</u> : and to mirth I said: <u>Why are you vainly deceived?</u>
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	To laughter I said, <u>in time of affliction</u> . It is mockery; and to mirth. <u>What profit is it to the man who indulges in it?</u>
Peshitta (Syriac)	I said of laughter, <u>What pleasure is there in it?</u> and of mirth, What do you accomplish?
Updated Brenton (Greek)	I said to laughter, Madness: and to mirth, Why do you [do] this:...

Significant differences: The Latin as *counted error* rather than *is praise*. The Syriac has *What pleasure is there in it*, which makes more sense. The Greek has *madness*, which also makes more sense.

The MT has *what is this one doing* as the final phrase. The Latin has *Why are you vainly deceived*; and the Aramaic targum has *What profit is it to the man who indulges in it*.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Easy English	It was silly to laugh all the time. I could look for things to make me happy. But they would not make my life worth anything.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	It is foolish to laugh all the time. Having fun does not do any good.
Good News Bible (TEV)	I discovered that laughter is foolish, that pleasure does you no good.
<i>The Message</i>	What do I think of the fun-filled life? Insane! Inane!

¹⁰⁵ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:1.

¹⁰⁶ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 2:1.

My verdict on the pursuit of happiness? Who needs it?

NIRV “Laughter doesn’t make any sense,” I said. “And what can pleasure do for me?”

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	I had something to say concerning the laughter and merrymaking which came of my experiment with pleasure: “It is madness.” And of pleasure itself I said, “It does not accomplish a thing.”
Contemporary English V. The Living Bible	Laughing and having fun is crazy. What good does it do? I said to myself, “Come now, be merry; enjoy yourself to the full.” But I found that this, too, was futile. For it is silly to be laughing all the time; what good does it do? V. 1 is included for context.
New Berkeley Version	Of laughter I said, “It is madness,” and of amusement, “What does it accomplish?”
New Century Version	It is foolish to laugh all the time, and having fun doesn’t accomplish anything.
New Life Version	I said of laughing, “It is crazy,” and of fun, “What use is it?”
New Living Translation	So I said, “Laughter is silly. What good does it do to seek pleasure?”
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	So I said to myself, “It is foolish to laugh all the time, and continually doing what makes me happy does not bring any lasting benefit.”

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	To laughter, I said, ‘You’re a burden!’ And to joy, I asked, ‘What have you achieved?’
Beck’s American Translation	I said about laughter, it doesn’t make any sense, and about pleasure, what does it accomplish?
Common English Bible	Merriment, I thought, is madness; pleasure, of no use at all.
International Standard V	“Senseless,” said I concerning laughter and pleasure, “How practical is this?”
New Advent (Knox) Bible	Wouldst thou know how I learned to find laughter an empty thing, and all joy a vain illusion;...
Translation for Translators	So I said <i>to myself</i> , “It is foolish to laugh <i>all the time</i> , and continually doing what I enjoy does not seem to bring any lasting benefit.”

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Alpha & Omega Bible	I SAID TO LAUGHTER, MADNESS: AND TO MIRTH, WHY DO YOU THIS:...
Awful Scroll Bible	I am to have ventured of amusement, being the bragger of joyfulness, that this is to be producing.
Conservapedia	I realized that such silliness is mad, and of amusement, what does it accomplish?
God’s Truth (Tyndale)	But lo, that was vanity also: in so much as I said unto laughter: you are mad, and to *mirth: What do you? A portion of v. 1 is included for context. *mirth from the Hebrew is joy, gladness, rejoice
NIV, ©2011	“Laughter,” I said, “is madness. And what does pleasure accomplish?”
Peter Pett’s translation	I said of laughter, “This is madness,” and of merriment, “What does it do?”
Unlocked Literal Bible	I said about laughter, “It is crazy,” and about pleasure, “What use is it?”
Urim-Thummim Version	I said of laughter, it is mad: and of mirth, what does it?
Wikipedia Bible Project	"To have fun", I said, "is madness. And happiness, what does it do?"

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

New American Bible (2011)	Of laughter I said: “Mad!” and of mirth: “What good does this do?”
New Jerusalem Bible	This laughter, I reflected, is a madness, this pleasure no use at all.
Revised English Bible–1989	Of laughter I said, “It is madness!” And of pleasure, “What is the good of that?”

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible Of laughter I said, "This is stupid," and of pleasure, "What's the use of it?"
The Complete Tanach Of laughter, I said, "[It is] mingled"; and concerning joy, "What does this accomplish?"

Of laughter, I said, "[It is] mingled": mixed with weeping and sighs.

and concerning joy, what: good does it accomplish? Behold, its end is grief.

exeGeser companion Bible Of laughter, I say, Halal!
Of cheerfulness, What works?
JPS (Tanakh—1985) Of revelry I said, "It's mad!" Of merriment, "What good is that?"
Orthodox Jewish Bible I said of laughter, It is mad; and of simchah, What doeth it accomplish?

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible I thought, "It is foolish [mad; crazy; insane] to laugh, and having fun [pleasure] doesn't accomplish anything [- what can it do...?]."
Pastor John Griffith I said of laughter, "It is madness," - A SENSE OF HUMOR IS IMPORTANT but you must realize that you can't face the tests - the CHP's of life or the crisis your about to face on the basis of the last good laugh you had. and of pleasure, "What does it accomplish?"

*** Let's understand that Solomon is not attacking a healthy sense of humor or periodic times of enjoyable God honoring pleasure.

Kretzmann's Commentary I said of laughter, of the joy and cheerfulness which he madly attempted to reach, It is mad, foolish, it affords no real satisfaction; and of mirth, What doeth it? It accomplishes nothing of value, it avails nothing in the attainment of real, lasting good.

NET Bible® I said of partying, "It is folly,"
and of self-indulgent pleasure, "It accomplishes nothing!"¹¹
¹¹ Heb "What does it accomplish?" The rhetorical question "What does it accomplish?" expects a negative answer: "It accomplishes nothing!" (see E. W. Bullinger, Figures of Speech, 949–51). See, e.g., Gen 1:19; 18:14, 17; Deut 7:17; 1 Sam 2:25; Job 40:2; Pss 56:7[8]; 90:11; 94:16; 106:2; Eccl 3:21.

The Pulpit Commentary I said of laughter, It is mad. Laughter and mirth are personified, hence treated as masculine. He uses the term "mad" in reference to the statement in Eccles. 1:17, "I gave my heart to know madness and folly." Septuagint, "I said to laughter, Error (περιφοράν);" Vulgate, Risum reputavi errorem. Neither of these is as accurate as the Authorized Version. Of mirth, What doeth it? What does it effect towards real happiness and contentment? How does it help to fill the void, to give lasting satisfaction? So we have in Prov. 14:13, "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of mirth is heaviness;" though the context is different. The Vulgate renders loosely, Quid frustra deeiperis?

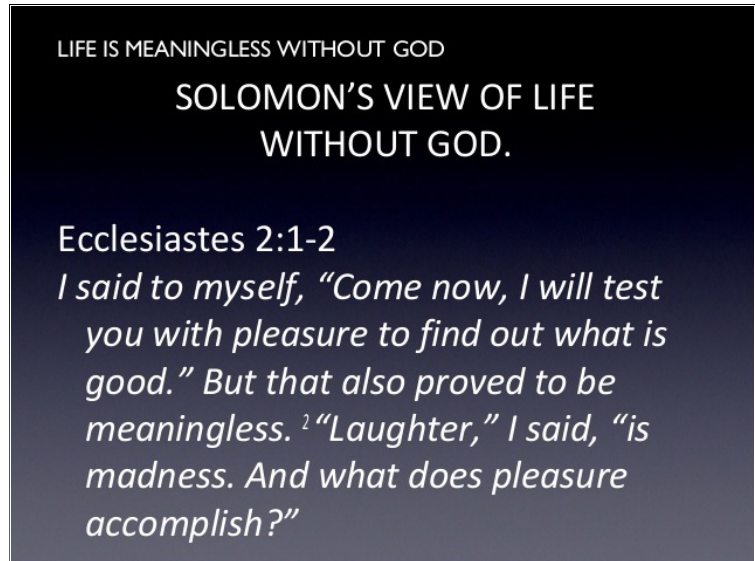
Syndein/Thieme {Solomon starts in on Pleasure - Too much study, need to laugh a little!}

The Voice Laughter I said . . . is foolish! And, what does pleasure accomplish? {Nothing}
Teacher: Of laughter I said, "Foolishness." Of pleasure, "And in the end what is accomplished?"

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

C. Thompson (updated) OT To laughter I said, It is madness; and to mirth, What is this you are doing?
Concordant Literal Version Mirth, I said, is a raving, And rejoicing, what then is it achieving?

Ecclesiastes 2:1–2: Solomon’s View of Life Without God (a graphic); From [Slide Player](#); accessed September 7, 2018.



English Standard Version	I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?"
Green’s Literal Translation	I said of laughter, <i>It is madness, and of mirth, What does it do?</i>
Modern English Version	And I said of frivolous fun, "They are only senseless ideas"; and regarding selfish pleasure, "What purpose is this?"
Updated Bible Version 2.11 Daniel Whedon (updated)	I said of laughter, It is insane; and of mirth, What does it do? To mirth I said, You are mad, (foolish,) and to pleasure, what does she accomplish, or amount to?
World English Bible Young’s Updated LT	I said of laughter, "It is foolishness;" and of mirth, "What does it accomplish?" Of laughter I said, "Foolish!" and of mirth, "What is this it is doing?"

The gist of this passage: Solomon considers laughter and pleasure, and concludes that they accomplish nothing.

Ecclesiastes 2:2a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l’]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong’s # BDB #510
s ^e chôwq (שְׂחֹוֹק) [pronounced s ^e KHOHK]	<i>laughter, mocking, derision; an object of derision; a dupe, a laughingstock; laughter; sport</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong’s #7814 BDB #966

The NET Bible: *Heb “laughter.” The term שְׂחֹוֹק (skkhoq, “laughter”) has a fourfold range of meanings: (1) “joyful laughter” (Ps 126:2; Prov 14:13; Job 8:21); (2) “frivolous laughter, merrymaking” (Eccl 2:2; 7:3, 6); (3) “pleasure, sport” (Prov 10:23; Eccl 10:19); and (4) “derision, mockery, laughingstock” (Jer 20:7; 48:26, 27, 39; Job 12:4; Lam 3:14). See HALOT 1315 s.v שְׂחֹוֹק; BDB 966 s.v. שְׂחֹוֹק. In Ecclesiastes, שְׂחֹוֹק is always used in contexts of self-indulgent banqueting, drinking, frivolous partying and merrymaking (Eccl 2:2; 7:3, 6; 10:19). It is distinct from “healthy” joy and laughter (Ps 126:2; Job 8:21). The connotation of “frivolous merrymaking” fits this context best.¹⁰⁷*

’âmar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong’s #559 BDB #55
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¹⁰⁷ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 15, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:2a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
hâlal (לָלַל) [pronounced haw-L AHL]	<i>praised, celebrated; one who is praised; one who is celebrated</i>	Pual participle	Strong's #1984 BDB #237

One form of this verb is found in 1Sam. 21:13, where David *feigns madness* (in the Hithpoel imperfect); so there may be a similar meaning for the Pual. If that is the case, this is the only place where that meaning is to be found.

Translation: *I said, regarding laughter, [it] is mad;...* This is one interpretation, and an excess of laughter is not really a great thing, it is madness. Another interpretation is, *laughing is celebrated or praised, but what does it really do?* (That is bringing v. 2b into the picture).

Solomon, when out in the world, could occasionally hear people laughing—and sometimes great, explosive laughter. And, no doubt, on many of those occasions, what has been said is humorous. But that cannot be perpetuated into a sustaining happiness or contentment with life.

Today, one of the popular television channels is Comedy Central. Can you enjoy your life by watching this particular channel throughout your waking hours? Of course not. In fact, more often than not, I personally find the comedians and the shows on that channel to be offensive.

I once heard a comedian and thought he was pretty funny, so I played his comedy routine for my nephew. I ended up being embarrassed by the comedian. I had heard the censored version; but the DVD that I had was the uncensored version. Nothing was bleeped. I did not realize how often he used crude and offensive language until I played that DVD for my young nephew. I ended up apologizing to him.

Ecclesiastes 2:2 Regarding laughter, I have said it is too often irrational; and what does pleasure really accomplish?

Ecclesiastes 2:2a: What about laughter—is it mad? (various commentators)

Dr. Dan Hill: *Pleasure: After all the study, Solomon was ready to have some fun so he seeks happiness in pleasure. Mirth (KJV) is the lightness of life, laughter, glee. Conclusion: It is madness!*¹⁰⁸

The Cambridge Bible: *The choice of a word cognate with the madness of chap. Eccles. 1:17, gives a special emphasis to the judgment which the man thus passes on himself. There was as much insanity in this form of life as in the other. He was plunging into madness with his eyes open and might say.*¹⁰⁹

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *We may look upon the troubles and painful mystery of life and be sad; or we may strive to laugh them away. There is a serious, and also a merry mood of treating the dark enigma of our present state. Here we have a wise man making a trial of worldly pleasure.*¹¹⁰

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary continues: *It is Moral Insanity. "I said of laughter, it is mad." In the wild excitement of pleasure, a man loses his claim to rationality—it is but the infatuation of madness. To forsake duty, and allow the senses to run riot, is to dethrone reason. The symptoms of the mental and moral diseases are similar.*

¹⁰⁸ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> accessed September 1, 2018.

¹⁰⁹ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:2.

¹¹⁰ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:1-2.

Ecclesiastes 2:2a: What about laughter—is it mad? (various commentators)

The Preacher's Commentary continues, suggesting three results: 1. *There is delusion. The insane mind lives in a false and unreal world. The true proportion of things are disturbed. The man of pleasure is not governed by truth and reality...* 2. *The supremacy of wild passions. The insane man is the subject of uncontrollable impulses. Reason being no longer his guide, he is driven about by the storms of passion; and, like a ship without a rudder, has no power of self-direction. He who lives for this world's pleasure alone, give up the high command of himself, and becomes the sport of untamed and destructive passions...* 3. *There is an entire perversion of the faculties. The will, instinct, and emotions are all perverted in mental disease. The man who forsakes God, and lives for pleasure.*¹¹¹

Using a somewhat different vocabulary, the Preacher's Commentary is speaking of scar tissue of the soul.

The College Press Bible Study: *Laughter is associated with pleasure. He has learned to laugh much because he has had great pleasure; but once again he admits to the superficial nature of this unrewarding experience. He labels his laughter as "madness," and asks of pleasure, "What does it accomplish?" Laughter, madness, and pleasure should be thought of as harmless delights in this context. Neither does madness convey the idea of mental insanity, but rather boasting and foolishness. His conclusion is that there isn't any true, lasting value in the exercising of sensuous pleasure.*

The College Press Bible Study continues: *Note this additional commentary on this subject in Eccles. 7:3 (Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad.); Eccles. 7:6 (For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fools; this also is vanity.) and Eccles. 10:19 (Bread is made for laughter, and wine gladdens life, and money answers everything.). In like manner, Jesus taught that the presence of laughter is not necessarily a sign of genuine joy (Luke 6:25—"Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. "Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.).*¹¹²

Ray C. Stedman: *Laughter only deals with the peripheries of life. There is no solid content to it. "The laughter of fools is like the crackling of thorns under the pot," (Eccles. 7:6). Laughter is only a crackling noise, that is all. It leaves one with a sense of unfulfillment.*¹¹³

Dr. John Gill: *The risible faculty in man is given him for some usefulness; and when used in a moderate way, and kept within due bounds, is of service to him, and conduces to the health of his body, and the pleasure of his mind; but when used on every trivial occasion, and at every foolish thing that is said or done, and indulged to excess, it is mere madness, and makes a man look more like a madman and a fool than a wise man.*¹¹⁴

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *[Laughter is] mad...when made the chief good; it is harmless in its proper place.*¹¹⁵

Keil and Delitzsch: *In the midst of the laughter and revelling in sensual delight, the feeling came over him that this was not the way to true happiness, and he was compelled to say to laughter, It has become mad.*¹¹⁶

Dunagan: *Solomon had realized that behind laughter can be a tremendous amount of pain, "Even in laughter the heart may be in pain" (Prov. 14:13). Most of us have ran into people who try to laugh everything away. Everything is a joke, the response to even the most serious questions of life is some silly or frivolous answer.*¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:1–2.

¹¹² *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:1–11 (comments). The verses, from the ESV, were added.

¹¹³ Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 2.

¹¹⁴ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:2.

¹¹⁵ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:2.

¹¹⁶ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 2:2.

¹¹⁷ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:2.

Ecclesiastes 2:2a: What about laughter—is it mad? (various commentators)

J. Vernon McGee: *[Solomon] probably had a comedian or a court jester to entertain him and tell him the latest jokes — probably many of them questionable. He said, "I found this to be a great waste of time."*¹¹⁸

Often, when you look behind the gay mask of the comedian, you often discover a life which is much less happy and laughter-filled than you might suspect. Whether you discover a person with a massive need to be approved, or an erratic personality, or a drug-indulging lifestyle; it is generally a far cry from the few minutes of laughter that such a one is able to engender.

Many of these comedians keep looking to push the envelope; but that envelop was pushed all the way through long ago. For me, I have a difficult time hearing most comedians because, even if they are occasionally funny, their profanity laced rants get tiring.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 2:2b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>leh</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
sim ^e châh (שמחה) [pronounced <i>sim^e-KHAW</i>]	<i>joy, gladness, mirth, great joy, rejoicing, enjoyment, pleasure</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #8057 BDB #970
<p>The NET Bible: <i>The term שמחה (simkhah, "pleasure") has a two-fold range of meanings in Ecclesiastes: (1) it can refer to the enjoyment of life that Qoheleth affirms is good (5:17; 8:15; 9:7; 11:8, 9) and that God gives to those who are pleasing to him (2:26; 5:19); and (2) it can refer to foolish pleasure, that is, frivolous merrymaking (2:1, 2; 7:4). The parallelism between שמחה and שוקוֹ (skkhoq, "laughter, frivolous merrymaking") in 2:2 suggests that the pejorative sense is in view here.</i>¹¹⁹</p>			
mâh (מה) [pronounced <i>maw</i>]	<i>what, how, why</i>	interrogative; exclamatory particle	Strong's #4100 BDB #552
zeh (זה) [pronounced <i>zeh</i>]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	feminine singular demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260
<p>The feminine and masculine have slightly different spellings.</p>			
<p>These two particles combine to mean, <i>what [is] this?</i></p>			
‘âsâh (עשה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i>]	<i>the one doing, the one making, a constructor, a fashioner, a preparer</i>	feminine singular, Qal active participle	Strong's #6213 BDB #793

Translation: ...and regarding mirth [or, pleasure], what does it do? Having this great time accomplishes nothing. At some point, the laughing, the mirth and the pleasure end; and what was really been done by it? You do not

¹¹⁸ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt (chapter 2) accessed September 3, 2018.

¹¹⁹ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 15, 2018.

feel any better afterward; it is not a long-lasting high; and you have accomplished nothing as a result. You are still the same person under the same results as before.

Although Eaton describes¹²⁰ *mirth* as *thoughtful pleasure*; I think that we should select a more general meaning. In fact, it would not be out of line for you to think specifically about the things which give you the greatest pleasure and incorporate them into your understanding of this passage.

Mirth and pleasure, like laughter, is not something which is necessarily sinful (although, of course, it can be). But when that is searched out as happiness in life, this search will be futile. What does it really avail us in the long run? There are people who frequent comedy clubs—are they overall happier than those who do not? Of course not. In fact, in these past few years, in the presidency of Donald Trump, many comedians have turned angry, and their sense of humor has become a stringing together a half dozen insulting phrases concerning the president. If a parallel phrasing had been applied to the previous president (President Obama), the very same people would not find these words entertaining. They would understand them to be what they really are—thinly veiled anger and hatred. The point I am trying to make is, these are comedians who are doing this, and it is clear that they are not happy and they cannot be mollified. If these comedians are clearly not happy, do we expect to find anything more than limited stimulation in listening to them?

Matthew Henry on *mirth*: *Mirth is the entertainment of the fancy, and, though it comes short of the solid delights of the rational powers, yet it is to be preferred before those that are merely carnal and sensual.*¹²¹

Ecclesiastes 2:2 Regarding laughter, I have said it is too often irrational; and what does pleasure really accomplish?

Ecclesiastes 2:2b: What good does mirth (or, *pleasure*) do? (commentators)

James Burton Coffman: *The rhetorical question at the end of this verse has negative intent...It simply means that mirth and laughter accomplish absolutely nothing.*¹²²

Matthew Poole: *What good does it do? Or how can it make men happy? I challenge all the epicures in the world to give me a solid and satisfactory answer.*¹²³

Benson (of mirth): *What good is it? Or how can it make men happy? I challenge all the epicures in the world to give me a solid answer.*¹²⁴

Dunagan: *"What does it accomplish?"-If more people in life would ask this question concerning what they are presenting pursuing, they would find the gospel message extremely attractive. Pleasure doesn't fill the void.*¹²⁵

Ray C. Stedman: *Of pleasure, Solomon's comment is, "What use is it?" What does it contribute to life? Nothing, is his answer. Pleasure consumes resources, it does not build them up. Most of us cannot afford a night out more than once or twice a year because it costs so much. Going out uses up resources that hard work have put together. Pleasure, Solomon concludes, adds nothing.*¹²⁶

¹²⁰ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26. Eaton does qualify his definition somewhat, as less specific.

¹²¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1–11.

¹²² From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 2, 2018.

¹²³ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:2.

¹²⁴ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1–2 (slightly edited).

¹²⁵ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:2.

¹²⁶ Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 2.

Ecclesiastes 2:2b: What good does mirth (or, *pleasure*) do? (commentators)

Stedman says once or twice a year. When I was young, our family going out to eat was a rare event. My parents were very frugal about food. We never lacked for food; but steaks were a rare event, and eating out, even rarer. Now, it is far more commonplace. If I am working out in the field, I think nothing of stopping somewhere to buy lunch. But the principle is the same—there is no long-term satisfaction or contentment to be found in a night out, even if you have a really good time.

Dr. Peter Pett: *Thus his conclusion was that laughter which resulted from 'having a good time' was folly, it was empty, and that seeking merriment accomplished nothing. After all, what did it do, what did it accomplish, what did it leave you with when it was all over? The answer is, absolutely nothing.*¹²⁷

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Is Mirth (Pleasure) the Best Way to Attain Happiness? (various commentators)

Expositor's Bible Commentary on the conclusion: *Once more, as he forthwith announces, he is disappointed in the result. He pronounces mirth a brief madness; in itself, like wisdom, a good, it is not the Chief Good; to make it supreme is to rob it of its natural charm.*¹²⁸

Gary Everett explains Solomon's quick conclusion: *[Solomon, an] educated man, walks among the poor and uneducated, and he sees the vanity of these conversations. He notes how their words are useless in providing answers to life. This type of laughter and mirth is the product of foolish jesting and vain imaginations.*¹²⁹

David Guzik: *Solomon tested the life lived for laughter, pleasure, and fun. Like a modern celebrity he ran from party to party, entertainment to entertainment. At the end of it all, he judged it to be "Madness" and without accomplishment.*¹³⁰

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *The pleasures of the world promise much, but they deceive at last. He who seeks in this way to drown the sense of the sad facts of life becomes at last disgusted with his own device. He first suspects, and then discovers himself befooled.*

The Preacher's Commentary continues: *1. He is deceived as to their depth and intensity. They promise to entrance the soul, and to shut out all painful thought and anxiety. But they cannot accomplish this,—“Even in laughter, the heart is sad.” 2. He is deceived as to their constancy. They promise to entertain the soul all life's journey through. But they soon clog the senses, and wear out the energy. Even the power of enjoying the world often passes away before the world itself. Pleasure casts her votaries off when they have toyed with her for a season, and the brief delight is turned into loathing and disgust. The soul sorrowfully asks the question which needs and expects no answer.*¹³¹

J. H. Newman: *In the midst of sinful pleasures, it is well if men have sufficient moral strength remaining to question them, and to suspect their delusive charms. Worldly mirth ends in vexation, remorse, and disgust; but spiritual joy yields a profit of infinite satisfaction.*¹³²

¹²⁷ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:2.

¹²⁸ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 2:1-11.

¹²⁹ Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 2:1-3 (slightly edited).

¹³⁰ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

¹³¹ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:1–2.

¹³² *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:2 (suggestive comments).

Is Mirth (Pleasure) the Best Way to Attain Happiness? (various commentators)

Keil and Delitzsch: *...and to joy (mirth), which disregards the earnestness of life and all due bounds, he is constrained to say, What does it result in? = that it produces nothing, i.e., that it brings forth no real fruit; that it produces only the opposite of true satisfaction; that instead of filling, it only enlarges the inner void.*¹³³

Dr. Dan Hill give us divine viewpoint when it comes to life: *Principle: The greatest fun you will ever have is as a believer, in fellowship, looking right down the barrel of life.*¹³⁴

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

I have been to parties, and have heard one person after another say absolutely absurd things, and people laugh; and someone else says something absurd, and people laugh again. But the humor only goes so far; and the absurdity can only go on for a limited amount of time. I am reminded of a Phil Ochs song, where he sings, "As another clever voice repeats absurd"¹³⁵ I would like to say, *I was at that party*. Many of us have heard that. Sometimes, it can even be a very clever absurdity; but appreciation for and enjoyment of same is perpetuated for a very limited amount of time. Even if there are several people there, each of which adds his own clever absurdity, the fun and enjoyment only lasts for so long. This explains why, a person searching for this sort of stimulation might fall into substance abuse. Drugs or alcohol might continue the feeling of gaiety, but even they have a shelf life (besides often taking your life to a disastrous place). And, no matter how you might perceive your remarks post-intoxication, those around you find them far less entertaining than you do.

Ecclesiastes 2:2 Regarding laughter, I have said it is too often irrational; and what does pleasure really accomplish?

Ecclesiastes 2:2: Solomon's conclusions of laughter and mirth (commentators)

Easton calls laughter, *a superficial gaiety*, and mirth, *a thoughtful pleasure*.¹³⁶

Dr. Bob Utley: *"laughter" and "pleasure"...bring no lasting peace, joy, or hope!*¹³⁷

Clarke on laughter and mirth: *[Solomon] tells the former to her face that she is mad; but as to the latter, he thinks her so much beneath his notice, that he only points at her, and instantly turns his back.*¹³⁸ I don't think this is really accurate; but I may form a collection of these.

The Cambridge Bible: *In each case the question might be asked "What does it work? What is its outcome?" And the implied answer is "Absolutely nothing."*¹³⁹

Clarke: *Solomon does not speak here of a sober enjoyment of the things of this world, but of intemperate pleasure, whose two attendants, laughter and mirth are introduced by a beautiful prosopopoeia as two persons; and the contemptuous manner wherewith he treats them has something remarkably striking. He tells the former to her face that she is mad; but as to the latter, he thinks her so much beneath his notice, that he only points at her, and instantly turns his back.*¹⁴⁰

¹³³ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 2:2.

¹³⁴ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> accessed September 1, 2018.

¹³⁵ From <https://genius.com/Phil-ochs-miranda-lyrics> accessed July 15, 2018.

¹³⁶ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

¹³⁷ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:2.

¹³⁸ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

¹³⁹ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:2.

¹⁴⁰ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:2.

Ecclesiastes 2:2: Solomon's conclusions of laughter and mirth (commentators)

Gary Everett: *Why does the Preacher make such a conclusion in Ecclesiastes 2:2? Perhaps when an educated man walks among the poor and uneducated, he sees the vanity of these conversations. He notes how their words are useless in providing answers to life. This type of laughter and mirth is the product of foolish jesting and vain imaginations.*¹⁴¹

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

None of the commentary on this verse means, you can't laugh, you can't tell a joke or you can't watch a comedian or a comedic movie. None of these things are inherently sinful (although they certainly can be). They are simply not the doorway to a life of happiness. None of these things will make you content, even if you find a way to fill, say, 6 hours with this sort of activity.

Comedy movies tend to be an hour 20 or an hour and 30 minutes. It is quite rare for a comedy to run 2 hours in length. The comedy can only be sustained for so long. A theater (or home) of laughing people can only go on for so long. Any attempt to stretch this out much longer is madness.

Solomon will later draw these conclusion: Eccles. 7:2–6 *It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools. For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fools; this also is vanity.*

Bear in mind, in Eccles. 7, Solomon has not found yet any definitive answers; he is still searching for human contentment.

Pro. 14:13 *Even in laughter the heart may ache, and the end of joy may be grief.*

There are two conclusions that we come to from the book of Ecclesiastes: life is better when one has a relationship with God (the Creator of life); and in life, there ought to be a balance. As a teacher, I attempted to include humor in every hour that I taught; but this had to be balanced out with the material I was teaching them. I could not spend the hour entertaining them; nor could I spend the hour dryly teaching the material. Ideally, I tried to find a balance.

However, when a nation has become too out of balance with God, this happens: Isa. 22:12–13 *In that day the Lord GOD of hosts called for weeping and mourning, for baldness and wearing sackcloth; and behold, joy and gladness, killing oxen and slaughtering sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine. "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."* See also Amos 6:3–6 1Peter 4:2–4.

Ecclesiastes 2:2 *Regarding laughter, I have said it is too often irrational; and what does pleasure really accomplish?*

This sort of stimulation has clear limits. Even in a film which is comedic, often there is the ending, which wraps up several plot points, or establishes particular relationships. Not often is there a comedy movie, where little or none of it makes sense; and it does not have an ending more than, "We ran out of jokes."

There is nothing wrong with humor in life or having a laugh. But very little can be built upon this.

Ecclesiastes 2:2 *Regarding laughter, I have said it is too often irrational; and what does pleasure really accomplish?*

¹⁴¹ Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:2.

Is Laughter Good or Bad? (When Critics Ask)

PROBLEM: Sometimes the Bible speaks as though laughter is good and other times as though it is bad. Solomon concluded, "I said of laughter, 'It is madness'; and of mirth, 'What does it accomplish?'" (Ecc. 2:2). He added that "sorrow is better than laughter" (7:3). Jesus added, "Woe to you who laugh now" (Luke 6:25). On the other hand, the Bible encourages laughter, claiming that "a merry heart does good, like medicine" (Prov. 17:22). Solomon even "commended enjoyment, because a man has nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry" (Ecc. 8:15).

SOLUTION: The answer lies in another verse. "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven... a time to laugh; a time to mourn" (Ecc. 3:1, 4). What the Bible says about laughter can be summarized in the following contrast.

WHEN LAUGHING IS GOOD

The means of enjoying life
Means of expressing happiness
In a cheerful spirit
As reasonable merriment

WHEN LAUGHING IS BAD

The end (goal) of life itself
Means of attaining happiness
In riotous derision
As senseless hilarity

From http://crusadeforthruth.com/links/PDFS/When_Critics_Ask.pdf (Eccles. 2:2); accessed September 9, 2018.

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Pastor John Griffith's translation: I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you, with pleasure. And behold, it too was futility. I said of laughter, "It is madness," and of pleasure, "What does it accomplish?"

Observations of Ecclesiastes 2:1–2 (Pastor John Griffith)

1. Our souls are designed to respond to God first.
2. Our individual old sin nature responses may differ (we have different trends and different lusts) but not the soul
3. Amplification on pleasure:
Pleasure as a pursuit of life has become the god of many today. Seeking the ultimate experience - that ultimate good feeling.
This is living life on the existential level where the experience rules where there are no absolutes to intrude only the interpretation of the moment, the situation, based on one's feelings - emotions.
I find it extremely interesting that this same hedonistic viewpoint was listed as one of the 5 main causes of bringing down the Roman Empire:

(Edward Gibbon - The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire 3 vols)

- #1. - Rapid increase in divorce - the breakdown of the family unit
- #2. - soaring taxes
- #3. - mad craze for pleasure - entertainment
- #4. - a gigantic arms build-up
- #5. - the decay of religion

With this we have the verification of what Solomon said back in 1:9b [So there is nothing new under the sun.](#)
- all adds up to man thinking that he is self-sufficient

From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_05.html accessed September 1, 2018.

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Ron Snider's translation of Ecclesiastes 2:1–2 I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself." And behold, it too was futility. I said of laughter, "It is madness," and of pleasure, "What does it accomplish?"

Ecclesiastes 2:1–2: Pleasure does not provide lasting satisfaction (Ron Snider)

1. The younger Solomon next moved from the search for academic wisdom and knowledge, which he had found to be a source of vexation and disappointment, to a new field of pursuit.
2. He has not indicated that wisdom and knowledge were not beneficial; he has simply observed the practical reality that greater insight brings a greater level of frustration.
3. It should be stressed that Qoheleth relied on his own empirical research rather than Divine revelation in his quest to understand the meaning of life.
4. In that regard, his tests were not scientific; rather, they were practical experiments to see what each activity accomplished and to find out what worked best in the human condition.
5. Since the mental stimulation of pursuing wisdom and knowledge did not provide lasting satisfaction, Qoheleth now turns to the physical realm in his pursuit of satisfaction.
6. It should be noted that Qoheleth set his sights on those pleasures that many people deem to be worthwhile in themselves; this includes wisdom and knowledge, the good life of wine, women, and song, creative projects, and the acquisition of the details of life.
7. We are again privy to his inner dialogue, as he converses with himself and determines to pursue a different course of action.
8. In this case, Qoheleth makes a polite demand of himself as seen in the use of the strengthened imperative of הֵלֵךְ (halakh-walk, "come now") and the particle of entreaty.
9. The imperfect verb נָסָה (nasah-to test) is cohortative in form, which changes the idea from a simple future I will test, to the idea of asking permission, let me test.
10. In many cases, this verb has the idea of testing or proving the quality of someone or something by means of adversity or hardship.
11. In this case, Qoheleth is not going to test himself with difficulty; he is intending to make pleasure the method by which he seeks satisfactory answers to life.
12. The root meaning of the noun שִׂמְחָה (simchah-pleasure) is that of being glad or joyful; what causes the joy is not really an issue.
13. In that regard, the term is used with respect to a variety of pleasures-some legitimate (Num. 10:10; 1Sam. 18:6) and some illegitimate. Judges 16:23; Ps. 35:16; Prov. 15:21
14. The older, wiser Solomon recognizes that true pleasure must come from God alone; therefore, the pleasure in view here would be those things that Qoheleth could have provided for himself apart from God or His will in the matter. Eccles. 2:26, 5:20
15. Although Qoheleth does not specify a particular type of pleasure or joy, we will observe that he includes wine (2:3), construction projects (2:4-6), acquisition of the details of life (2:7-8), entertainment (2:8), sexual pleasure (2:8), and anything else he thought might be satisfying (2:10).
16. The imperative of רָאָה (ra'ah-to see) has the idea here of a purpose clause; Qoheleth is testing himself with pleasure in order to see (discover, discern, perceive, understand) what value there may be in these things.
17. The prefixed בּ (b) is used two ways when dealing with sight; the first is used to denote the agent with which one looks (with the eyes), and the second is used to introduce the direct object of what one sees (as is the case here).
18. The phrase to see what is good has the idea of ascertaining whether or not pleasure is beneficial, valuable, or satisfying to the human condition-in short, does the good life of material pleasures bring satisfaction?
19. In that regard, the use of the imperative here would seem to indicate that Qoheleth fully expected the good life of pleasure to be satisfying.
20. The Latin expression summum bonum (the highest good) describes the ultimate end or the highest course which human beings should pursue.
21. Although most people would rather have pleasure than hardship, difficulty, etc., Qoheleth will document his finding that pleasure is not the summum bonum..

Ecclesiastes 2:1–2: Pleasure does not provide lasting satisfaction (Ron Snider)

22. Once again, Qoheleth does not leave us in suspense but states his conclusion at the outset.
23. We should understand that the younger Solomon engaged in these experiments and his conclusion is his judgment on what he discovered at that time.
24. As he continues in verse two, Qoheleth provides his thoughts on the significance of pleasure.
25. The first word in verse two is the Qal infinitive construct of צחק (tsachaq-to laugh), which functions as a verbal noun and has the nuance of laughing.
26. The root conveys the idea of laughter, which may be understood here as the response one has when confronted with something amusing.
27. This particular stem is used of making someone look foolish, making a mockery of someone, or even acting insanely. Job 12:17; Eccles. 7:7; Isa. 44:25
28. Qoheleth states that his view of laughing was that it was foolish, senseless, or insane since it yielded no lasting contentment.
29. The second concept he evaluated is the same noun that was used in verse one, which is translated by the English term pleasure.
30. The term is used of legitimate pleasure that comes from God (Eccles. 5:19) and is also used of the frivolous sort of pleasure that comes from carousing and partying. Eccles. 7:4
31. In this context it is difficult to determine if we should see any significant distinction between laughing and pleasure, which may be superficial or profound pleasure..
32. With respect to pleasure, Solomon concludes by asking a rhetorical question, which is intended to solicit a denial from the reader, who would acknowledge that it accomplishes nothing.
33. He brands frivolity as something that is not necessarily intelligent or psychologically sound; his argument with joy is that it does not accomplish anything that is lasting or worthwhile.
34. It appears that he passes a sharper verdict on laughter than he does when he only mildly disparages pleasure; this may have to do with the fact that laughter is the more transitory than some abiding joy.
35. It is evident that Solomon was acquainted with the concepts of surface joy and deep, abiding joy; however, neither could produce the good which he sought. Eccles. 2:3
36. Although one may surround himself with the best of comedians that keep him amused, he will find that the jokes and the laughter grow stale after a point.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#); accessed September 2, 2018 (will open as a Word Document on your computer).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

What Solomon says in this next verse may not make much sense, the first few times that you read it. He's going to enjoy drinking wine and he is going to bring in the wisdom into the picture as well. Now, when was the last time you associated drinking with wisdom? Bear with me, as this verse makes perfect sense. Also, it was interesting to me that so many people came to the same conclusion of how to interpret this.

I am not very happy with my translation, but I believe that my explanation is right on.

*Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: Solomon is not speaking here of sober enjoyment of the things of the world, but of intemperate pleasure, whose two attendants, laughter and mirth, are introduced by a beautiful prosopopeia, as two persons, whom he treats with the utmost contempt.*¹⁴²

¹⁴² *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Eccles. 2:2.

I am searching in my heart to continue with wine my body; and my heart bringing in the wisdom. And to grasp in folly as far as I can see where this [is] pleasant to sons of the Adam, who do below the heavens a number of days of their lives.

Ecclesiastes
2:3

I have searched my heart to lure my body with wine and my heart is bringing in the wisdom. Also [I seek] to take a hold of folly. As far as I can see, this [is] pleasant to the sons of man, who do [whatever they can] under the heavens [in whatever] number of days [allotted to] their lives.

Soon after, I decided to regularly drink alcohol, and yet retain wisdom in my thinking. Why not enjoy a bit of fun? From what I have observed, this approach to life is pleasant to the sons of man, who do whatever they can during the days God has given them to enjoy life.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	I am searching in my heart to continue with wine my body; and my heart bringing in the wisdom. And to grasp in folly as far as I can see where this [is] pleasant to sons of the Adam, who do below the heavens a number of days of their lives.
Revised Douay-Rheims	I thought in my heart, to <u>withdraw</u> my flesh from wine, that I might turn my mind to wisdom, and might <u>avoid</u> folly, till I might see what was profitable for the children of men: and what they ought to do under the <u>sun</u> , all the days of their life.
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	I tried in my heart to <u>enrapture</u> my flesh in the house of the feast of wine, and my heart conducted with wisdom, and to seize the folly of youth, until I examined and saw which of them was good for the children of men, that they may do while they abide in this world under the heavens, the number of the days of their life.
Peshitta (Syriac)	I thought in my heart to give myself to wine, but my heart reasoned with wisdom; and I laid hold upon understanding, till I might see what was good for the sons of men, which they should do under the <u>sun</u> all the days of their lives.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	And I examined whether my heart would <u>excite</u> my flesh as <i>with</i> wine, (though my heart guided <i>me</i> in wisdom,) and <i>I desired</i> to lay hold of mirth, until I should see of what kind is the good to the sons of men, which they should do under the <u>sun</u> all the days of their life.

Significant differences: The second verb is quite difficult to have a reasonable translation for; so there were strong differences in the ancient translations (which are noted by underlining).

The Latin has *avoid* when the word ought to be the exact opposite. The Syriac appears to leave out the word *folly*, *mirth*.

The Latin, Syriac and Greek all have *under the sun* rather than *under the heavens*.

There are clearly difficulties with translating and understanding this verse.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	I made a search with my heart to give pleasure to my flesh with wine, still guiding my heart with wisdom, and to go after foolish things, so that I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under the heavens all the days of their life.
Easy English	So I decided to drink wine to make myself happy. I wanted to understand how a fool thinks. But I did not want to be a fool myself. We only live for a short time on the earth. And I wanted to know the best way to use that time.

Easy-to-Read Version–2006	So I decided to fill my body with wine while I filled my mind with wisdom. I tried this foolishness because I wanted to find a way to be happy. I wanted to see what was good for people to do during their few days of life.
God's Word™	The Spokesman Studies Wine I explored ways to make myself feel better by drinking wine. I also explored ways to do some foolish things. During all that time, wisdom continued to control my mind. I was able to determine whether this was good for mortals to do during their brief lives under heaven.
Good News Bible (TEV)	Driven on by my desire for wisdom, I decided to cheer myself up with wine and have a good time. I thought that this might be the best way people can spend their short lives on earth.
The Message	With the help of a bottle of wine and all the wisdom I could muster, I tried my level best to penetrate the absurdity of life. I wanted to get a handle on anything useful we mortals might do during the years we spend on this earth.
NIRV	I tried cheering myself up by drinking wine. I even tried living in a foolish way. But wisdom was still guiding my mind. I wanted to see what was good for people to do on earth during their short lives.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	I extended my experiment to the pleasures of the table. I stimulated my body with wine and yet my mind always remained in control of every situation. I thought fulfillment could be found in silliness, the opposite of wisdom, so I put my hand to folly and asked, "What good is there for the sons of men to do during the few days of their short lives as they lived them under heaven?"
Contemporary English V.	I wanted to find out what was best for us during the short time we have on this earth. So I decided to make myself happy with wine and find out what it means to be foolish, without really being foolish myself.
The Living Bible	So after a lot of thinking, I decided to try the road of drink, while still holding steadily to my course of seeking wisdom. Next I changed my course again and followed the path of folly, so that I could experience the only happiness most men have throughout their lives.
New Berkeley Version	I explored in my heart to stimulate my body with wine — while my heart was acting with wisdom — and to lay hold of frivolity, so that I might see what was good for man to do under the sun during his lifetime.
New Century Version	I decided to cheer myself up with wine while my mind was still thinking wisely. I wanted to find a way to enjoy myself and see what was good for people to do during their few days of life.
New Life Version	I tried to find in my mind how to make my body happy with wine, yet at the same time having my mind lead me with wisdom. I tried to find how to take hold of what is foolish, until I could see what good there is for the sons of men to do under heaven during the few years of their lives.
New Living Translation	After much thought, I decided to cheer myself with wine. And while still seeking wisdom, I clutched at foolishness. In this way, I tried to experience the only happiness most people find during their brief life in this world.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	So, after thinking a lot about it, I decided to cheer myself up by drinking a lot of wine. While I was still trying to be wise, I acted stupidly. I tried to learn what people can do to be happy during the short time that they are alive on the earth.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	So I thought in my heart, 'I will drink wine for my flesh!' But my heart then led me toward wisdom. Next, I decided to hold onto joy Until I could see just what kind of good. There is to be found among sons of men, And what they can do in their short days of life.
Beck's American Translation	I tried to find out what happened when I stimulated my body with wine (my mind being wisely in control); and I also took hold of foolishness till I could see what is best for human beings to do under the sun during the short time of their life.
Common English Bible	I tried cheering myself with wine and by embracing folly—with wisdom still guiding me—until I might see what is really worth doing in the few days that human beings have under heaven.
International Standard V	I decided to indulge in wine, while still remaining committed to wisdom. I also tried to indulge in foolishness, just enough to determine whether it was good for human beings under heaven given the short time of their lives.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	Wouldst thou know how I learned to find laughter an empty thing, and all joy a vain illusion; how I resolved at last to deny myself the comfort of wine, wisdom now all my quest, folly disowned? For I could not rest until I knew where man's true good lay, what was his life's true task, here under the sun. V. 2 is included for context. In the Hebrew text, the first part of this verse refers not to the second thoughts which recalled the author to a simpler way of living, but to those first thoughts of which he afterwards repented: 'I considered how best to pamper my body with wine, how best to cling to my follies, yet retaining wisdom all the while'.
Translation for Translators	So, after thinking a lot about it, I decided to ◀cheer myself/cause myself to be happy▶ by drinking a <i>lot of</i> wine. So while I was still trying to be wise, I decided to do things that <i>many</i> people do to be happy during the short time that they are alive on the earth.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Alpha & Omega Bible	AND I EXAMINED WHETHER MY HEART WOULD EXCITE MY FLESH AS WITH WINE, THOUGH MY HEART GUIDED ME IN WISDOM, AND I DESIRED TO LAY HOLD OF MIRTH, UNTIL I SHOULD SEE OF WHAT KIND IS THE GOOD TO THE SONS OF MEN, WHICH THEY SHOULD DO UNDER THE SUN ALL THE DAYS OF THEIR LIFE.
Awful Scroll Bible	I have sought out in <i>the sensibility of</i> my heart, to draw along meat and wine, guiding <i>the sensibility of</i> my heart in wisdom, even to take hold of languorousness; maintain I to perceive that serviceable to the sons of mankind, that they remain to prepare under the expanse, the number of days of their sustenance.
Albert Barnes	I resolved (literally "I turned in my heart") to draw my flesh with wine (see the margin), my heart guiding me with wisdom. He only provided a translation for the first half.
Conservapedia Translation	I tried to give myself over to drunkenness, while seeking wisdom. I tried to avoid trouble until I could see what is good for men, to see what they should do with their time here on Earth.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	I intentionally tried to embolden my body by wine,—with my intellect scientifically guiding me,—and to seize upon folly until I could discover what was best for the children of Adam to do under the sun, for the number of the days they lived?
God's Truth (Tyndale)	So I thought in my heart, *to withdraw myself from wine, to apply my mind unto wisdom, and to comprehend foolishness until the time that among all things which are under the Sun, I might see what were best for men do, so long as they live under heaven. *(kju =to give myself unto wine)

HCSB	I explored with my mind how to let my body enjoy life [Lit to <i>pull my body</i>] with wine and how to grasp folly—my mind still guiding me with wisdom—until I could see what is good for people to do under heaven [Two Hb mss, LXX, Syr read <i>the sun</i>] during the few days of their lives.
Jubilee Bible 2000	I proposed in my heart to regale my flesh with wine and that my heart would walk in wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, until I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.
Lexham English Bible	I also {explored} {the effects of indulging my flesh} with wine. My mind guiding me with wisdom, {I investigated} folly so that I might discover what [is] good under heaven for {humans} to do {during the days of their lives}.
Peter Pett's translation	I searched in my heart how to sustain myself (my flesh) with wine, my heart yet guiding me with wisdom, and how to lay hold on frivolity, that I might see what it was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their life.
Tree of Life Version	I thought deeply about how to cheer my flesh with wine—letting my heart guide me with wisdom—and how to grasp folly, so that I could see what was worthwhile for the sons of men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives.
Unlocked Literal Bible	I explored in my heart how to gratify my desires with wine. I let my mind guide me with wisdom although I was still holding on to folly. I wanted to find out what is good for people to do under heaven during the days of their lives.
Urim-Thummim Version	I sought in my heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting my heart with Wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, until I might see what was good for the sons of men, which they should do under the cosmos all the days of their life.
Wikipedia Bible Project	I considered to myself to ply my flesh with wine, and my heart is used to wisdom, and to grasp onto folly, until I would see just how good to people that which they do under the sky, in the number of their days.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

The Heritage Bible	I was on the go for gain in my heart to draw out wine to myself, and my heart led me with wisdom, and to lay hold on stupidity, until I might see from where was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heavens all the days of their life.
New American Bible (2002)	I thought of beguiling my senses with wine, though my mind was concerned with wisdom, and of taking up folly, until I should understand what is best for men to do under the heavens during the limited days of their life. Though my mind . . . wisdom: while indulging in pleasure the author hopes to discover wherein man's true happiness consists.
New American Bible (2011)	Guided by wisdom,* I probed with my mind how to beguile my senses with wine and take up folly, until I should understand what is good for human beings to do under the heavens during the limited days of their lives. * [2:3] Guided by wisdom: using all the means money can buy, the author sets out on a deliberate search to discover if pleasure constitutes true happiness.
New English Bible—1970	So I sought to stimulate myself with wine, in the hope of finding out what was good for men to do under heaven throughout the brief span of their lives. But my mind was guided by wisdom, not blinded by [not blinded by: prob. rdg, Heb to grasp] folly.
New Jerusalem Bible	I decided to hand my body over to drinking wine, my mind still guiding me in wisdom; I resolved to embrace folly, to discover the best way for people to spend their days under the sun.
Revised English Bible—1989	I sought how to cheer my body with wine, and, though my mind was still guiding me with wisdom, how to pursue folly; I hoped to find out what was good for mortals to do under heaven during their brief span of life.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	I searched my mind for how to gratify my body with wine and, with my mind still guiding me with wisdom, how to pursue foolishness; my object was to find out what was the best thing for people to do during the short time they have under heaven to live.
The Complete Tanach	I searched in my heart to indulge my body with wine, and my heart conducting itself with wisdom and holding onto folly, until I would see which is better for the children of men that they should do under the heavens, the number of the days of their lives.

I searched in my heart: I returned to search in my heart to maintain all of them: feasting, wisdom, and folly, and to indulge and to pamper my body with wine feasting. Every feast of enjoyment is called מַשְׂתֵּה because of the wine.

conducting itself with wisdom: Even if my body is being indulged with wine, my heart is being conducted with wisdom, to hold onto the Torah.

and holding onto folly: to things that appear to me as folly, concerning which I said, (Prov. 30:1): "God is with me; yea, God is with me, and I will be able," for example, the wearing of shaatnez and mingled species in a vineyard, which Satan and the nations of the world dispute, and so he says (below 7: 18): "It is good that you should take hold of this," and also, concerning Saul, to whom it appeared folly to slay both man and woman, both infant and suckling, but it was the commandment of the Omnipresent, and he called it folly.

exeGesés companion Bible	I explored in my heart to draw my flesh to wine; yet driving my heart with wisdom: and to lay hold on folly until I see the good for the sons of humanity; which they work under the heavens the number of the days of their life.
Hebraic Roots Bible	I explored with my heart how to drag my flesh with wine, and leading my heart in wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, until I might see where the good for the sons of men is, that which they should do under the heavens the number of days of their life.
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	I ventured to tempt my flesh with wine, and to grasp folly, while letting my mind direct with wisdom, to the end that I might learn which of the two was better for men to practice in their few days of life under heaven.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	I searched in mine lev to draw my basar on with yayin, my mind guiding me with chochmah; and to lay hold on sichlut (folly), till I might see what was tov for bnei haAdam, which they should do under Shomayim all the few days of their life.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	I explored with my mind how to gratify myself with wine while [at the same time] having my mind remain steady and guide me wisely; and how to take control of foolishness, until I could see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives.
The Expanded Bible	I ·decided [^L explored with my heart] to cheer ·myself up [^L my body/flesh] with wine and embrace folly while my mind was ·still thinking wisely [guided by wisdom]. I wanted to see what was good for people to do ·on earth [^L under heaven; 1:3] during their few days of life.
Kretzmann's Commentary	I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, to comfort himself by its use, either with the object of nourishing the body or to have the sensual pleasure afforded by the exhilaration produced by the stimulant, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom, that is, to keep wisdom and discretion as the guiding principles of his life; and to lay hold on folly, to seize and enjoy the pleasures of the flesh, to find out whether they would satisfy, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, what course

they had best pursue in going through life, **which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life**. Solomon did what so many people have tried out since his time; instead of accepting the statements of God's Word concerning that which is good and beneficial to them, they determine to try out for themselves what is good and so are obliged to learn through many bitter and painful experiences. Solomon, having the means, took every opportunity for his experiment.

NET Bible®

I thought deeply about the effects of¹³ indulging myself with wine (all the while¹⁶ my mind was guiding me¹⁷ with wisdom) and the effects of¹⁹ behaving foolishly, so that²¹ I might discover what is profitable²² for people²³ to do on earth²⁴ during the few days²⁵ of their lives.

¹³tn The phrase “the effects of” does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

¹⁶tn The phrase “all the while” does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

¹⁷tn The word “me” does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

¹⁹tn The phrase “the effects of” does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

²¹tn Or “until.” The construction **דַּע אֲשֶׁר** (*'ad 'asher*, “until”) introduces a temporal result clause (e.g., Gen 27:44; 28:15; Num 21:35; Isa 6:11); see HALOT 787 s.v. III דַּע B.b. With an imperfect verb (such as **רָאָה**, *ra'eh*, Qal imperfect first common singular from **רָאָה**, *ra'ah*, “to see”), the compound construction **דַּע אֲשֶׁר** usually refers to future time (Gen 27:44; 29:8; Exod 23:30; 24:14; Lev 22:4; Num 11:20; 20:17; 1 Sam 22:3; Hos 5:15), but it also rarely refers to past time (Jonah 4:5; Eccl 2:3); see BDB 725 s.v. III דַּע II.1.a.b. Joüon 2:370 §113.k notes that when the compound construction **דַּע אֲשֶׁר** is occasionally used with an imperfect depicting past action to denote a virtual nuance of purpose: “until” = “so that,” e.g., Jonah 4:5; Eccl 2:3.

²²tn Heb “I might see where is the good?” The interrogative particle **אֵי** (*'e*, “where?”) used with the demonstrative pronoun **זֶה** (*zeh*, “this”) forms an idiom: “where [then]?” (HALOT 37–38 s.v. **אֵי** 2.a; see, e.g., 1 Sam 9:18; 1 Kgs 13:12; 2 Kgs 3:8; Isa 50:1; 66:1; Jer 6:16; Job 28:12, 20; 38:19, 24; Esth 7:5). The phrase **אֵי זֶה טוֹב** (*'e-zeh tov*) is an indirect question that literally means, “Where is the good?” that is, “what good?” (HALOT 38 s.v. **אֵי** 2.d).

²³tn Heb “the sons of man.”

²⁴tn Heb “under the heavens.”

²⁵tn Heb “number of the days.” The Hebrew noun **מִסְפָּר** (*mispar*, “number, quantity”) sometimes means “few” (e.g., Gen 34:30; Num 9:20; Deut 4:27; 33:6; Isa 10:19; Jer 44:28; Ezek 12:16; Ps 105:12; Job 16:22; 1 Chr 16:19); see HALOT 607 s.v. **מִסְפָּר** 2.b; BDB 709 s.v. **מִסְפָּר** 1.a. This phrase is an idiom that means, “during all their lives” (BDB 709 s.v.), “during their total [short] time of life,” that is, “as long as they live” (HALOT 608 s.v. **מִסְפָּר** 3.d). Ecclesiastes often emphasizes the brevity of life (e.g., 5:17; 6:12; 9:9). The LXX rendered **מִסְפָּר** in a woodenly literal sense: **ἀριθμὸν** (*ariqmon*, “the number [of days of their lives]”). Several English translations adopt a similar approach: “all the days of their life” (ASV, Douay) and “the number of days of their lives” (YLT). However, this idiom is handled well by a number of English translations: “during the few days of their lives” (RSV, NRSV, NASB, NIV, Moffatt, NJPS), “during the limited days of their life” (NAB), and “throughout the brief span of their lives” (NEB).

The Pulpit Commentary

I sought in mine heart; literally, I spied out (as Eccles. 1:13) in my heart. Having proved the fruitlessness of some sort of sensual pleasure, he made another experiment in a philosophical spirit. **To give myself unto wine**; literally, to draw (mashak) my flesh with wine; i.e. to use the attraction of the pleasures of the table.

Yet acquainting my heart with wisdom. This is a parenthetical clause, which Wright translates, "While my heart was acting [guiding] with wisdom." That is, while, as it were, experimenting with pleasure, he still retained sufficient control over his passions as not to be wholly given over to vice; he was in the position of one who is being carried down an impetuous stream, yet has the power of stopping his headlong course before it becomes fatal to him. Such control was given by wisdom. Deliberately to enter upon a course of self-indulgence, even with a possibly good intention, must be a most perilous trial, and one which would leave indelible marks upon the soul; and not one person in a hundred would be able to stop short of ruin. The historical Solomon, by his experiment, suffered infinite loss, which nothing could compensate. The Septuagint renders not very successfully, "I examined whether my heart would draw (εἰλκύσει) my flesh as wine; and my heart guided me in wisdom." The Vulgate gives a sense entirely contrary to the writer's intention; "I thought in my heart to withdraw my flesh from wine, that I might transfer my mind to wisdom." **And to lay hold on folly.** These words are dependent upon "I sought in my heart," and refer to the sensual pleasures in which he indulged for a certain object. "Dulce est desipere in loco," says Horace ('Canto.,' 4.12. 28); Εἴν μὲν μαινομένοις μάλα μαινομαι. **Till I might see.** His purpose was to discover if there was in these things any real good which might satisfy men's cravings, and be a worthy object for them to pursue **all the days of their life.**

Syndein/Thieme

{Now Add a Little of Liquid Cheer and See if that Helps}

I tried cheering myself with wine and it raised folly. My mind still guiding me with academics. I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives.

{Note: Without giving the details, Solomon says he tried everything to find happiness in the pleasures of life - to no avail.}

The Voice

Teacher: So I thought about drinking wine, for it soothes the flesh. But all the while my mind was filled with thoughts of wisdom—about how to rein in foolishness—until I might understand the best way for us to live out our brief lives and number of days under heaven.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Charles Thompson OT

Now I had examined whether my mind could lead my flesh to wine; and my mind had led it with wisdom, retaining a command over pleasure, until I should see of what sort that good is, which the sons of men are to pursue under the sun, all the days of their life.

Concordant Literal Version

I explored within my heart by stimulating my flesh with wine (While my heart was leading with wisdom) And by getting a hold on frivolity, Until I should see just where good may be for the sons of humanity In what they do under the heavens during the number of days in their lives."

Context Group Version

I searched in my heart how to cheer my flesh with wine, my heart yet guiding [me] with wisdom, and how to lay hold on senseless shame, until I might see what it was good for the sons of man that they should do under the skies all the days of their life.

Darby Translation

I searched in my heart how to cherish my flesh with wine, while practising my heart with wisdom; and how to lay hold on folly, till I should see what was that good for the children of men which they should do under the heavens all the days of their life.

Green's Literal Translation

I sought in my heart *how* to drag my flesh with wine, and leading my heart in wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, until I might see where the good for the sons of men *is*, that which they should do under the heavens the number of days of their life.

Modern English Version

I investigated how to cheer up my body with wine, while my heart was still guiding me with wisdom, in order to grasp folly until I might experience what is good for

	sons of men to do under heaven during the number of days that they might have life.
New American Standard B.	I explored with my mind [Lit <i>heart</i>] how to stimulate my body with wine while my mind [Lit <i>heart</i>] was guiding me wisely, and how to take hold of folly, until I could see what good there is for the sons of men to do [Lit <i>which they do</i>] under heaven the few years [Lit <i>days</i>] of their lives.
New King James Version	I searched in my heart <i>how</i> to gratify my flesh [Lit. <i>to draw my flesh</i>] with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives.
Updated Bible Version 2.11	I searched in my heart how to cheer my flesh with wine, my heart yet guiding [me] with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, until I might see what it was good for the sons of man that they should do under heaven all the days of their life.
A Voice in the Wilderness	I sought in my heart to gratify my flesh with wine, while leading my heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, until I might find out what was good for the sons of men to do under the heavens all the days of their life.
Webster's Bible Translation	I sought in my heart, to give myself to wine, yet acquainting my heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.
World English Bible	I searched in my heart how to cheer my flesh with wine, my heart yet guiding me with wisdom, and how to lay hold of folly, until I might see what it was good for the sons of men that they should do under heaven all the days of their lives.
Young's Literal Translation	I have sought in my heart to draw out with wine my appetite, (and my heart leading in wisdom), and to take hold on folly till that I see where is this—the good to the sons of man of that which they do under the heavens, the number of the days of their lives.

The gist of this passage: Solomon then explores drinking, yet with some wisdom, hoping to lay a hold of just the right amount of folly, to determine what might be right for men to enjoy.

Here is how this logically progresses. Solomon has first pursued laughter and mirth; which led him to situations where drinking was occurring. So, maybe the key was a little bit of drinking, he suggests. However, Solomon, being a careful observer of human activity, recognizes that one can take drinking too far—so he is going to apply his wisdom so as not to take drinking too far.

This same illustration can be applied to the use of any sort of mood-changing or mind-altering substances. Instead of drinking in order to have fun, Solomon could also have decided, “I think I will smoke a little reefer and see how that works for me.”

Ecclesiastes 2:3a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
tûwr (רוּת) [pronounced <i>toor</i>]	<i>to spy, to search out, to explore; to go about</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #8446 BDB #1064
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
lêb (לֵב) [pronounced <i>lay^bv</i>]	<i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking; midst</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #3820 BDB #524

Ecclesiastes 2:3a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>BDB gives the following definitions: <i>inner man, mind, will, heart, understanding; inner part, midst; midst (of things); heart (of man); soul, heart (of man); mind, knowledge, thinking, reflection, memory; inclination, resolution, determination (of will); conscience; heart (of moral character); as seat of appetites; as seat of emotions and passions; as seat of courage.</i></p>			
<p>The NET Bible: <i>Heb "In my heart I explored." The verb תור (tur, "to seek out, to spy out, to explore") is used in the OT to describe: (1) the physical activity of "spying out" or "exploring" geographical locations (Num 13:2, 16, 17, 21, 25, 32; 14:6, 7, 34, 36, 38; Job 39:8) and (2) the mental activity of "exploring" or "examining" a course of action or the effects of an action (Eccl 1:13; 2:3; 7:25; 9:1). See BDB 1064 s.v. תור 2; HALOT 1708 s.v. תור. It was used as a synonym with דרש (darash, "to study") in 1:13: "I devoted myself to study (לשודרל, lidrosh) and to explore (לרותל, later)."</i></p>			
<p>The NET Bible continues: <i>As the repetition of the term לב (lev, "heart" or "mind") indicates (2:1, 3), this experiment appears to have been only an intellectual exercise or a cognitive reflection: "I said to myself (Heb "in my heart [or "mind"]," 2:1); "I explored with my mind (Heb "heart," 2:3a); and "my mind (Heb "heart") guiding me with wisdom" (2:3b). Qoheleth himself did not indulge in drunkenness; but he contemplated the value of self-indulgence in his mind.</i>¹⁴³</p>			
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^o]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
mâshak ^e (משך) [pronounced maw-SHAK ^e]	<i>to draw out, to lure, to drag, to continue with something, to proceed to, to march to</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #4900 BDB #604
<p>In battle, it means <i>to advance, to march to</i>. Its application is only a bit more difficult than that. It can mean ❶ <i>to draw up and lift out</i>; ❷ <i>to draw [a bow]</i>; ❸ <i>to proceed, to march</i>; ❹ <i>to draw out a sound, to make a continuous sound</i>; ❺ <i>to draw out, to lure, to gather to</i>; ❻ <i>to prolong a condition, to continue</i>; ❼ and <i>to trail seed (to draw out seed while you are sowing).</i></p>			
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
yayin (יין) [pronounced YAH-yin]	<i>wine</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3196 BDB #406
'êth (את) [pronounced ayth]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
bâsâr (בשר) [pronounced baw-SAWR]	<i>flesh; body; animal meat</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #1320 BDB #142
<p>Keil and Delitzsch (referencing the Haggadists): <i>"to draw the flesh" = to bring it into willing obedience by means of pleasant attractions.</i>¹⁴⁴</p>			

¹⁴³ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 15, 2018.

¹⁴⁴ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 2:3.

Ecclesiastes 2:3a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
The NET Bible: Heb "my flesh." The term בָּרֶשֶׁת (baksari, "my flesh") may function as a synecdoche of part (i.e., flesh) for the whole (i.e., whole person). See E. W. Bullinger, <i>Figures of Speech</i> , 642. One could translate, "I sought to cheer myself." ¹⁴⁵			
The NET Bible: Or "I sought to cheer my flesh with wine." The term לִמְשֹׁךְ (limshokh, Qal infinitive construct from מָשַׁךְ, mashakh, "to draw, pull") functions in a complementary sense with the preceding verb תִּוֵּר (tur "to examine"): Heb "I sought to draw out my flesh with wine" or "I [mentally] explored [the effects] of drawing out my flesh with wine." The verb מָשַׁךְ means "to draw, to drag along, to lead" (BDB 604 s.v. מָשַׁךְ) or "to draw out; to stretch out [to full length]; to drag; to pull; to seize; to carry off; to pull; to go" (HALOT 645–46 s.v. מָשַׁךְ). BDB suggests that this use be nuanced "to draw, to attract, to gratify" the flesh, that is, "to cheer" (BDB 604 s.v. מָשַׁךְ 7). While this meaning is not attested elsewhere in the OT, it is found in Mishnaic Hebrew: "to attract" (Qal), e.g., "it is different with heresy, because it attracts [i.e., persuades, offers inducements]" (b. Avodah Zarah 27b) and "to be attracted, carried away, seduced," e.g., "he was drawn after them, he indulged in the luxuries of the palace" (b. Shabbat 147b). See Jastrow 853-54 s.v. מָשַׁךְ; Here it denotes "to stretch; to draw out [to full length]," that is, "to revive; to restore" the body (HALOT 646 s.v. מָשַׁךְ [sic] 3). The statement is a metonymy of cause (i.e., indulging the flesh with wine) for effect (i.e., the effects of self-indulgence). ¹⁴⁶			

Translation: I have searched my heart to lure my body with wine... I struggled with the translation of this verse and I am not happy with where I ended up. What appears to be the case is, Solomon decided to do a little drinking.

I struggled with translating this verse; and it appears that others did as well.

Ecclesiastes 2:3 Soon after, I decided to regularly drink alcohol, and yet retain wisdom in my thinking. Why not enjoy a bit of fun? From what I have observed, this approach to life is pleasant to the sons of man, who do whatever they can during the days God has given them to enjoy life.

"I gave myself to wine..." (Ecclesiastes 2:3a) (Various translations)

Mostly literal translations:

Albert Barnes	I resolved (literally "I turned in my heart") to draw my flesh with wine...
Conservapedia Translation	I tried to give myself over to drunkenness,...
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	I intentionally tried to embolden my body by wine...
HCSB	I explored with my mind how to let my body enjoy life [Lit to pull my body] with wine and how to grasp folly...
Lexham English Bible	I also {explored} {the effects of indulging my flesh} with wine.
Unlocked Literal Bible	I explored in my heart how to gratify my desires with wine.
Urim-Thummim Version	I sought in my heart to give myself unto wine,

Nearly literal translations:

¹⁴⁵ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 15, 2018.

¹⁴⁶ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 15, 2018.

“I gave myself to wine...” (Ecclesiastes 2:3a) (Various translations)

Charles Thompson OT	Now I had examined whether my mind could lead my flesh to wine...
Concordant Literal Version	I explored within my heart by stimulating my flesh with wine...
Context Group Version	I searched in my heart how to cheer my flesh with wine...
Green’s Literal Translation	I sought in my heart <i>how</i> to drag my flesh with wine...
Modern English Version	I investigated how to cheer up my body with wine...
New American Standard B.	I explored with my mind [Lit <i>heart</i>] how to stimulate my body with wine...
New King James Version	I searched in my heart <i>how</i> to gratify my flesh [Lit. <i>to draw my flesh</i>] with wine...
Webster’s Bible Translation	I sought in my heart, to give myself to wine...

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown offers two approaches: *give myself unto wine* — literally, “to draw my flesh,” or “body to wine” (including all banquetings). *Image from a captive drawn after a chariot in triumph* (Rom. 6:16, Rom. 6:19; 1Cor. 12:2); or, one “allured” (2Peter 2:18, 2Peter 2:19).¹⁴⁷

Interestingly enough, there are no dramatic differences, despite the many differences in the way of translation v. 3a.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Now, if you have been to any party where you have people making absurd comments and then laughing (see v. 2), you quickly see that wine and other intoxicants are often involved. Solomon then appears to think, “Okay, maybe the key is a little bit of alcohol.”

Solomon has decided to spend some of his time drinking wine. Searching his heart suggests that he has thought about it and has decided to pursue it. I would guess that, in Solomon’s early days, he did not spend any time drinking—and was never drunk. But, this is different. Solomon is older now and he has seen a lot and he has seen many people drink...and it looks like they are having a bit of fun.

Ecclesiastes 2:3 *Soon after, I decided to regularly drink alcohol, and yet retain wisdom in my thinking. Why not enjoy a bit of fun? From what I have observed, this approach to life is pleasant to the sons of man, who do whatever they can during the days God has given them to enjoy life.*

Ecclesiastes 2:3a: Can we find satisfaction in wine? (Various commentators)

Dr. John Gill: *I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine,.... Not in an immoderate way, so as to intoxicate himself with it, in which there can be no pleasure, nor any show of happiness; but in a moderate, yet liberal way, so as to be innocently cheerful and pleasant, and hereby try what good and happiness were to be possessed in this way.*

Solomon was able to enjoy a variety of food and drink to choose from; with the idea that, whatever he desired, that he could put on his own table.

The College Press Bible Study: *“Wine” could represent all the pleasures of the table as well as just the enjoyment of wine. It would be understood as the part used for the whole. So elaborate were King Solomon’s tables that the Queen of Sheba was totally exhausted in her praise (1Kings 10:5). One should not understand his statement as an abandonment to strong drink. He assures us that his mind continued to guide him wisely.*¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:3.

¹⁴⁸ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:1–11 (comments).

Ecclesiastes 2:3a: Can we find satisfaction in wine? (Various commentators)

Ken Cayce: *Many people in our society today, drink alcohol and take drugs to hide from the realities of life. They feel that for a moment, the deadening will help them to forget their sorrows. It really does not work. When the effects are gone, they are even more depressed than when they began.*¹⁴⁹

Ray C. Stedman: *Wine, he says, is of no help either. It appears to be. Every social gathering today almost invariably includes the dispensing of liquor first. The first thing the stewardess says after your plane is airborne is, "Would you like a cocktail?" There is a widespread conviction in the world that you cannot get strangers to talk to each other until you loosen them up with liquor. And it seems to work. After wine or cocktails are served, people soon begin to chat a little bit and the tenseness and quietness is lessened. But not much of any significance is ever said, either on planes or in social gatherings. There is little communication; it is all surface conversation. Wine, Solomon says, does not really help. "I looked into it," he says, "and I found that it too was vanity; it left people with a feeling of futility and emptiness."*¹⁵⁰

Dr. Bob Utley: *This may refer to drunkenness, but with limits, safeguards (i.e., the wisdom of the sages). This is similar to the use of "mind expanding" drugs today, which have temporary pleasurable results, but long term addiction and destruction!*¹⁵¹

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

What Solomon is doing here is quite clever. He is not saying, *so I have decided to try getting drunk a lot.* Because note what he says next:

Ecclesiastes 2:3b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lêb (לֵב) [pronounced <i>lay^bv</i>]	<i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking; midst</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #3820 BDB #524
This is the 3 rd use of <i>my heart</i> in this chapter.			
nâhag (נָהַג) [pronounced <i>naw-HAHG</i>]	<i>bringing, leading, urging on a course, driving [animals] along, driving away, leading away [as a captive]</i>	Qal active participle	Strong's #5090 BDB #624
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
châk ^e mâh (חָכְמָה) [pronounced <i>khawk^e-MAW</i>]	<i>wisdom [in all realms of life], doctrine in the soul; skill [in war]</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #2451 BDB #315

¹⁴⁹ From bible.studys.org accessed September 6, 2018.

¹⁵⁰ Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 2.

¹⁵¹ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:3.

Ecclesiastes 2:3b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>The NET Bible: <i>Heb “and my heart was leading along in wisdom.” The vav + noun, בְּלִי (vklippi) introduces a disjunctive, parenthetical clause designed to qualify the speaker’s remarks lest he be misunderstood: “Now my heart/mind....” He emphasizes that he never lost control of his senses in this process. It was a purely mental, cognitive endeavor; he never actually gave himself over to wanton self-indulgence in wine or folly.</i>¹⁵²</p> <hr/> <p>Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: <i>yet acquainting ... wisdom — literally, “and my heart (still) was behaving, or guiding itself,” with wisdom [Gesenius].</i>¹⁵³</p>			

Translation: ...and my heart is bringing in the wisdom. I read this to understand that he is still able to pursue wisdom while he is enjoying a little wine. Perhaps he has studied men who drink and still record great books of wisdom (there have certainly been recent authors who do this).

Solomon is a very smart man. He has observed people all of his life. He has seen people drink and he has seen obsessive drunkenness. So, he is going to indulge himself with wine, but he is not going to be an idiot about it. He is not going to drink himself to stupification night after night.

Application: We see this today with drugs—particularly with marijuana when it has been made legal. Young people think, *it’s harmless; it’s just a bit of fun. I will enjoy it from time to time and not become a druggie.* This is Solomon’s approach to drinking; this is often the *wise young person* deciding that he (or she) is going to enjoy being stoned (*after all, they think, this is just the 21st century version of having a cocktail after work*). What really happens? Best case scenario, the person does not become a druggie; but also, he is not happy, satisfied or good with his life. He is using an intoxicant and there is not real joy in intoxication. It is a bit of fun, a bit of fluff, but it is no good for your mind.

Application: There is also the worst case scenario, and that is, psychological dependence upon marijuana (or whatever your choice of intoxicant is). You fool yourself to think that you are just enjoying the 21st century cocktail, but what you are doing is potentially setting yourself up to want/need/desire this drug more and more often. Now, will you go through physical withdrawals if you stop smoking pot for a week? Highly unlikely. You know what is also highly unlikely, when you get hooked? Not smoking pot for a week. Simply deciding that you are going to take a week off from smoking pot, if you have been a regular pot smoker for awhile—well, it is not going to happen; or it will not happen very often.

Application: Mere human indulgence or gratification can never solve the problems of the human heart.

Ecclesiastes 2:3 *Soon after, I decided to regularly drink alcohol, and yet retain wisdom in my thinking. Why not enjoy a bit of fun? From what I have observed, this approach to life is pleasant to the sons of man, who do whatever they can during the days God has given them to enjoy life.*

Solomon’s use of wisdom in Ecclesiastes 2:3b (various commentators)

Dunagan: *[Solomon applied shrewd] and prudent human wisdom, a very careful examination. Solomon didn’t become a drunk, rather he shrewdly and cleverly attempted to find the ultimate balance, that fine line between what the world calls excess and having a good time.*

¹⁵² From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 15, 2018.

¹⁵³ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:3.

Solomon's use of wisdom in Ecclesiastes 2:3b (various commentators)

Dunagan continues: *[Solomon was not employing] Divine wisdom, but rather, the best wisdom available "under the sun", human wisdom at its best. Solomon knew that his fine wines could prove deadly to him (Prov. 23:29–35), he knew that he was playing with fire. Even though Solomon never became an alcoholic, for a while he was addicted to such things. It's just that, like many worldly and successful people, Solomon simply moved from one addiction to another.*¹⁵⁴

Dunagan makes some excellent points, but then goes off the deep end, adding this: *Solomon's use of wine no more justifies social drinking among Christians than his harem justifies polygamy among Christians.*¹⁵⁵ If he had said *social drunkenness* rather than *social drinking*, then he would have been right on the money.

Whedon: *The sense seems to be, that not rashly or impulsively, but with reflection and self-counsel, he sought to determine whether real enjoyment could be found in merely sensual pleasures.*¹⁵⁶

John Dummelow: *Whatever indulgences he may yield to, he is careful not to drift, and so vitiate his experiment. Through all he retains a prudent self-control.*¹⁵⁷

Matthew Poole: *Yet acquainting my heart with wisdom; yet resolving to use my wisdom; either,*
 1. *To set bounds to my pleasures. Or rather,*
 2. *That I might try whether I could not arrive at satisfaction, by mixing wine and wisdom together, by using wine to sweeten and allay the toils of wisdom, and wisdom to prevent that destruction which many bring upon themselves by intemperate pleasures whilst they seek for satisfaction, that so I might have the comfort without the danger and mischief of pleasures.*¹⁵⁸

Benson: *I sought to...gratify myself with delicious meats and drinks; yet...resolving to use my wisdom, that I might try whether I could not arrive at satisfaction, by mixing wine and wisdom together.*¹⁵⁹

The Cambridge Bible: *Possibly...the seeker gives the rein to pleasure, yet seeks to guide or drive the steed with his wisdom.*

The Cambridge Bible continues: *This also was an experiment, and he retained, or tried to retain, his self-analysing introspection even in the midst of his revelry. All paths must be tried, seeming folly as well as seeming wisdom, to see if they gave any adequate standard by which the "sons of men" might guide their conduct, any pathway to the "chief good" which was the object of the seeker's quest.*¹⁶⁰

Dr. John Gill: *[Solomon] was guided and governed by wisdom in this research of happiness; he was upon his guard, that he did not go into any sinful extravagancies, or criminal excesses in eating and drinking.*¹⁶¹

Dr. Peter Pett on Solomon's exploration of pleasure, but with using his wisdom: *And this was the way he went about it. He experimented with enjoying good wine, without letting it take possession of him or hinder his thought processes. He experimented with 'having a good time'. He wanted to find out what would satisfy the hearts of men all the days of their lives. He threw himself into it. But all clearly failed. That was no way to live a life.*¹⁶²

¹⁵⁴ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:3.

¹⁵⁵ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:3.

¹⁵⁶ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from e-Sword; Eccles. 2:3.

¹⁵⁷ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcb/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 6, 2018.

¹⁵⁸ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:3.

¹⁵⁹ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:3.

¹⁶⁰ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:3.

¹⁶¹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:3.

¹⁶² Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:3.

Solomon's use of wisdom in Ecclesiastes 2:3b (various commentators)

Hitzig: *Wine is compared to a draught beast such as a horse, and he places wisdom as the driver on the box, that his horse may not throw him into a ditch or a morass.*¹⁶³

Keil and Delitzsch: *[Solomon] wished to have enjoyment, but in measure, without losing himself in enjoyment, and thereby destroying himself. He wished to give himself over to sweet desipere, but yet with wise self-possession (because it is sadly true that ubi mel ibi fel) to lick the honey and avoid the gall. There are drinkers who know how to guide themselves so that they do not end in drunken madness; and there are habitual pleasure-seekers who yet know how so far to control themselves, that they do not at length become roués. Koheleth thus gave himself to a foolish life, yet tempered by wisdom, till there dawned upon him a better light upon the way to true happiness.*¹⁶⁴

The NIV Study Bible: *From first to last (v. 9) the author used wisdom to discover the good (v. 1) and the worthwhile (v. 3).*¹⁶⁵

Solomon, from the thinking of human viewpoint, was pretty smart here. Obviously, when it comes to food and drink, people overdo it—and they overdo it all of the time. Solomon observes their enjoyment and the pitfalls and decides, *I will partake, but I will be careful to avoid the pitfalls.*

However, this is quite the tightrope act, as Solomon writes in Prov. 20:1 *Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.* (ESV)

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Who should drink? There are some people who should never drink (believers and unbelievers), as they are prone to drunkenness. When a person argues the marijuana should be legalized because it is the same thing as drinking, that person ought not to use any sort of stimulant or depressant. Such a person is unable to recognize that wine with dinner is different from drinking a bottle of wine after dinner.

Anyone who drinks to get drunk ought not to drink.

Most people who have attended AA and SA and take it seriously (they are there for a reason other than fulfilling a state requirement of some sort) recognize that taking a drink or smoking a joint violates their sobriety and can lead them back into a life of substance abuse.

There are some people who can drink a beer when eating pizza, a margarita when eating Mexican food; and not have any alcohol other than that. There are people who can nurse a drink (or have a single drink) through the entire length of a party. This does not violate any Christian principles (unless, perhaps, you are drinking in front of a weaker brother who might be thus encouraged to over-indulge).

Ecclesiastes 2:3c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

¹⁶³ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 2:3. From [Collins English dictionary](#): *A draught animal is one which pulls heavy loads, for example on a farm.*

¹⁶⁴ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 2:3.

¹⁶⁵ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 987 (footnote).

Ecclesiastes 2:3c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʾâchaz (אָחַז) [pronounced aw-KHAHZ]	<i>to grasp, to take hold of, to seize; to take [by hunting, fishing]; to hold [something taken]; to take possession of</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #270 BDB #28
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
sik ^e luwth (שׂוֹלָה) [pronounced sihk-LOOTH]	<i>folly, silliness, foolishness</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #5531 BDB #698

Also spelled çik^eluwth (סׁוֹלָה) [pronounced sihk-LOOTH]. The verb it comes from means *to be foolish, to be a fool*. This noun is only found here in Ecclesiastes.

Dr. Bob Utley: *The verb form (BDB 698) in Aramaic means "to know," "to be intelligent," or "to cause to understand." This connotation seems to fit the context best (cf. Eccles. 1:17 2:12-13 7:25).*¹⁶⁶

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *folly — namely, pleasures of the flesh, termed "mad," Eccles. 2:2.*¹⁶⁷

Dunagan: *[Folly] could be "harmless nonsense". This could include being the class clown, cutting up, being a prankster, and playing practical jokes on others. The type of person who is joking all the time.*¹⁶⁸

The NET Bible: *Heb "embracing folly." The verb אָחַז ('akhaz, "to embrace") is normally used to describe the physical action of taking hold of an object. Here it is used metaphorically to describe a person's choice of lifestyle, that is, adopting a particular course of moral conduct (e.g., Job 17:9); see HALOT 31–32 s.v. אָחַז; BDB 28 s.v. אָחַז.*¹⁶⁹

Translation: Also [I seek] to take a hold of folly. I pick up the verb from v. 3a and continue it here; Solomon decides to pursue some fun, some folly; a little silliness.

Using his wisdom, Solomon is looking to find just the right balance; just the right amount. He does not want to overdo it.

Ecclesiastes 2:3 *Soon after, I decided to regularly drink alcohol, and yet retain wisdom in my thinking. Why not enjoy a bit of fun? From what I have observed, this approach to life is pleasant to the sons of man, who do whatever they can during the days God has given them to enjoy life.*

¹⁶⁶ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:3.

¹⁶⁷ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:3.

¹⁶⁸ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:3.

¹⁶⁹ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 15, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:3c: Solomon and folly (various commentators)

College Press Bible Study: *“Folly” implies the harmless nonsense that so often accompanies the pleasure of dining with friends. We should understand this to be the lowest level of his pleasurable pursuits.*¹⁷⁰

Matthew Henry: *He resolved to try what mirth would do and the pleasures of wit, whether he should be happy if he constantly entertained himself and others with merry stories and jests, banter and drollery; if he should furnish himself with all the pretty ingenious turns and repartees he could invent or pick up, fit to be laughed over, and all the bulls, and blunders, and foolish things, he could hear of, fit to be ridiculed and laughed at, so that he might be always in a merry humour.*¹⁷¹

Martin G. Collins: *Self-indulgence leads to excessive striving for yet more worldly pleasure. For those whose chief aim in life is sensual pleasure, there is never enough to satisfy. Self-indulgence can lead to full-blown addiction.*¹⁷²

Solomon said that he retained his wisdom, which suggests to me that he avoided the pitfalls which he has observed elsewhere.

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Ecclesiastes 2:3d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿad (עד) [pronounced <i>gahd</i>]	<i>as far as, even to, up to, until</i>	preposition of duration or of limits	Strong's #5704 BDB #723
rāʾâh (ראַה) [pronounced <i>raw-AWH</i>]	<i>to see, to look, to look at, to view, to behold; to observe; to perceive, to understand, to learn, to know</i>	1 st person singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7200 BDB #906
ʿêy (אֵי) [pronounced <i>āy</i>]	<i>where</i>	adverb; with a suffix, the verb <i>to be</i> may be implied	Strong's #335 BDB #32
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced <i>zeh</i>]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	masculine singular demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260
ṭôwb (טוֹב) [pronounced <i>tohv</i>]	<i>pleasant, pleasing, agreeable, good, better; approved</i>	masculine singular adjective which can act like a substantive	Strong's #2896 BDB #373
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l</i> ʰ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
bânîym (בְּנֵי) [pronounced <i>baw-NEEM</i>]	<i>sons, descendants; children; people; sometimes rendered men; young men, youths</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119

¹⁷⁰ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:1–11 (comments).

¹⁷¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1–11.

¹⁷² From [Bible Tools.org](http://BibleTools.org); accessed September 3, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:3d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾādām (אָדָם) [pronounced <i>aw-DAWM</i>]	<i>a man, a human being, mankind;</i> <i>transliterated Adam</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #120 & #121 BDB #9

The word *the Adam* can mean *man, mankind, humankind, men, human beings*.

Translation: *As far as I can see, this [is] pleasant to the sons of man,...* Solomon has viewed this among men, and it appears to him that they find this to be pleasant. So, maybe he has just not really hung out enough with the guys?

In making some basic observations, Solomon can see that there is some enjoyment to be had with wine; and he can also see how this has been overdone. So he looks to find that sweet spot between alcoholism and fun, so that this is pleasant to the sons of men.

He is hoping that the sweet spot is also the key to a contented life.

In this life, people do a great many things for personal stimulation, which can certainly include a variety of hobbies. There is nothing wrong with a believer having hobbies. However, fulfillment in life is dependent upon the intake of Bible doctrine. It is not sinful to fish, hunt, build furniture or collect stamps. It is all a matter of balance; and you have to balance that out with taking in the Word of God.

Solomon is discussing balance and using his intelligence; but he is not considering how spiritual growth enters into the picture. This is why he will conclude, on many occasions, that *all is emptiness and chasing after wind*.

Ecclesiastes 2:3e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾāsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>uh-SHER</i>]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom;</i> <i>where; in that, in which, in what</i>	relative pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to</i> <i>be</i> is implied	Strong's #834 BDB #81
ʿāsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i>]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to</i> <i>produce, to fashion, to form, to</i> <i>prepare, to manufacture;</i> <i>accomplish</i>	3 rd person plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
tachath (תַּחַת) [pronounced <i>TAH-</i> <i>khahth</i>]	<i>underneath, below, under,</i> <i>beneath; instead of, in lieu of; in</i> <i>the place [in which one stands];</i> <i>in exchange for; on the basis of</i>	preposition of location or foundation	Strong's #8478 BDB #1065
shâmayîm (שָׁמַיִם) [pronounced <i>shaw-MAH-</i> <i>yim</i>]	<i>heaven, heavens, skies; the</i> <i>visible heavens, as in as abode</i> <i>of the stars or as the visible</i> <i>universe, the sky, atmosphere,</i> <i>etc.; Heaven (as the abode of</i> <i>God)</i>	masculine dual noun with the definite article	Strong's #8064 BDB #1029

Ecclesiastes 2:3e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
miç ^e phâr (מִיֻּצָפָאֵר) [pronounced mis ^e -FAWR]	number, counted, numerical total; a recounting, a narration	masculine singular construct	Strong's #4557 BDB #708
yâmîym (יָמַיִם) [pronounced yaw-MEEM]	days, a set of days; time of life, lifetime; a specific time period, a year	masculine plural construct	Strong's #3117 BDB #398
chayyîym (חַיִּיִם) [pronounced khay-YEEM]	life, lives, living, being alive, having life, immortality, a long life, sustenance, sustaining life; refreshment; being vigorous; prosperity, welfare, happiness, living prosperously	masculine plural substantive; masculine plural adjective with the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #2416 BDB #313

Keil and Delitzsch: *The accusative designation of time, "through the number of days of their life," is like Eccles. 5:17; Eccles. 6:12. We have not, indeed, to translate with Knobel: "the few days of their life," but yet there certainly lies in מִיֻּצָפָאֵר the idea that the days of man's life are numbered, and that thus even if they are not few but many (Eccles. 6:3), they do not endure forever.*¹⁷⁵

Whedon: *Better, The limited days of their lives; necessarily few.*¹⁷⁶

Translation: ...who do [whatever they can] under the heavens [in whatever] number of days [allotted to] their lives. I read this to understand that this is what many men during throughout their lives. Or, perhaps the idea is, this might be the way that Solomon find contentment for all of his life on earth.

There might just be that right balance of work and fun; and Solomon seeks to find that balance. He does not want to fall into debauchery—indicating that he is retaining his wisdom. So many youth fall into debauchery because they have no real wisdom to curb their desires.

Solomon continues to pursue the question of the previous chapter. Eccles. 1:3 **What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?** (ESV) Where is the reward? What's the payoff?

Paraphrased from Ray C. Stedman: *Solomon's question was, how best to spend your life. What can I do that will make me happy all of my life?*¹⁷⁷

Dr. John Gill: *...till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life; where the "summum bonum", or chief happiness of man lies; and which he should endeavour to seek after and pursue, that he might enjoy it throughout the whole of*

¹⁷³ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Eccles. 4:3.

¹⁷⁴ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:3 (slightly edited).

¹⁷⁵ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 2:3 (slightly edited).

¹⁷⁶ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 2:3.

¹⁷⁷ Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 2.

his life, while in this world: and that he might still more fully know it, if possible, he did [just the right things].¹⁷⁸

Paraphrased from Matthew Poole: *Solomon was trying, by several methods, to find out the true way to contentment and satisfaction, for his mortal life.*¹⁷⁹

Ecclesiastes 2:3 Soon after, I decided to regularly drink alcohol, and yet retain wisdom in my thinking. Why not enjoy a bit of fun? From what I have observed, this approach to life is pleasant to the sons of man, who do whatever they can during the days God has given them to enjoy life.

Ecclesiastes 2:1–3 I said to myself, “Let’s approach this in a different way. I will give my heart to joy and pleasure and see if that is any good. But, in the end, even that seemed to be empty and meaningless. Regarding laughter, I have said it is too often irrational; and what does pleasure really accomplish? Soon after, I decided to regularly drink alcohol, and yet retain wisdom in my thinking. Why not enjoy a bit of fun? From what I have observed, this approach to life is pleasant to the sons of man, who do whatever they can during the days God has given them to enjoy life.

Ecclesiastes 2:1–3: Is fun, laughter and pleasure the way to the good? (Comments)

Keil and Delitzsch: *[T]his experiment also to find out the summum bonum proves itself a failure: he found a life of pleasure to be a hollow life.*¹⁸⁰

Dr. Peter Pett: *[Solomon’s] conclusion was that laughter which resulted from ‘having a good time’ was folly, it was empty, and that seeking merriment accomplished nothing. After all, what did it do, what did it accomplish, what did it leave you with when it was all over? The answer is, absolutely nothing.*¹⁸¹

Dr. Thomas Constable summarizes this conclusion of Solomon’s: *Pleasure produces no lasting accomplishment, either. That is, while it has some temporary, immediate value (e.g., relieving grief or boredom), it does not produce anything permanently or ultimately worthwhile. Rather, the pursuit of pleasure yields a hollow life. It is clear from Eccles. 2:3 that Solomon’s investigation of pleasure was not a mindless dive into the morass of hedonism. Wisdom guided him throughout. He evidently pursued every pleasure available to an oriental monarch.*¹⁸²

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Pleasure and the Christian Life (Dr. Dan Hill)

PLEASURE is not wrong, God wants us to enjoy life.

John 10:10 speaks of "an abundant life..."

It is hard to visit Israel and spend anytime with the Jews and not see that these people have a zest for life.

¹⁷⁸ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:3.

¹⁷⁹ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:3.

¹⁸⁰ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 2:1.

¹⁸¹ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:2.

¹⁸² Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:1–3.

Pleasure and the Christian Life (Dr. Dan Hill)

Pleasure is great but it has two problems: First, it can become a distraction to what is really important in life, growing in Christ. Second, it can become a false foundation for life itself. By having temporal pleasure in life you can fool yourself into thinking everything is okay, but pleasure is only temporary and may have consequences.

The HEDONIST seeks pleasure and never looks at the consequences.

From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> accessed September 1, 2018.

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Is it possible that these are various hypotheses that Solomon has explored? Or perhaps these are reasonable conclusions to come from *the man under the sun*? That is, these are not the eternal conclusions that we come to by means of revelation, but reasonable conclusions for the man without God.

A Collection of Solomon's Conclusions (from the College Press Bible Study)

- (1) "There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen, that it is from the hand of God" (Eccles. 2:24).
- (2) "I know there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime, moreover, that every man who eats and drinks sees good in all his labor—it is the gift of God" (Eccles. 3:12-13).
- (3) "Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward. Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God" (Eccles. 5:18-19).
- (4) "For who knows what is good for a man during his lifetime, during the few years of his futile life? He will spend them like a shadow. For who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun" (Eccles. 6:12)?
- (5) "So I commended pleasure, for there is nothing good for a man under the sun except to eat and to drink and to be merry and this will stand by him in his toils throughout the days of his life which God has given him under the sun" (Eccles. 8:15).
- (6) "Go then, eat your bread in happiness, and drink your wine with a cheerful heart; for God has already approved your works" (Eccles. 9:7).
- (7) "Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life, and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun" (Eccles. 9:9).

As important as the theme is, it is to be understood as a minor chord which he sounds, a half step less than the major theme. The theme is recurring, appearing no less than seven times as noted above, yet it only leads man to the logical conclusion as he views life under the sun. It is in this light alone he turns to examine the evidence of his quest. The major theme speaks to the emptiness of what is thought of as a full and fruitful and enjoyable life when it is lived without the redeeming nature of grace and apart from the direction of God's revelation. We have purposely jumped ahead of Solomon. We have read the conclusions, which at this time in his experience, he is eager to discover himself. It is important, therefore, that we realize that at this point in his experiment, he is steeped in the details of one of his most elaborate undertakings.

The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:1–11 (comments).

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Ron Snider's translation of Ecclesiastes 2:3 I explored with my mind how to stimulate my body with wine while my mind was guiding me wisely, and how to take hold of folly, until I could see what good there is for the sons of men to do under heaven the few years of their lives.

Ecclesiastes 2:3: Wine does not provide lasting satisfaction (Ron Snider)

1. Having already announced his verdict with respect to his pursuit of sensual pleasures, Solomon now describes in detail the types of pleasures he had evaluated.
2. Just as he had thoroughly investigated the realms of wisdom and knowledge, Qoheleth carries out his experiment in the physical realm with equal thoroughness.
3. This is seen in the use of the same verb תִּירוּר (tur-explore) that Solomon used in chapter one to describe his search for wisdom. Eccles. 1:13
4. The first specific area Qoheleth fully investigated was the physical and mental stimulation that comes from alcohol.
5. Although the translation here is admittedly difficult, there is no textual evidence that the text needs to be emended, or that letters need to be transposed in certain words.
6. The purpose of his exploration is seen in the Qal infinitive construct of the verb מִשָּׂךְ (mashak), which means to seize, to pull or drag, or to draw out. Gen. 37:28; Jud. 4:7
7. It can have the sense of drawing something out in the sense of prolonging it, engaging in something for a sustained period. Josh. 6:5
8. The sense in our passage would be to pull the body, to test its limits or capabilities with alcohol.
9. This would militate against the position of some interpreters that Qoheleth approached this subject of alcohol strictly as a connoisseur-he engaged in extended drinking sessions in order to determine the effects that it had on the body.
10. The NET Bible translates this section as "I mentally explored the effects of indulging my flesh with wine, and the effects of behaving foolishly".
11. This does not mean that he had to drink to the point of drunkenness on each and every occasion; however, it would seem unrealistic to suggest that Qoheleth did not drink to excess during his experimentation.
12. Leupold seeks to preserve Qoheleth's dignity during this experiment with wine and finds it hard to believe that Qoheleth ever drank so much as to become intoxicated.
13. He bases his conclusion on the statement that follows while my mind was guiding me with wisdom.
14. However, that phrase does not conclusively prove that Qoheleth never got drunk; rather, it indicates that Qoheleth carefully weighed the significance of his actions as they related to his overall search for meaning.
15. It does not demand that he always retained his rational abilities during the course of his experimentation; it does demand that he never lost sight of his overall objective of discovering some significant benefit in alcohol.
16. The positive or beneficial effects of alcohol include stimulating the appetite, heightened appreciation, enhanced enjoyment, reduced tension, and increased sexual desire.
17. Qoheleth was clearly using wine to explore the positive effects that alcohol can produce when it is used wisely.
18. Webster defines intoxication as, "a high excitement of mind; an elation which rises to enthusiasm, frenzy, or madness".
19. From what Qoheleth says later in this verse about exploring folly, it would appear that he is also describing the results of an excess of wine.
20. In that regard, he would be fully qualified to comment on the one that drank for pleasure without descending into drunkenness, as well as the one that had experienced the foolishness of excess.
21. The noun סִכְלֹות (sikhluth) is derived from the verb סָכַל (sakhul), which means to act rashly or foolishly; rash behavior often reflects a lack of moral or spiritual sense. 1Sam. 13:13; 2Sam. 24:10
22. The sense of the phrase to take hold of folly is that of being able to mentally grasp the concept, see it for what it is, and understand it.
23. Qoheleth determined to explore courses of life that men considered to be foolish, to see whether or not there might be some good in folly that men had not considered.

Ecclesiastes 2:3: Wine does not provide lasting satisfaction (Ron Snider)

24. The verb אָחַז ('achaz-take hold, grasp) also indicates that Qoheleth considered folly (acted foolishly) for some time; he did not want his test to be undermined by making it too brief.
25. It is obvious that Qoheleth was quite committed to his experiment since he states that he intended to continue until such time as he could arrive at a conclusive answer about the best way for a man to spend his time.
26. One should not underestimate the extent to which Qoheleth engaged himself in pursuing the good life; his provision for one day is found in 1Kings 4:22-23.
27. Some have suggested that this provision would have fed several thousand people; therefore, it should be evident that Qoheleth had plenty of company as he enjoyed lavish feasts where wine likely flowed like water.
28. Doubtless, there was plenty of entertainment, which was designed to amuse people, make them laugh, and keep them happy.
29. As in chapter one, Qoheleth employs the phrase sons of men, which is literally sons of the man; this is designed to remind us of the fallen condition of mankind that came to us through Adam. Rom. 5:12
30. This phrase then would relate the human experience back to the fall, which causes even the very wise Solomon to recognize that there exists a real difficulty for man in finding ultimate happiness.
31. This is because there is something fundamentally wrong with man; mankind was changed at the fall when its genetics were permanently altered to produce the indwelling sin nature. Rom. 5:12
32. However, this passage makes it clear that Qoheleth is seeking something better or more satisfying as the interrogative phrase asks, "Where is this good?".
33. Solomon now uses the phrase under heaven, rather than the far more common under the sun, which obliquely brings God into the matter of how one should live his life.
34. The final phrase translates literally as the days of his life, and is recognized as an idiom for as long as he lives, during his life.
35. Although the term מִסְפָּר (mispar) equates to the Greek term ἀριθμῶν (arithmon) and strictly means a number, it is used in many contexts to emphasize a small number.
36. Qoheleth recognizes that life is brief; in fact, he emphasizes that one's brief life is followed by the absolute certainty of death. Eccles. 5:17, 6:12, 2:14-15

From [Makarios Bible Church](#); accessed September 2, 2018 (will open as a Word Document on your computer).

[Chapter Outline](#)

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[Chapter Outline](#)

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Solomon experiments with building buildings and parks

Solomon tried pleasure and it took him only so far. He was careful not to over-indulge, he was careful not to let the alcohol rule over him. But that approach was not enough. So he decides instead, *why not go with what I've got? Why not pursue the passion of my life, which is building? This is something I am clearly great at, so why not go with that approach?*

Previously, in the book of Kings, Solomon clearly accomplished some great things in building—the Temple and his palace. That is something that he was good at, and he was able to pursue it. In Kings, there are times assigned to this and that project. Perhaps Solomon had set aside his hard hat, compass, and construction plans in order to pursue happiness; and maybe that was the key. He had a talent and he had vision. He could see things that were not there, and then build them. This is who he is; this is what he can do—why deny that?

It is possible that Solomon set for himself a self-imposed goal of completing the Temple and his palace, along with a couple of other buildings; and then he would quit after that. Perhaps, Solomon is here going back to this particular vocation as a builder. Maybe a return to building and construction is exactly what Solomon needs in order to pursue the worthwhile life.

*Sutcliffe's Commentary: [Solomon did more than simply chase after pleasure.] He employed himself very much in the latter part of life in beautifying his plantations, walks, pools, and gardens. The opulent do the same in every age: this also is vanity. They die before they have completed their plans, and cannot tell who shall enjoy their work. Besides, the superb palace and its enchanting scenes attach the heart too much to this life, and make an invitation to the paradise above an unwelcome message, though in itself the highest of all favours.*¹⁸³

*Dr. Bob Utley: Eccles. 2:4-11...describes what the author attributes to King Solomon. These are things and accomplishments that he had done (a series of 23 Perfect tense verbs), but, there was no lasting peace, joy, hope, and happiness.*¹⁸⁴

*Pastor John Griffith: [This is Solomon's] experiment with great building projects.*¹⁸⁵

When considering the angst of the book of Ecclesiastes, we need to remind ourselves that this is Solomon, one of the greatest builders and one of the wealthiest men of his time (he may well have been the greatest builder and wealthiest man of his day). All of this troubles him. In vv. 4–6, Solomon considers all that he has built; and in vv. 7–8, all of his material possessions. If anyone should be content with his accomplishments and/or possessions, it should have been Solomon.

Application: It seems to be inherent in man to think that, if he accomplishes enough in life, or if he buys enough really good stuff, that happiness follows. Solomon will tell us that this is not the case. He has great accomplishments as the builder-king; he has possessions in that era that no one could have imagined—and yet, he is clearly an unhappy man. The book of Ecclesiastes warns against the saying, *he who dies with the most toys wins*.

Application: God has greatly blessed the United States. The average person enjoys the wealth which is in the top 5% of the world. Nearly half of the world lives on less than \$2.50/day; 80% live on less than \$10/day.¹⁸⁶ The average American lives on about \$80/day (given an average \$30K salary/year¹⁸⁷). People in the U.S. ought to be the happiest people in the world, but we are not. Despite our poverty numbers (which actually amounts to \$65/day or less—based upon poverty being \$24K or less per year¹⁸⁸), most people have their needs met in the US. And, in fact, most people in the US live quite well, despite any propaganda to the contrary. And yet, suicides in the United States are on the rise and considered a major *health* problem (a graph shows suicides increasing from the mid 1990's forward).¹⁸⁹ Logically, we ought to be among the happiest people in the world (logically, by the standards of human viewpoint), but that is not the case. And, if you hear anything about politics, you have certainly heard all about white male privilege. Interestingly enough, about 7 out of 10 suicides are white males.¹⁹⁰ Suicide in the United States is at **epidemic levels** as is **opioid abuse**; and all one has to do is understand the book of Ecclesiastes to understand why that is true.

¹⁸³ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/jsc/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 3, 2018.

¹⁸⁴ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:4-11.

¹⁸⁵ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_06.html accessed September 1, 2018.

¹⁸⁶ From **Do Something**; accessed July 23, 2018.

¹⁸⁷ From **Wallet Hacks**, accessed July 23, 2018.

¹⁸⁸ From **Wallet Hacks**, accessed July 23, 2018.

¹⁸⁹ From **Wikipedia** accessed July 23, 2018.

¹⁹⁰ From **Wikipedia** accessed July 23, 2018.

Application: Even though we are living in a nation clearly blessed by God, that does not mean that we are automatically a happy people. Our stability and our mental health is very much dependent upon our relationship with Jesus Christ. As we move further and further away from God (and away from Bible doctrine), our capacity for life is reduced; and our happiness quotient is low.

Application: One of the major points of the book of Ecclesiastes is, you cannot depend upon what happens around you to provide happiness. As we will study in the next 2 sections of Ecclesiastes, Solomon was very productive, he left a great legacy in the realm of building, and he had every possession a man could dream of (in that era), and yet none of this brought him happiness.

As we have studied in Kings, Solomon experimented with his legacy and great building projects. This was not his original intention, but he was able to take what he had done in the past and apply it to his search under the sun.

What Solomon has built is a long list of things which are found in vv. 4–6; so many translations treat this passage as 1 or 2 sentences.

It is certainly legitimate to consider the productiveness of a human life as *another form of pleasure*.¹⁹¹

<p>I have made great my works; I have built for myself houses; I have planted for myself vineyards.</p>	<p>Ecclesiastes 2:4</p>	<p>I have magnified my works; I have built buildings for myself [and] I have planted vineyards [and gardens] for myself.</p>
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I have magnified my great works. I have built great buildings and planted marvelous gardens, all for myself.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	I have made great my works; I have built for myself houses; I have planted for myself vineyards.
Revised Douay-Rheims V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	I made me great works, I built me houses, and planted vineyards,... I multiplied good works in Jerusalem. I built houses, <u>viz., the temple, to make atonement for Israel, and a royal palace, and the conclave, and the porch, and a house of judgment of hewn stones, where the wise men sit, and the judges, to give judgment; I made a throne of ivory for the sitting of royalty;</u> I planted vineyards in Jabne, that I and the Rabbis of the Sanhedrin might drink wine, and also to make libations of wine, new and old, upon the altar;...
Peshitta (Syriac)	I multiplied my servants; I built myself houses; I planted vineyards for myself:...
Updated Brenton (Greek)	I enlarged my work; I built me houses; I planted me vineyards.

Significant differences: The targum is filled with excess text. The Syriac *servants* rather than *works*.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	I undertook great works, building myself houses and planting vine-gardens.
Easy English	I made some great things. I built houses for myself and I planted many vines.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	Then I began doing great things. I built houses, and I planted fields of grapes for myself.
<i>God's Word</i> TM	The Spokesman Studies Personal Achievements I accomplished some great things: I built houses for myself.

¹⁹¹ Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 2.

I planted vineyards for myself.
 I made gardens and parks for myself.
 I planted every kind of fruit tree in them.
 I made pools to water the forest of growing trees. V. 5 is included for context.

NIRV So I started some large projects. I built houses for myself. I planted vineyards.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	I planned and carried out great undertakings. I planned them for myself. I was not satisfied with building just one house for myself, so I built houses. I planted vineyards for my own personal gratification and enjoyment.
Contemporary English V. New Century Version	I did some great things. I built houses and planted vineyards. Does Hard Work Bring Happiness?
New Life Version	Then I did great things: I built houses and planted vineyards for myself.
New Living Translation	I did great things. I built houses for myself. I planted grape-fields for myself.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	I also tried to find meaning by building huge homes for myself and by planting beautiful vineyards. I did great things. I caused houses to be built for myself and vineyards to be planted.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	So thereafter, I went into action... I planted vineyards and built many homes.
Beck's American Translation	<i>Wealth</i> I accomplished some great things. I built houses for myself and planted vineyards for myself.
Translation for Translators	I did great things: I <i>caused</i> houses to be built for myself and vineyards to be planted.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible	I have been committed to magnificent works: Even am I to have built houses, have planted vineyards,...
Christian Standard Bible	The Emptiness of Possessions I increased my achievements. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself.
Conservapedia	I did great things; I built homes; I planted vineyards.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	I extended my operations,—I built myself houses; I planted myself vineyards;...
God's Truth (Tyndale)	I made gorgeous fair works. I builded me houses, and planted vineyards.
Lexham English Bible	Qohelet's Investigation of Personal Accomplishment {I accomplished great things}. I built for myself houses; I planted for myself vineyards.
Tree of Life Version	I increased my possessions. I built myself houses and I planted myself vineyards.
Wikipedia Bible Project	I multiplied my deeds, for me I built houses, I planted for me vinyards.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

The Heritage Bible	I made great works for myself; I built houses for myself; I planted vineyards for myself; I made gardens and parks for myself, and I planted in them trees of all fruits; I made reservoirs of water for myself, with which to irrigate the plants that sprouted trees;... Vv. 5–6 are included for context.
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New American Bible (2011) I undertook great works; I built myself houses and planted vineyards; I made gardens and parks, and in them set out fruit trees of all sorts. V. 5 is included for context.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible I worked on a grand scale — I built myself palaces, planted myself vineyards, and made myself gardens and parks; in them I planted all kinds of fruit trees. V. 5 is included for context.

The Complete Tanach I made myself great works; I built myself houses, and I planted myself vineyards.

I made myself great works: in the days of my greatness.

exeGesés companion Bible I greatedened my works;
I built houses; I planted vineyards;...

JPS (Tanakh—1985) I multiplied my possessions. I built myself houses and I planted vineyards.

Orthodox Jewish Bible I undertook me great works; I built me batim (houses); I planted me kramim (vineyards);...

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible Does Hard Work Bring Happiness?
Then I did great things: I built houses and planted vineyards for myself [1Kings7:1–12; 9:15; 2 Chr. 8:1–6].

Pastor John Griffith I enlarged my works: Having seen that the pursuit of pleasure did give him what he was looking for he now rolls up his sleeves so to speak and turns to architecture and building for the satisfaction that he was seeking. I built houses for myself, - the most famous of which is the great lodge or retreat he built in the forest of Lebanon. 1 Kg 10:17 I planted vineyards for myself; - he took up horticulture also

Kretzmann's Commentary I made me great works, building magnificent structures and piling up evidences of wealth on every hand; I builded me houses, 1 Kings 7-10; I planted me vineyards, Song 8:11;...

NET Bible® *Futility of Materialism*
I increased my possessions;²⁶
I built houses for myself;²⁷
I planted vineyards for myself.

²⁶sn This section (2:4-11) is unified and bracketed by the repetition of the verb גָּדַל (gadal, "to increase") which occurs at the beginning (2:4) and end (2:9), and by the repetition of the root עָשָׂה (noun: "works" and verb: "to do, make, acquire") which occurs throughout the section (2:4, 5, 6, 8, 11).

²⁷sn The expression for myself is repeated eight times in 2:4-8 to emphasize that Qoheleth did not deny himself any acquisition. He indulged himself in acquiring everything he desired. His vast resources as king allowed him the unlimited opportunity to indulge himself. He could have anything his heart desired, and he did.

The Pulpit Commentary This commences a new experience in the pursuit of his object. Leaving this life of self-indulgence, he takes to art and culture, the details being drawn from the accounts of the historical Solomon. I made me great works; literally, I made great my works; Septuagint, Ε'μεγάλυνα ποιήμá per; Vulgate, Magnificavi opera mea. Among these works the temple, with all its wonderful structural preparations, is not specially mentioned, perhaps because no one could think of Solomon without connecting his name with this magnificent building, and it was superfluous to call attention to it; or else because the religious aspect of his operations is not here in question, but only his taste and pursuit of beauty. But the omission tells strongly against the Solomonic authorship of the book. I builded me houses. Solomon had a passion for erecting magnificent buildings. We have various accounts of his

works of this nature in 1Kings 7:1–51. and 9.; 2Chron. 8:1–18. There was the huge palace for himself, which occupied thirteen years in building; there was the "house of the forest of Lebanon," a splendid hall constructed with pillars of cedar; the porch of pillars; the hall of judgment; the harem for the daughter of Pharaoh. Then there were fortresses, store–cities, chariot–towns, national works of great importance; cities in distant lands which he founded, such as Tadmor in the wilderness. I planted me vineyards. David had vineyards and olive yards (1Chron. 27:27, 1Chron. 27:28), which passed into the possession of his son; and we read in So 2Chron. 8:11 of a vineyard that Solomon had in Baal–hamon, which some identify with Belamon (Judith 8:3), a place near Shunem, in the Plain of Esdraelon.

Syndein/Thieme

{3rd Experiment of Solomon - Now on to bigger things! Happiness in Project Building}

The Voice

I made myself great projects. I built myself palaces. I planted vineyards.

Teacher: Next, I began some enormous projects, building my own houses and planting my own vineyards.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Charles Thompson OT
Concordant Literal Version

I enlarged my plan of operations. I built me houses. I planted me vineyards. I made great things as my works; I built houses for myself; I planted vineyards for myself;...

Green’s Literal Translation
Modern English Version
New American Standard B.
World English Bible
Young’s Updated LT

I made my works great; I built houses for myself; I planted vineyards for myself;... I accomplished great works. I built houses for myself, and planted myself vineyards. I enlarged my works: I built houses for myself, I planted vineyards for myself;... I made myself great works. I built myself houses. I planted myself vineyards. I made great my works, I built for me houses, I planted for me vineyards.

The gist of this passage: Solomon also tried building great things—houses and vineyards.

Ecclesiastes 2:4a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
gâdal (גָּדַל) [pronounced gaw-DAHL]	to make great, to cause to be lifted high, to magnify, to do great things (in a good or bad sense)	1 st person singular, Hiphil perfect	Strong’s #1431 BDB #152
ma’ăšîym (מַעֲשָׂיִם) [pronounced mah-ăuh-SEEM]	deeds, works, production, that which is produced or done [crops, property, goods]; profession, occupation	masculine plural noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong’s #4639 BDB #795

The NET Bible: Or “my works”; or “my accomplishments.” The term *מַעֲשָׂיִם* (ma’asay, “my works”) has been handled in two basic ways: (1) great works or projects, and (2) possessions. The latter assumes a metonymy, one’s effort standing for the possessions it produces. Both interpretations are reflected in the major English translations: “works” (KJV, NEB, NAB, ASV, NASB, MLB, RSV, Douay, Moffatt), “projects” (NIV), and “possessions” (NJPS).¹⁹²

Translation: I have magnified my works;... What Solomon has already done is, he has done great works; and these works are known throughout the land of Israel.

¹⁹² From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 15, 2018.

Of the Jewish kings, no one compares to Solomon for his building projects. There are few kings of other countries with similar accomplishments.

Trapp: *I took not pleasure in trifles, as Domitian did, in catching and killing flies with his penknife; or as Artaxerxes did, in making hafts for knives; or as Solyman the great Turk did, in making notches of horn for bows; but I built stately houses, planted pleasant vineyards, &c. A godly man may be busied in mean, low things; but he is not satisfied in them as adequate objects: he trades for better commodities, and cannot rest without them.*¹⁹³

Throughout the next several verses, Solomon uses the perfect tense of what he has done. I believe that these refer to past events, when Solomon was on his building kick, and he not only built buildings, but he also designed gardens and orchards to dress up the exterior. I think the idea is, he has done this in the past. He does not need to repeat this experiment, even though, at the time, it was not a part of his search for happiness. In this, he had found that he was no happier than when he began all of these projects. Now, in the midst of this philosophical search, he looks back on this and decides, *this was not happiness either*.

David Guzik: *The Preacher looked not only for meaning in amusements, but also in great and legitimate accomplishments. He tried to give life meaning through the satisfaction that comes through building and organizing and improving one's environment.*¹⁹⁴

Ecclesiastes 2:4 I have magnified my great works. I have built great buildings and planted marvelous gardens, all for myself.

"I have enlarged my works" (Dr. Bob Utley)

Ecclesiastes 2:4 "I enlarged my works" BDB 152, KB 178, Hiphil PERFECT.

1. houses, Ecclesiastes 2:4
2. vineyards, Ecclesiastes 2:4
3. parks, Ecclesiastes 2:5
4. orchards, Ecclesiastes 2:5
5. ponds, Ecclesiastes 2:6
6. slaves, Ecclesiastes 2:7
7. flocks and herds, Ecclesiastes 2:7

Notice the number of times "myself" appears in Ecclesiastes 2:4-8.

Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:4.

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Ecclesiastes 2:4b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bânâh (בָּנָה) [pronounced baw-NAWH]	to build, to construct; to erect; to rebuild, to restore	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1129 BDB #124

Dr. Robert Dean: *[This] means to carefully build and construct something through the use of craftsmanship...it is something that is thought out, something that has been prepared for and planned, not something that is done haphazardly...[it] is the same word used to describe God's creation of Eve in the garden of Eden.*¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 2:4.

¹⁹⁴ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

¹⁹⁵ From [Dean Bible.org](http://DeanBible.org); accessed December 10, 2015.

Ecclesiastes 2:4b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 1 st person singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
bâttyim (בֵּיתִים) [pronounced <i>baht-TEEM</i>]	<i>houses, residences; buildings; households</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #1004 BDB #108

Translation: ...I have built buildings for myself... He has built many buildings—and he admits here that, for all intents and purposes, they were for himself. These buildings were, in many ways, Solomon's legacy.

Solomon will not make reference to the Temple.

Ecclesiastes 2:4 I have magnified my great works. I have built great buildings and planted marvelous gardens, all for myself.

Solomon's building projects

1. Solomon spent 13 years building his own palace. 1Kings 7:1–5 2Chron. 8:1b
2. He built the Hall of Pillars (1Kings 7:6) and the Hall of the Throne (1Kings 7:7). I believe that these are covered, open-air buildings.
3. He built a house for Pharaoh's daughter. 1Kings 7:8
4. He built up or rebuilt towns that he got from Hiram, as well as a number of other cities. 1Kings 9:15–22 2Chron. 8:2–6
5. Solomon also built great gardens, parks and ponds. Eccles. 2:4–6 Song of Songs 1:14 6:11 7:12 8:11–12

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Solomon's pleasure and building timeline: It might be worth exploring the order in which these events occurred. It appears that Solomon became king at a very young age, being guided by his father David. Solomon listened to David's advice and did not stray too far from it (although he clearly went his own way from time to time); and Solomon began his building projects very early on in his reign (he began in his 4th year as king—1Kings 6:1). Now, somewhere in there, Solomon became disenchanted with his life, and was not content, which leads us into Solomon's experiments in Ecclesiastes 2. Now, in vv. 1–3, Solomon speaks of having fun and exploring that option in his life. However, in vv. 4–6, he speaks of his building projects. This does not mean that he first decided to have fun and then tried building. Given what we know about Solomon and his history, he appears to have been a builder first and then, some time later, tried fun and pleasure.

Let me suggest this timeline: Solomon did the great building projects early on in his reign; at some point he looked at having fun and pleasure; and then, later, he took up with building projects again. This is something that he was good at, it apparently did give him some personal satisfaction, so I would posit that Solomon returned to it. So, even if it seems like his building phrase occurred all at once (vv. 4–6), it is not out of the question for Solomon to have done a lot of building throughout his life—and, at least for some period of time, looked to derive some satisfaction from it.

Ray C. Stedman on the pleasure of building: *There is pleasure in designing and building a house. Some people give their whole lives to this. This area is noted for the Winchester Mystery House, built by a woman who could not stop building. The house is a conglomeration of rooms, doors that open on to blank walls, staircases that go nowhere, etc., anything just to keep on building. Some wealthy people gain a reputation as philanthropists because they endow beautiful public buildings, but they always manage to get their names engraved on a brass plaque somewhere in the building. All they are really doing is indulging an edifice complex! It was said of the emperor Nero that he found Rome a city of bricks and left it a city of marble. But history tells us that he did not do that for the beautification of Rome, he did it for his own gratification and his own fame.*¹⁹⁶

Steve Zeisler on building not providing true satisfaction in life: *In 1927 William Randolph Hearst began construction of an estate that would later be known as Hearst Castle. In the 1940s it featured 56 bedrooms, 61 bathrooms, 19 sitting rooms, 127 acres of gardens, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, tennis courts, a movie theater, an airfield, and the world's largest private zoo. It was under construction for more than 25 years, until the end of Hearst's life, and he was never satisfied with it.2 There is nothing new under the sun. Koheleth (and his imitators) experiment on the largest scale to see if grand undertakings give meaning to life.*¹⁹⁷

Ecclesiastes 2:4c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
nâṭa' (נָטַח) [pronounced naw-TAHG]	<i>to set upright; to plant; to place; to fix, to fasten [with a nail]; to pitch [a tent], to set up; figuratively to establish</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5193 BDB #642
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^o]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 1 st person singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
k ^e râmiym (כַּרְמִים) [pronounced keh-raw-MEEM]	<i>vineyards, orchards, cultivated gardens</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3754 BDB #501

Some claim that this is a Persian word, and, therefore, try to assign a late date to the writing of Ecclesiastes.

James Burton Coffman: *Such Persian words might easily have crept into the text from the efforts of copyists. If one doubts that such things occur in 'translations' and 'versions,' let him compare a copy of the King James Bible published in the 1600's with one printed today.*¹⁹⁸

Allowing myself a tangent here, if you run into some King James Version only people (they are still around), if they saw the original KJV, they might find many parts of it incomprehensible.

Here are the first 4 verses of Ecclesiastes 2 in the 1611 KJV:

¹⁹⁶ Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 2.

¹⁹⁷ From pbc.org accessed September 9, 2018.

¹⁹⁸ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 2, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:4c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
¹ I said in mine heart, Goe to now, I wil prooue thee with mirth, therfore enioy pleasure: and behold, this also is vanitie.			
² I saide of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?			
³ I sought in mine heart to giue my selfe vnto wine, (yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom) and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sonnes of men, which they should doe vnder the heauen all the dayes of their life.			
⁴ I made me great workes, I builded mee houses, I planted mee Uineyards.			

Translation: ...[and] I have planted vineyards [and gardens] for myself. Solomon has also planted great gardens and vineyards; again, all for himself. Solomon was a top landscaper; and understood that the buildings looked best in the right setting. He also liked to have vineyards and gardens as well.

Trapp: {Solomon's orchards and vineyard yielded} [p]lenty of fruit in clusters and bunches, many grapes together.¹⁹⁹

No doubt you have seen some houses from the street that just turn you off; they are unattractive. However, with the right landscaping, nearly any house can be made to look inviting. If the house looks flat and it is too square or boxy from the front, the right work in front, the correct planting of trees, bushes and ground cover can easily overcome that very rectangular look.

Solomon is looking back upon things which he has already done.

Solomon has few limiting conditions on his search for personal fulfillment and happiness. He is intelligent, he is in good health, and he has whatever budget is necessary to purchase happiness. Solomon will never say, "I was just on the verge of happiness, but it would have cost me an extra million that I did not have." If there is a way to buy happiness or to buy the things which provide happiness, Solomon has enough cash to do it (1Kings 10:27).

<p>I made for myself gardens and parks and I planted in them a forest [of] every fruit.</p>	<p>Ecclesiastes 2:5</p>	<p>I planted gardens and parks for myself and I planted in them a forest [of trees], [of] every [kind of] fruit.</p>
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I planted personal gardens and parks, and in them I planted a variety of trees, including fruit trees.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

<p>Masoretic Text (Hebrew) Revised Douay-Rheims V. Alexander's Aramaic T.</p>	<p>I made for myself gardens and parks and I planted in them a forest [of] every fruit. ...I made gardens, and orchards, and set them with trees of all kinds,...</p> <p>I made watered gardens and parks, and I sowed there all kinds of herbs, <u>some for food, some for drink, and some for medicine, and all kinds of aromatics; I planted therein sterile trees, and aromatic trees, which the spectres and evil spirits brought me from India, and all kinds of fruit-bearing trees ; and its boundary was from the wall of the city of Jerusalem to the margin of the river Siloah;</u>...</p>
<p>Peshitta (Syriac)</p>	<p>I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them trees of all kinds of fruit;...</p>

¹⁹⁹ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 2:4.

Updated Brenton (Greek) I made me gardens and orchards, and planted in them every kind of fruit-tree.

Significant differences: The targum is filled with additional text.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Easy English I made gardens and parks. I planted many fruit trees in the gardens and parks.
 Easy-to-Read Version–2006 I planted gardens, and I made parks. I planted all kinds of fruit trees.
 NIRV I planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks. I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.
 New Simplified Bible I made myself parks and fruit gardens, planting in them fruit-trees of all kinds.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study I designed and constructed a paradise of shade trees and winding paths where I could enjoy their beauty and the relaxing benefits of my parks. Throughout my gardens and parks, I planted all kinds of fruit trees.
 Contemporary English V. I had flower gardens and orchards full of fruit trees.
 The Living Bible Then I tried to find fulfillment by inaugurating a great public works program: homes, vineyards, gardens, parks, and orchards for myself, and reservoirs to hold the water to irrigate my plantations. V. 4 is included for context.
 New Berkeley Version ...I laid out gardens and parks for myself and I planted in them fruit trees of every kind.
 New Life Version I made gardens and beautiful places for myself, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.
 New Living Translation I made gardens and parks, filling them with all kinds of fruit trees.
 Unlocked Dynamic Bible I made gardens and parks. Then I planted the gardens with many kinds of fruit trees.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible I made myself gardens and parks,
 Which I planted with all sorts of fruit.
 Common English Bible I made gardens and parks for myself, planting every kind of fruit tree in them.
 International Standard V **A Testimony to Extravagant Works**
 With respect to my extravagant works, I built houses for myself; I planted vineyards for myself. I constructed gardens and orchards for myself, and within them I planted all kinds of fruit trees. V. 4 is included for context.
 New Advent (Knox) Bible Great plans I set on foot; I would build palaces, I would plant vineyards, I would have park and orchard, planted with every kind of tree; and to water all this greenery there must be pools of water besides. Vv. 4, 6 are included for context.
 Translation for Translators I *told my workers* to make gardens and parks. *Then I told them* to fill the gardens with many kinds of fruit trees.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible ...have made gardens and plantations, and have planted trees of fruit.
 Conservapedia Translation I had gardens and orchards planted, and they contained trees bearing many kinds of fruit.
 God's Truth (Tyndale) I made me orchards and gardens of pleasure, and planted trees in them of all manner fruits.
 Tree of Life Version I made royal gardens and parks for myself, and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.
 Wikipedia Bible Project I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted in them trees of every fruit.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

New American Bible (2002) ...I made gardens and parks, and set out in them fruit trees of all sorts.
 Revised English Bible—1989 I undertook great works; I built myself palaces and planted vineyards; I made myself gardens and orchards, planted with every kind of fruit tree. V. 4 is included for context.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

The Complete Tanach I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted in them all sorts of fruit trees.

all sorts of fruit trees: for Solomon recognized with his wisdom the veins of the earth: which vein leads to Cush, and there he planted peppers; which one goes to a land of carob fruits, and there he planted carob trees. For all the veins of the lands come to Zion, from where the world was founded, as it is said (Ps. 50:2): "From Zion, the all-inclusive beauty." Therefore, it is said: "all sorts of fruit trees." Midrash Tanhuma (Kedoshim 10).

exeGeses companion Bible ...I worked gardens and orchards;
 and in them I planted trees of all fruits:...
 JPS (Tanakh—1985) I laid out gardens and groves, in which I planted every kind of fruit tree.
 Orthodox Jewish Bible ...I made me ganot (gardens) and parks, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them;...

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

Pastor John Griffith I made gardens and parks for myself and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees;
 - fruit trees not for the fruit as much as the esthetics of the scented blossoms in the spring.

Kretzmann's Commentary - During the hot summer, the gardens would provide a refuge from the stifling heat.
 I made me gardens and orchards, pleasure-grounds near his various residences, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits, in rich variety, including many from foreign countries;...

NET Bible® I designed²⁸ royal gardens²⁹ and parks for myself, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.
^{28tn} Heb "made."
^{29tn} The term does not refer here to vegetable gardens, but to orchards (cf. the next line). In the same way the so-called "garden" of Eden was actually an orchard filled with fruit trees. See Gen 2:8-9.

The Voice **Teacher:** I designed *impressive* gardens and parks and planted them with all kinds of fruit trees.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

English Standard Version I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.
 Modern English Version I made for myself royal gardens and parks, and I planted in them all sorts of fruit trees.
 Webster's Bible Translation I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all *kind of* fruits:...
 Young's Literal Translation I made for me gardens and paradises, and I planted in them trees of every fruit.

The gist of this passage: Solomon also built gardens and orchards, with fruit trees planted in them.

Ecclesiastes 2:5a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿāsâh (אָסָה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i>]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to produce, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 1 st person singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
gannâh (גַּנָּה) [pronounced <i>gahn-NAW</i>]	<i>garden, orchard</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #1593 & #1594 BDB #171
This is also spelled ginnâh (גִּנָּה) [pronounced <i>ghihn-NAW</i>]. Strong's #1594.			
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
pardêç (פַּרְדֵּי) [pronounced <i>pahr-DAYÇ</i>]	<i>preserve, park, forest, orchard, enclosed garden</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #6508 BDB #825

The NET Bible: *The noun פַּרְדֵּי (pardes, "garden, parkland, forest") is a foreign loanword that occurs only 3 times in biblical Hebrew (Song 4:13; Eccl 2:5; Neh 2:8). The original Old Persian term pairidaeza designated the enclosed parks and pleasure-grounds that were the exclusive domain of the Persian kings and nobility (HALOT 963 s.v. פַּרְדֵּי; LSJ 1308 s.v. παράδεισος). The related Babylonian term pardesu "marvelous garden" referred to the enclosed parks of the kings (AHw 2:833 and 3:1582). The term passed into Greek as παράδεισος (paradeisos, "enclosed park, pleasure-ground"), referring to the enclosed parks and gardens of the Persian kings (LSJ 1308). The Greek term has been transliterated into English as "paradise."*²⁰⁰

Dr. Bob Utley: *"parks"...is a Persian loan word (BDB 825) describing a wealthy person's garden.*²⁰¹

Translation: I planted gardens and parks for myself... Nothing is more visually and aromatically stimulating than a garden or a park with a variety of plants and flowers and bushes and trees.

These two words will be distinguished below.

Ecclesiastes 2:5 I planted personal gardens and parks, and in them I planted a variety of trees, including fruit trees.

The King's Gardens (Ecclesiastes 2:5a) (various commentators)

Trapp: *Called gardens because guarded and enclosed with a wall, {Song of Songs. 4:12} like as we call garments quasi guardments, in an active acception of the word, because they guard our bodies from the injury of wind and weather. The Hebrew word גן, Gan, comes likewise from a word that signifieth to protect or guard; and there are those who give this for a reason why the Lord forbade the Jews to keep swine, because they are such enemies to gardens, whereof that country is very full.*²⁰²

²⁰⁰ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 15, 2018.

²⁰¹ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:5.

²⁰² John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 2:5 (slightly edited).

The King's Gardens (Ecclesiastes 2:5a) (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *Solomon's love of gardens appears throughout the Canticles (So Song of Songs. 6:2, etc.). He had a king's garden on the slope of the hills south of the city (2Kings 25:4); and Beth-hacchemm, "the House of the Vine," at Ain Karim, about six miles east of Jerusalem (Jer. 6:1); and at Baal-hamon another extensive vineyard (So Song of Songs. 8:11).*²⁰³

Dr. John Gill: *Of the king's garden, we read Jer. 39:4. Adrichomius (b) makes mention of a royal garden in the suburbs of Jerusalem, fenced with walls; and was a paradise of fruit trees, herbs, spices, and flowers; abounded with all kind of fruit, exceeding pleasant and delightful to the senses: and, as Solomon was so great a botanist, and knew the nature and use of all kinds of trees and herbs, 1Kings 4:33; no doubt but he has a herbal garden, well stocked with everything of that kind, curious and useful; see 1Kings 21:2. Gardens are made for pleasure as well as profit; Adam, as soon as created, was put into a garden, to add to his natural pleasure and felicity, as well as for his employment, Gen. 2:8; and the pleasure of walking in a garden, and partaking of the fruits of it, are alluded to by Solomon, Song of Songs. 4:12.*²⁰⁴

Ken Cayce: *Solomon loved beautiful gardens. The garden he had on the outskirts of Jerusalem was well known. Even the beautiful gardens he loved did not bring the satisfaction he was looking for.*²⁰⁵

Mentions of gardens:

The masculine version is gan (גן) [pronounced *gahn*]; Strong's #1588 BDB #171.

Garden: Gen. 2:8–10 2:15–16 3:1–3, 8, 10, 23–24 Deut. 11:10 1Kings 21:2 2Kings 9:27 21:18 2Kings 21:26 25:4 Neh. 3:15 Song of Songs. 4:12, 16 Isa. 51:1–3 Jer. 31:11–12 39:4 52:7 Lam. 2:6 Ezek. 28:13 Ezek. 31:8–9 36:35 Joel 2:3.

Gardens: Song of Songs. 4:15 6:2 8:13

The feminine version is gannâh (גַּנָּה) [pronounced *gahn-NAW*]; Strong's #1593 & #1594 BDB #171.

Gardens: Num. 24:6 Eccles. 2:5 Isa. 1:29 65:3 66:17 Jer. 29:5, 28 Amos 4:9 9:14.

Garden: Job. 8:16 Isa. 1:30 61:11.

It is not clear to me a difference between the masculine and feminine (although I am sure that there is).

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Ecclesiastes 2:5 I planted personal gardens and parks, and in them I planted a variety of trees, including fruit trees.

Orchards (or Paradises, Parks) (Ecclesiastes 2:5) (various commentators)

Trapp: *Paradises; famous for curious variety and excellence of all sorts of trees and foreign fruits, resembling even the garden of God for amenity and delight. And herein perhaps he gratified Pharaoh's daughter - the Egyptians took great pleasure in gardens - like as that king of Assyria did his wife horto pensili, with a garden that hung in the air, to his incredible cost.*²⁰⁶

²⁰³ The Pulpit Commentary; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:5.

²⁰⁴ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:5.

²⁰⁵ From bible.studys.org accessed September 6, 2018.

²⁰⁶ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 2:5.

Orchards (or Paradises, Parks) (Ecclesiastes 2:5) (various commentators)

E. W. Bullinger: *Hebrew. pardesim = paradises, parks, or pleasure grounds. Different from "gardens", which were cultivated (Deut. 11:10. 1Kings 21:2). Paradises were formed by eastern monarchs. In the British Museum may be seen the inscriptions of Gudea, the greatest of the Sumerian rulers of Chaldea (2500 B.C.), and Tiglath-pileser I, king of Assyria (1120 B. C), describing what could be only a botanical and zoological park. Assur-nazir-pal, king of Assyria (885 B. C), founded such a public paradise, and describes how he stocked it; what he brought, and whence he brought the natural history collection. The British Museum contains a portion of a similar catalogue of Sennacherib. The Paradise in Rev. 2:7; Rev. 22:1, Rev. 22:2, refers to the future paradise, which will be as literal and real, not figurative.*²⁰⁷

The Cambridge Bible: *orchards..., originally [a] Persian [word],;[is] found only in the O. T. in this book, in Song of Songs. 4:13, and Neh. 2:8, is the "paradise" of Xenophon, of later Rabbinic writings and of the New Testament (Luke 23:43; 2Cor. 12:4). It indicates what we call a park, with flowing streams and shady groves and fruit trees, and deer feeding on the fresh green grass, and doves flitting through the trees, such as seemed to the Eastern imagination the fittest type of the highest blessedness.*

The Cambridge Bible continues: *The whole scenery of the Song of Solomon is such a garden, planted with pomegranates and pleasant fruits, spikenards and camphire, calamus and cinnamon, and trees of frankincense, and lilies (Song of Songs. 4:13–15; Song of Songs. 6:2).*

The Cambridge Bible concludes: *The pools of Solomon at Etam, on the south–west of Bethlehem, described by Josephus (Ant. viii. 7. 3) still preserve the memory of such a "paradise." Other traces of these surroundings of the palaces of Jewish kings are found in the history of Naboth's vineyard, where the "garden of herbs" can hardly be thought of as merely a "kitchen garden" (1Kings 21:2) and in the garden of Zedekiah (Jer. 52:7).*²⁰⁸

The Pulpit Commentary: *The word rendered "orchard" (parder) occurs also in So Song of Songs. 4:13 and Neh. 2:8. It is a Persian word, and passed into the Greek form παράδειος (Xenophon, 'Anab.,' 1.2.7), meaning "a park" planted with forest and fruit trees, and containing herds of animals.*²⁰⁹

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *Hebrew, "paradises," a foreign word; Sanskrit, "a place enclosed with a wall"; Armenian and Arabic, "a pleasure ground with flowers and shrubs near the king's house, or castle." An earthly paradise can never make up for the want of the heavenly (Rev. 2:7).*²¹⁰

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Ecclesiastes 2:5b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

²⁰⁷ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:5.

²⁰⁸ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:5.

²⁰⁹ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:5.

²¹⁰ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:5.

Ecclesiastes 2:5b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
nāṭa' (נָטַע) [pronounced naw-TAHṬ]	to set upright; to plant; to place; to fix, to fasten [with a nail]; to pitch [a tent], to set up; figuratively to establish	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5193 BDB #642
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within	a preposition of proximity with the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	No Strong's # BDB #88
'êts (עץ) [pronounced gáyts]	tree, wood; wooden post, [wooden] stake, a staff; gallows; [collectively for] a forest of trees	masculine singular noun	Strong's #6086 BDB #781
kôl (כָּל) [pronounced kohl]	every, each, all of, all; any of, any	masculine singular construct not followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
p ^e rîy (פְּרִי) [pronounced p ^{ee} ree]	fruit, produce (of the ground); fruit, offspring, children, progeny (of the womb); fruit (of one's actions, labor), yield	masculine singular noun; pausal form	Strong's #6529 BDB #826

Translation: ...and I planted in them a forest [of trees], [of] every [kind of] fruit. In these gardens and parks, Solomon planted fruit trees and trees from all over.

Where I live, an old friend of mine rightly described as having 3 or 4 trees. Now, I had not noticed this until he said this, and then I noticed that there were a lot of scrawny pines and oak trees, and little else. When you have a tree that you see every day, it is nice to mix in a tree from some other area, which stands in contrast. No doubt, Solomon brought in a variety of trees from all over the nearby lands.

The Cambridge Bible: The horticulture of Palestine included the apple, the fig, the pomegranate, the date, the caper-tree, nuts, almonds, raisins and mandrakes. The account is in strict keeping with the character of the king who spake of trees "from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall" (1Kings 4:33).²¹¹

Solomon could be visually stimulated by all of these trees; and during certain times of the year, walk out among them and take some fresh fruit from them—this was certainly a desert in the ancient world.

Clarke: How well Solomon was qualified to form gardens, orchards, vineyards, conservatories, etc., may be at once conceived when we recollect his knowledge of natural history; and that he wrote treatises on vegetables and their properties, from the cedar to the hyssop.²¹²

Dr. John Gill: [Solomon] had thorough knowledge of, and many of which were brought him from foreign parts; and all served to make his gardens, orchards, parks, forests, and enclosures, very pleasant and delectable.²¹³

²¹¹ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:5.*

²¹² *Adam Clarke, Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:5 .*

²¹³ *Dr. John Gill, John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:5.*

Ecclesiastes 2:5 I planted personal gardens and parks, and in them I planted a variety of trees, including fruit trees.

I made for myself pools of waters to irrigate from them a forest springing up trees. Ecclesiastes 2:6 **I [also] constructed pools of water to irrigate from them the forest [I planted, with] trees springing up.**

I also constructed irrigation pools to water this great forest which I designed, where trees and all manner of plants would just spring up from the ground.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	I made for myself pools of waters to irrigate from them a forest springing up trees.
Revised Douay-Rheims	...And I made me ponds of water, to water therewith the wood of the young trees,...
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	...I made receptacles of water, whence to water the trees and the herbs; <u>I made pools of water, to water from them even the thicket which produces fine wood</u> ;...
Peshitta (Syriac)	I made myself pools of water, to irrigate the nursery that produces trees.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	I made me pools of water, to water from them the timber-bearing wood.

Significant differences: The targum has additional text. The Greek appears to lack a word for *forest*.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	I made pools to give water for the woods with their young trees.
Easy English	I made large pools to give water for the trees.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	I made pools of water for myself, and I used them to water my growing trees.
Good News Bible (TEV)	I planted gardens and orchards, with all kinds of fruit trees in them; I dug ponds to irrigate them. V. 5 is included for context.
<i>The Message</i>	I Never Said No to Myself Oh, I did great things: built houses, planted vineyards, designed gardens and parks and planted a variety of fruit trees in them, made pools of water to irrigate the groves of trees. Vv. 4–5 are included for context.
NIRV	I made lakes to water groves of healthy trees.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	I needed to irrigate a forest of growing trees, so I constructed pools for myself.
Contemporary English V.	And I had pools where I could get water for the trees.
New Berkeley Version	I made for myself pools of water to irrigate a plantation of growing trees;...
New Century Version	I made pools of water for myself and used them to water my growing trees.
New Life Version	I made pools of water for myself from which to water many new trees.
New Living Translation	I built reservoirs to collect the water to irrigate my many flourishing groves.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	I built pools of water to store water to irrigate the fruit trees.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	Around them, I dug ponds and lakes To water the groves filled with trees.
Beck's American Translation	I made pools to water a park of growing trees.
Common English Bible	I made reservoirs for myself to water my lush groves.
International Standard V	I built for myself water reservoirs to irrigate forests that produce trees.
Translation for Translators	I <i>told them</i> to build reservoirs to store water to irrigate the fruit trees.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Alpha & Omega Bible	I MADE ME POOLS OF WATER, TO WATER FROM THEM THE TIMBER-BEARING WOOD.
Awful Scroll Bible	I have made pools of water, to make watered the woods sprouting with trees.
Conservapedia Translation	I had ponds constructed, to irrigate the orchards.
Ferrari-Fenton Bible	I made myself pools and brooks, to water from them a forest of shadowy trees.
God's Truth (Tyndale)	I made pools of water, to water the green and fruitful trees withal.
Jubilee Bible 2000	...I made myself pools of water, to water with them the forest that brings forth trees;...
Peter Pett's translation	I made myself great works, I built myself houses, I planted vineyards for myself. I made myself gardens, and parks, and I planted trees in them producing all kinds of fruit. I made myself pools of water, to water from them the woodlands where trees were nurtured. Vv. 4–5 are included for context.
Unlocked Literal Bible	I created pools of water to water a forest where trees were grown.
Urim-Thummim Version	I made for myself pools of water, to water from them a forest shooting forth trees.
Wikipedia Bible Project	I made me pools of water, to irrigate from them, a wood growing trees...

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

New American Bible (2011)	And I constructed for myself reservoirs to water a flourishing woodland.
New Jerusalem Bible	I worked on a grand scale: built myself palaces, planted vineyards; made myself gardens and orchards, planting every kind of fruit tree in them; had pools made for watering the young trees of my plantations. Vv. 4–5 are included for context.
Revised English Bible–1989	I constructed ponds from which to water a grove of growing trees;...

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	I made myself pools from which to water the trees springing up in the forest.
The Complete Tanach	I made myself pools of water, to water from them a forest sprouting with trees.
pools of water: Like a sort of vivaria for fish, which they dig in the ground.	
exeGesés companion Bible	...I worked pools of water to wet the forest to sprout trees;...
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	I constructed pools of water, enough to irrigate a forest shooting up with trees.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	...I made me reservoirs of mayim, to water therewith the forest of trees tzomeiach (sprouting up);...
<i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	I made pools of water for myself, to water from them a plantation of growing trees.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	...I made pools of water for myself from which to water the forest <i>and</i> make the trees bud.
The Expanded Bible	I made pools of water for myself and used them to water my ·growing [flourishing forest of] trees.
Pastor John Griffith	I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees. - was common to construct great pools or reservoirs to retain what rainfall they had in the rainy season for use later.

All these things didn't provide him what he was looking for in his running from truth and a relationship with God so he quickly moved on to something else.

Kretzmann's Commentary

...I made me pools of water, artificial lakes for purposes of irrigation, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees, this being necessary on account of the extent and the magnificence of his parks;...

NET Bible®

I constructed pools of water for myself, to irrigate my grove³¹ of flourishing trees.

³¹Heb "to water from them a grove" (or "forest").

Syndein/Thieme

I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees.

The Voice

I installed pools of water to irrigate the forests of young saplings. These continue to be the words of the *Teacher*.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Charles Thompson OT
Concordant Literal Version

I made me pools of water, to water from them my blooming nurseries.

I made reservoirs of water for myself, To irrigate from them the sprouting grove of trees."

Context Group Version
Emphasized Bible

I made myself pools of water, to water from it the forest where trees were set;...

I made me pools of water,—to irrigate therefrom the thick-set saplings growing up into trees:...

English Standard Version
Green's Literal Translation

I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees.

I made pools of water for myself; to water from them the forest shooting forth trees;...

New American Standard B.
New European Version

...I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees.

I made myself pools of water, to water from it the forest where trees were reared.

Webster's Bible Translation
Young's Literal Translation

I made me pools of water, to water with them the wood that bringeth forth trees:...

I made for me pools of water, to water from them a forest shooting forth trees.

The gist of this passage:

Solomon constructed pools of water designed to irrigate his gardens and orchards.

Ecclesiastes 2:6a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿāsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i>]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to produce, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 1 st person singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
b ^e rêkâh (בְּרֵכָה) [pronounced <i>b^e-ray-KAW</i>]	<i>pool, pond; a reservoir</i>	feminine plural construct	Strong's #1295 BDB #140
mayim (מַיִם) [pronounced <i>mah-YIHM</i>]	<i>water (s)</i>	masculine plural noun pausal form	Strong's #4325 BDB #565

Translation: I [also] constructed pools of water... Ponds of water can be constructed for a number of different reasons. It appears that Solomon's building of such was utilitarian, reservoirs which he would use in his gardens.

I would assume that Solomon diverted water from rivers and streams and torrents in order to make these ponds. However, it is certainly possible that he also used water from wells which were pumped up in some way. That particular detail is not made known to us.

Ecclesiastes 2:6 I also constructed irrigation pools to water this great forest which I designed, where trees and all manner of plants would just spring up from the ground.

Solomon's pools of water (Ecclesiastes 2:6a) (various commentators)

Barnes: *A short distance south of Bethlehem, in a valley in the defile of Urtas, three "Pools of Solomon" are still shown and an adjoining hill still bears the name of the "Little Paradise."*²¹⁴

Matthew Poole: *I made me pools of water, because the rain there fell but seldom.*²¹⁵ Although we really do not know the rain patterns of that era, we may reasonably supposed that there is little rain.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *pools* — artificial, for irrigating the soil (Gen. 2:10; Neh. 2:14; Isa. 1:30). Three such reservoirs are still found, called Solomon's cisterns, a mile and a half from Jerusalem.²¹⁶

The Cambridge Bible: *Those at Etam have been mentioned above. Besides these we have the fish-pools of Heshbon (Song Song of Songs. 7:4), the pool of the king (Neh. 2:14), possibly also, the pools of Siloam (John 9:7), and Beth-esda (John 5:2). In Palestine, as in India, these large tanks or reservoirs of water, as meeting the necessities of the climate, were among the favourite works of kingly munificence. Stress is laid on the fact that they were not for beauty only, but for service in irrigating the extensive park.*²¹⁷

Dr. John Gill: *For cascades and water works to play in, as well as to keep and produce fish of all kinds: mention is made of the king's pools, Neh. 2:14; the fish pools at Heshbon, by the gate of Bathrabbim, perhaps belonged to Solomon, Song of Songs. 7:4; Little more than a league from Bethlehem are pools of water, which at this day are called the fish pools of Solomon; they are great reservatories cut in the rock, the one at the end of the other; the second being a little lower than the first, and the third than the second, and so communicate the water from one to another when they are full.*²¹⁸

Ken Cayce: *Many people find it very soothing to live on the banks of a lake. This was the thoughts of Solomon, as well. Again, this does not cause him to be satisfied.*²¹⁹

Maundrell: *They [the 3 springs] are about an hour and a quarter distant from Bethlehem, southward; they are three in number, lying in a row above each other, being so disposed, that the waters of the uppermost may descend into the second, and those of the second into the third; their figure is quadrangular; the breadth is the same in all, amounting to above ninety paces; in their length there is some difference between them, the first being about an hundred sixty paces long; the second, two hundred; the third, two hundred twenty; they are all lined with a wall, and plastered, and contain a great depth of water.*²²⁰

²¹⁴ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:6.

²¹⁵ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:6.

²¹⁶ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:6.

²¹⁷ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:6.

²¹⁸ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:6.

²¹⁹ From bible.studys.org accessed September 6, 2018.

²²⁰ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:6. Further documentation there.

Solomon's pools of water (Ecclesiastes 2:6a) (various commentators)

Rauwolff: [B]eyond the tower of Ader, in another valley, not far from Bethlehem, they show still to this day a large orchard, full of citron, lemon, orange, pomegranate, and fig trees, and many others, which King Solomon did plant in his days; with ponds, canals, and other water works, very pleasantly prepared, as he saith himself, Eccles. 2:5; this is still in our time full of good and fruitful trees, worthy to be seen for their sakes, and ditches there: wherefore I really believe it to be the same Josephus...makes mention of, called Ethan, about twelve mile from Jerusalem; where Solomon had pleasant gardens and water pools, to which he used to ride early in a morning.²²¹

The Pulpit Commentary: Great care was exercised by Solomon to provide his capital with water, and vast operations were undertaken for this purpose. "The king's pool," mentioned in Neh. 2:14, may have been constructed by him (Josephus, 'Bell. Jud.,' 5.4. 2); but the most celebrated work ascribed to him is the water-supply at Etham, southwest of Bethlehem, and the aqueduct leading from thence to Jerusalem. Most modern travelers have described these pools. They are three in number, and, according to Robinson's measurement, are of immense size. The first, to the east, is 582 feet long, 207 wide, and 50 deep; the second, 432 by 250, and 39 feet deep; the third, 380 by 236, and 25 feet deep. They are all, however, narrower at the upper end, and widen out gradually, flowing one into the other. There is a copious spring led into the uppermost pool from the north-east, but this supply is augmented by other sources now choked and ruined. .

The Pulpit Commentary continues: The water from the pools was conveyed round the ridge on which Bethlehem stands in earthen pipes to Jerusalem. Dr. Thomson says, "Near that city it was carried along the west side of the Valley of Gihon to the north-western end of the lower Pool of Gihon, where it crossed to the east side, and, winding round the southern declivity of Zion below Neby Dβūd, finally entered the south-eastern corner of the temple area, where the water was employed in the various services of the sanctuary."

The Pulpit Commentary continues: Etham is, with good reason, identified with the beautiful valley of Urtas, which lies southwest of Bethlehem, in the immediate neighborhood of the pools of Solomon. The fountain near the present village watered the gardens and orchards which were planted here, the terraced hills around were covered with vines, figs, and olives, and the prospect must have been delightful and refreshing in that thirsty land.²²²

Whedon: The making of cisterns and fixtures for watering gardens is in the dry East indispensable. For such purpose, in part, the now famous Pools of Solomon, south of Bethlehem, may have been constructed. The same occurs in our Colorado. A well-watered Eastern garden, enlivened by playing fountains and birds "that sing among the branches," is a most charming object.²²³

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 2:6b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^o]	to, for, towards, in regards to	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510

²²¹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:6. Further documentation there.

²²² *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:6.

²²³ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874-1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 2:6.

Ecclesiastes 2:6b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shâqâh (שָׁקַח) [pronounced shaw-KAW]	to give drink to, to furnish drink, to cause to drink, to make drink; to water [cattle, land]; to irrigate [land]	Hiphil infinitive construct	Strong's #8248 BDB #1052
min (מִן) [pronounced min]	from, off, out from, of, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than	preposition of separation with the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
ya'ar (רֵעִי) [pronounced YAH-ġahr]	wood, forest, thicket; a beehive; an excess of honey; a thicket of trees	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3293 and #3264 (plural form) BDB #420
A 2 nd meaning of this word is <i>honeycomb</i> and the JPS reasonably suggests <i>beehive</i> (BDB names 1Sam. 14:25–26 SOS 5:1 as the only places where this rendering would be reasonable). This helps to explain the varying translations at this point.			
tsâmach (צָמַח) [pronounced tsaw-MAHKH]	sprouting, springing up, springing forth	Qal active participle	Strong's #6779 BDB #855
êtsîym (עֲצֵימ) [pronounced ġay-TSEEM]	trees; trees felled for building (1Kings 5:20, 32), lumber (Gen. 6:14 2Kings 12:13), sticks or logs for fuel (Gen. 22:3 Lev. 1:7); vessels of wood [that hold water] (Ex. 7:19)	masculine plural noun	Strong's #6086 BDB #781

The Pulpit Commentary: *literally, in order to irrigate a wood sprouting forth trees; i.e. a nursery of saplings.*²²⁴

Translation: ...to irrigate from them the forest [I planted, with] trees springing up. What Solomon is irrigating here appears to be a nursery. Pipes or aqueducts would have been employed to move the water from the pools to where the water was needed. Whether the water was moved in any other way besides gravity is unknown to us.

The Cambridge Bible: *the wood that brings forth trees*] Better, “a grove making trees to bud,” i. e. in the language of modern gardening, a “nursery” for young trees.²²⁵

Matthew Poole: *The wood that brings forth trees; the nurseries of young trees newly planted in the orchards, which for the multitude of them were like a wood or forest.*²²⁶

I don't know if you have ever had the experience of taking a normally dry plot of ground and adding water to it regularly. All kinds of things pop up. Sometimes, it is very surprising.

I replaced my lawn once with a heavy coating of bark. I honestly expected things to remain just like that, but they didn't. All kinds of things began to grow—nearly a dozen crape myrtle trees emerged from nowhere (well, there

²²⁴ The Pulpit Commentary; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:4.

²²⁵ The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:6 slightly edited).

²²⁶ Matthew Poole, English Annotations on the Holy Bible; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:6 (slightly edited).

was a couple of crape myrtles on my property already). It is quite a fascinating experiment. I planted many things, but it turns out that I really did not have to.

I think what Solomon is saying here is, he is watering this forest, and trees as well as other plants are just springing up. Volunteers, as they have been called.

It is no doubt obvious that, wherever there is a stream or river, everything along that stream or river is green. Therefore, it only stands to reason that, if you want greenery, you must have water.

The Pulpit Commentary: *[These pools are] a most necessary feature in Eastern countries, where streams and pools are not constructed for picturesque reasons, but for material uses.*²²⁷

Ecclesiastes 2:6 I also constructed irrigation pools to water this great forest which I designed, where trees and all manner of plants would just spring up from the ground.

Ecclesiastes 2:4–6 I have magnified my great works. I have built great buildings and planted marvelous gardens, all for myself. I planted personal gardens and parks, and in them I planted a variety of trees, including fruit trees. I also constructed irrigation pools to water this great forest which I designed, where trees and all manner of plants would just spring up from the ground.

Solomon's Great Building Projects (Ecclesiastes 2:4–6) (various commentators)

Arno Gaebelein: *[Solomon] made great works, built houses, planted vineyards, laid out beautiful oriental gardens with fruit trees, all kinds of shrubbery, with pools of water, springs and waterfalls--all so pleasing to the eye--the lust of the eyes.*²²⁸

Dr. Peter Pett: *Being the king, and wealthy, he was able to indulge his interests. He built houses, planted vineyards, planned and brought into being gardens and parks of outstanding beauty. He filled them with fruit trees, full of tasty things and delightful to the eye.*

Pett continues: *He built artificial pools, always full of water, in a land where water was often a luxury, and surrounded them with trees of every kind, an oasis in an often dry land. This was no short term experiment. These things would take many years. Surely this was accomplishing something? But he concluded that it was not. Others had done the same, and where were those things now?*²²⁹

Ray C. Stedman: *Solomon too gave himself to this. His own house took fourteen years to build, the temple seven. He built houses for his many wives whom he brought to Jerusalem, spending time, money and interest doing so. Southwest of Jerusalem, in a place seldom visited by tourists; there exist yet today vast depressions in the earth which are still called the Pools of Solomon, which he used to water the forest of trees which he planted in an effort to find satisfaction for his own heart.*²³⁰

Dunagan: *Next, Solomon threw himself into the joys of creativity. Solomon is like many people, who in their teens or early twenties pursued pleasure and having a good time, in their later twenties and thirties try to find fulfillment in building a house, remodeling, landscaping, building a fish pond in the backyard, or whatever the latest home improvement idea might be. . . .*

Dunagan continues: *2. In this section no mention is made of the Temple, because Solomon is discussing those things he planned and designed for his own personal use. 3. Solomon's house is described in 1 Kings 7:1-12 and 9:19. He built many public works, including an armory, a citadel which protected the Temple (1 Kings 9:24; 11:27), store-cities, chariot cities, etc...(9:18-19).*

²²⁷ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:6.

²²⁸ Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1–26.

²²⁹ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:4–6.

²³⁰ From www.raystedman.org/ accessed July 27, 2018. Copyright © 2010 by Ray Stedman Ministries

Solomon's Great Building Projects (Ecclesiastes 2:4–6) (various commentators)

Dunagan continues: 4. *Solomon inherited the vineyards of his father David and also had his own (1 Chron. 27:27-28; Song of Solomon 8:10-11).* 5. *The "Parks" of this section were large and enclosed parks for private use, which included all kinds of trees and even animals for hunting. Solomon, like the Persian kings had his own private reserve.*

Dunagan concludes: 6. *Various "pools" which Solomon built have been found. Not far from Bethlehem three such pools, located on separate levels still exist to this day. All are roughly rectangular, the largest measures 200 ft. wide, 600 ft. long and 50 ft. deep. Basically, Solomon built whatever he wanted to build. Someone has noted that the ancient talent of gold was thought to be worth \$30,000 dollars (in 1962 dollars). Hence, if Solomon had been alive in 1962, his annual income would have been 20 million (1 Kings 10:14).²³¹*

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

This is an excellent summary of section 2:

The Aesthetic Improvements Made by Solomon (College Press Bible Study)

Section two: aesthetic improvements. (Eccles. 2:4-6)

Although the Temple was the most important and most elaborate of Solomon's contributions, no mention is made of it in this section. The reason is obvious. Solomon is discussing only those items which he planned and designed for personal satisfaction, the Temple belonged in a special way to the people as well as to the king. In reality it was God's Temple and thus it would be out of place to mention it along with those things programmed for sensuous delights.

- (a) Houses. For a detailed explanation of Solomon's houses, read 1Kings 7:1-12; 1Kings 9:19. His endeavors were almost unbelievable in scope. He built numerous buildings and public works in Jerusalem. He spent thirteen years building his own palace. It included the armory and the Hall of Judgment. He built a "house of Pharaoh's daughter" (1Kings 7:2-8). He built a citadel (1Kings 9:24; 1Kings 11:27) or huge fortress to protect the temple. He founded cities in distant lands (1Kings 9:18), built store-cities and chariot towns, national works of great importance, and rebuilt and fortified cities throughout his kingdom.
- (b) Vineyards. David possessed vineyards that Solomon undoubtedly inherited (1Chron. 27:27-28). It is also recorded in Song of Songs. 8:10-11 that he possessed his own vineyard.
- (c) Gardens. The term is synonymous with the Greek term for paradise and suggests pleasantry and beauty. There is a reference to "a king's garden" in 2Kings 25:4. Note also Song of Songs. 4:16. A detailed description of gardens in Palestine cannot be found in the Bible although they are often mentioned. They were generally believed to be walled in-closures with winding paths and canals of running water to provide for the many shade and fruit trees. This is in harmony with the information in this section. One can almost see the sweet-smelling, aromatic blossoms inviting travelers to the cooling arbors and refreshing streams.
- (d) Parks. The terms "parks," "gardens," and "forests" are used interchangeably. From the context in Neh. 2:8 and corresponding references, the emphasis is on trees and forestry. Such parks also contained fruit trees and herds of animals.

²³¹ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:6.

The Aesthetic Improvements Made by Solomon (College Press Bible Study)

- (e) Ponds. Besides the aesthetic value of pools or reservoirs, they served a practical purpose. Pools supplied the water for the irrigation of the growing trees. Because of the long extended periods without rain, sometimes lasting three to four months, the ponds provided an essential and vital supply of water. Evidence of the water supply at Etham is the most celebrated of the pools ascribed to Solomon. There were three large pools ranging in length from 380 feet to 582 feet and in width from 207 feet to 250 feet. They varied in depth from 25 to 50 feet. The pools were located a distance of ten miles from Jerusalem but because of the natural contour of the Judaeen hills, the water traveled nearly 15 miles to the enormous reservoir beneath the city. The origin of the aqueduct is uncertain. The history of Jerusalem has always included a struggle on the part of the people to discover and supply water for their needs. However, in Solomon's description, no mention is made of the utilitarian purposes of the pools, either for Temple needs or the needs of the people. He is searching for the answer to the question: Is there any good in the beautiful?

The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:1–11 (comments).

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[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 2:4–6 I have magnified my great works. I have built great buildings and planted marvelous gardens, all for myself. I planted personal gardens and parks, and in them I planted a variety of trees, including fruit trees. I also constructed irrigation pools to water this great forest which I designed, where trees and all manner of plants would just spring up from the ground.

Ecclesiastes 2:4–6: The overall picture of Solomon's building projects (Dr. Dan Hill)

ENGINEERING OR CONSTRUCTION: Solomon built the Temple that was planned and designed by his father David. He was happy building the Temple.

[However, in this passage, it] Sounds like he is trying to build the garden of Eden

Now that he is on a frantic search for significance, he decides that he will try a few building projects.

I Kings 9:10 tells us his building activity lasted for twenty-two years. He built a great palace, many official buildings in Jerusalem, even a five mile long covered riding path.

The closest thing we have to this today in our culture is probably the Hearst Castle in San Simeon, California.

[Solomon's] Conclusion of [his] building career is given in Eccl 2:17-18

"So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind. Thus I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me."

From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> accessed September 1, 2018 (slightly edited).

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Matthew Henry on all that Solomon built: *When the Creator had made his great works he reviewed them, and behold, all was very good; every thing pleased him. But when Solomon reviewed all his works that his hands had wrought with the utmost cost and care, and the labour that he had laboured to do in order to make himself easy and happy, nothing answered his expectation; behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit; he had no satisfaction in it, no advantage by it; there was no profit under the sun, neither by the employments nor by the enjoyments of this world.*²³²

²³² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1–11.

How we feel all comes from the inside. When I complete a project, I am quite happy with it and often take pictures (before and after photos). It is a nice feeling of accomplishment. However, one's long-term appreciation for one's life comes from the intake of Bible doctrine.

In my life, I have known people who have had their psyche managed with psychotropic drugs (two of whom committed suicide); and others who have seen therapists of one kind or another (operating under this or that theory of psychology/therapy). I do not know anyone who has emerged from either approach whole and content. On the other hand, I have known people who are teetering on life, have believed in Jesus Christ, and then got on doctrine, and they have emerged whole and content.

Solomon develops these great building plans in his head and he executes them, having the funds and resources (slaves) to bring these things to pass. There is every evidence that his execution of his plans is what he expects; and that the buildings or gardens which emerge—having once been but a vision in his head—are quite satisfactory to the senses. The problem is, is if Solomon depends upon these things for his overall well-being, and these things, as gratifying as they are, do not provide one with happiness and contentment.

The key is, we all have the same Creator, and He designed us as part of a great plan. When we are in the midst of this plan, we enjoy happiness and satisfaction. When we pursue those things in other ways, contentment will always elude us. This understanding is the essence of the book of Ecclesiastes.

Ecclesiastes 2:4–6 (GNT) (a graphic); from [TimeHD](#); accessed September 7, 2018.

This is a good example of a thought-for-thought translation or a dynamic translation. When you read it, it makes a great deal of sense. It is the kind of reading that you could easily do at night before bed.

It is my recommendation that everyone have a reading Bible (one of my favorites is the NLT; this is the Good News Translation). This can be on your computer or you can access any translation that you want on your iPad.

You may not use this translation in order to justify this or that doctrine; but you get a good feel for the thinking, the progress of thought, and the big points made by this book, chapter or passage.

"I have also learned why people work so hard to succeed: it is because they envy the things their neighbors have. But it is useless. It is like chasing the wind. They say that we would be fools to fold our hands and let ourselves starve to death. Maybe so, but it is better to have only a little, with peace of mind, than be busy all the time with both hands, trying to catch the wind."

ecclesiastes 4:4-6

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Ron Snider's translation of Ecclesiastes 2:4–6 I enlarged my works: I built houses for myself, I planted vineyards for myself; I made gardens and parks for myself, and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees; I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees.

Ecclesiastes 2:4–6: Ambitious projects do not satisfy (Ron Snider)

1. The first two areas of pursuit have largely been confined to the mind and body of Qoheleth, focusing on the quest for wisdom and knowledge and focusing on the pleasures of stimulating the body.
2. He has already provided his conclusion as to the value of these pursuits as he described them as striving after the wind (1:17), futility (2:1), and madness that accomplishes nothing. Eccles. 2:3
3. Although he does not explicitly disparage the use and effects of alcohol, it is implicit that he found nothing in that pursuit that yielded any permanent satisfaction.
4. While one interpreter has suggested that Qoheleth moved from one pursuit to another (and that may generally be true), it would seem that there would have to be some overlapping of these pursuits during this experiment.
5. It does seem clear that Qoheleth moved from the most personal areas of pursuing satisfaction to more overt pursuits in these next three verses.
6. As we have pointed out in the previous verse respecting his pursuit of satisfaction through the use of alcohol, Qoheleth had the money, time, and energy to do things on a grand scale.
7. The first clause of verse four may be understood in a couple of ways; Qoheleth either began to engage in these elaborate works that follow, or he was expanding on his previous works.
8. Given the history of Solomon, it would seem that the second suggestion is the more likely since Solomon had already accomplished a significant amount—most notably the building of the Temple and his own house in Jerusalem.
9. These two projects took a combined total of twenty years and place us in the 24th year of Solomon's reign. 1Kings. 6:1. 9:10
10. However, his past great accomplishments apparently did not bring any lasting satisfaction (there was a definite let down), so he embarked on more elaborate plans in order to contribute to his experiment.
11. Wright has observed that, "a sensible use of money may be a form of creativity; so Solomon expressed himself in extensive building projects, planting of vineyards, fruit trees, and gardens."
12. While this might indicate that many of his building plans were of the nature of public works, it is evident from the text that Qoheleth was not doing these things for philanthropic reasons.
13. He was doing it all for his own pleasure, which is seen in the fact that the dative of interest לִי (liy-for myself) is used eight times in verses 4-8.
14. This makes it quite clear the fact that Qoheleth was not engaging in this projects for any humanitarian purpose, or for the good of the kingdom, he was doing it for his own personal gratification.
15. The general phrase at the beginning of verse four, I enlarged my works, is expanded on and explained more fully by the types of works that Qoheleth pursued.
16. It should be noted that Solomon does not mention the most famous and elaborate of his works—the Temple in Jerusalem.
17. The reasons for this include the fact that it had preceded this experiment, it was built with some measure of a Divine mandate, and it was a public project erected for the spiritual good of Israel.
18. However, it might be observed that once one had effectively built a residence for the Creator of all things, other projects might seem to pale in comparison.
19. His first residence, the palace he built in Jerusalem, was thirteen years in the building and was extremely elaborate and expensive. 1Kings 7:1-12
20. Although the Old Testament does not record anything about the nature and extent of Solomon's personal home building projects, there can be little doubt that they were elaborate and of the highest quality. 1Kings 7:15-25
21. In all these projects, it must be remembered that while Solomon may have organized and planned them, he accomplished all these things with the skills and labor of other men. 1Kings 9:20-23

Ecclesiastes 2:4–6: Ambitious projects do not satisfy (Ron Snider)

22. The second area of expansion was in the area of vineyards, which were no doubt devoted in large measure to the production of the finest wines of that time.
23. Again, the historical account does not mention much about the vineyards of Solomon; but, like everything he did, we can be assured that they were planted on a grade scale.
24. The one passage that does mention a vineyard is found in the Song of Solomon and notes that he used the vineyard as another source of income. SOS 8:11
25. The next two building projects are viewed as a single enterprise, but each had its own unique
26. The Hebrew term גַּנָּה (gannah-garden) referred to a plot of ground, which was protected by a wall or hedge.
27. This area was often irrigated and was used to cultivate flowers, fruit, and vegetables. Isa. 58:11; SOS 5:1, 6:2
28. During the hot summer months, these gardens would provide a welcome refuge from the oppressive summertime heat. SOS 5:2, 8:13
29. The second term is the Hebrew פֶּרְדֵּס (pardes-park) is used only three times and has the nuance of an orchard, forest, or park. Neh. 2:8; Eccles. 2:5; SOS 4:13
30. Although many interpreters and commentators believe that this term is a Persian loanword (justifying their view of a much later date of writing), there is no evidence that the Persians might not have borrowed the word from Solomon.
31. If it is indeed a term loaned from the Persians, this usage predates the rise of the Persian Empire by about 400 years.
32. Like their counterparts in the Near East, Israel kings took great pride in gardens and enclosed parks or preserves.
33. These two items were both aesthetic and practical, providing beautiful scenery, relief from the heat, and various types of fruit trees and vegetables.
34. The parks were often used as animal refuges as well, which served as a convenient source of wild meat while providing royal sport.
35. Qoheleth continued with his major building projects, which were closely linked with the two preceding projects of gardens and parks.
36. Although irrigating a park with sufficient water was a practical matter (Isa. 1:30) that was worthy of a king, Qoheleth reiterates that he did it for himself and not for others.
37. In Palestine, where the rainfall of the winter has to be stored for the dry months of summer, reservoirs or cisterns are of great importance.
38. Several are mentioned in the Old Testament, including an important one near Jerusalem, one in Heshbon, and one in Hebron. Nejd. 2:14; SOS 7:4; 2Sam. 4:12
39. In fact, three such reservoirs west of Bethlehem that may be seen today that are attributed by tradition to Solomon.
40. It would appear that Solomon was building his own world within a world, a world of beauty and productivity, harmonious, and producing pleasure for the one living in it.
41. In that regard, the use of the word that is translated in the English by paradise might even suggest that Solomon had constructed his own personal Garden of Eden-with no forbidden fruit.
42. For all this effort, time, and expense, Solomon had no doubt created brilliant and spectacular achievements, which he has already told us did not provide any lasting satisfaction.
43. How many people today spend their time seeking to create their own world within a world, pursuing aesthetic pleasures, and building their homes and constructing their gardens as showcases for others to
44. What does it accomplish, what will they have at the end of their lives for all the time, energy, and money they have spent? "All the riches of the kings end up in wills..." Switchfoot

From [Makarios Bible Church](#); accessed September 2, 2018 (will open as a Word Document on your computer).

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Solomon experiments with consumerism

Addictive Consumerism and Solomon: Solomon was able to build beautiful things; he was able to conceive of, design and then produce amazing structures. He even extended this into the realm of *building with nature*. So he built gardens and parks; and he designed ponds and irrigation systems in order to water them. But this was not enough. So Solomon decided to pursue the accumulation of possessions. If he liked something, he could buy it. If something interested him, he could purchase it and observe it.

Recently, the company Apple has been able to produce and market its iphone so well that, people in many cities will line up to purchase the newest model (by the time that you read this, that is no doubt passe). But, in our consumer-driven society, people develop a desire for certain things, and they will stand in long lines to get that thing, whatever it is. Maybe an iphone, maybe concert tickets, maybe the new X-box (I think that is over now?). In any case, when an enterprise is successful with whatever its product is and marketing that product, they can get people to line up in long lines in order to purchase that item—and you have better get down there quick, because quantities are limited.

There are people who watch the Shopping Network or the Shopping Channel (I think I have those names right), and they will buy, buy and then take a break for lunch, and then buy some more. People have unopened packages of stuff which they have bought by their front door, in the extra bedroom, or in the garage. When they saw these things presented, they thought, *I need to have one of those*. But, by the time that package arrived, there were ten other things that they just had to have.

Solomon, for his day and time, was the ultimate consumer. If he heard about it, knew about it, saw it, and it appealed to him, he'd buy it. And just like there are companies who have something to sell and they concentrate on marketing that item (whether it is a movie, a singer, or something produced over in China), there were no doubt traders and artisans who went directly to Solomon (or to his staff) and showed him stuff that they had, hoping that he would buy it.

But, no matter what Solomon bought, it was not enough; and it never was able to give his soul contentment. He will conclude in v. 11 that, it is empty; and he is still chasing after wind.

John Dummelow: *[The author] acquires slaves, herds, and flocks, and precious metals, musicians, and inmates of the harem. Without being the slave of these delights he yet indulges in every desire of his heart, but, as before, all is vanity.*²³³

Pastor John Griffith: *[In this section, Solomon] Experiments with possessions and prosperity.*²³⁴

I acquired servants and maidens, and sons of the house is to me. Also, livestock, a herd and a flock increase is to me, more than all to my faces in Jerusalem.

Ecclesiastes
2:7

[Over time,] I acquired male and female servants, and [their] children [who are born] in [my] palace [also belong] to me. Furthermore, [I have acquired] livestock—herds and flocks—[and their] increase [also belongs] to me, [so that my wealth is] greater than all before me in Jerusalem.

²³³ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/dcb/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 6, 2018.

²³⁴ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_06.html accessed September 1, 2018.

Over time, I acquired both male and female servants, along with children born to them in my household. Furthermore, I have acquired livestock—great herds and flocks—which continue to increase in great numbers—more than all who came before me in Jerusalem.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	I acquired servants and maidens, and sons of the house is to me. Also, livestock, a herd and a flock increase is to me, more than all to my faces in Jerusalem.
Revised Douay-Rheims	I got me menservants, and maidservants, and <u>had a great family</u> : and herds of oxen, and great flocks of sheep, above all that were before me in Jerusalem:...
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	I bought bond-men and bond-women from the children of Ham, <u>and other foreign nations; and I had officers placed over the eatables of my house, to provide for me and the people of my house food twelve months of the year, and one to provide for me during the leap-year</u> ; I had also cattle and sheep more than all generations before me in Jerusalem;...
Peshitta (Syriac)	I got for myself menservants and maidservants, and had a great household; also I had great possessions of cattle and flocks, above all who were before me in Jerusalem.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	I got servants and maidens, and servants were born to me in the house: also I had abundant possession of flocks and herds, beyond all who were before me in Jerusalem.

Significant differences: The targum has some addition text and some distortions.

The Latin has *had a great family* instead of speaking to the sons raised by Solomon's slaves.

I understood the Hebrew text to refer to 3 sets of animals: livestock, herds and flocks; the Latin has 2 of those (each expanded); and the Syriac and Greek only have two of them listed.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Easy English	I bought male slaves and female slaves. Their sons and their daughters became my slaves too. Many people lived in Jerusalem before I did. And many of them had animals. But I had more cows and sheep than anyone else had.
Easy-to-Read Version—2006	I bought men and women slaves, and there were slaves born in my house. I owned many great things. I had herds of cattle and flocks of sheep. I owned more things than any other person in Jerusalem did.
God's Word™	I bought male and female slaves. In addition, slaves were born in my household. I owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me.
The Message	I bought slaves, male and female, who had children, giving me even more slaves; then I acquired large herds and flocks, larger than any before me in Jerusalem.
New Simplified Bible	I acquired male and female servants, and they gave birth to sons and daughters in my house. I had great wealth of herds and flocks, more than all who were in Jerusalem before me.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	I owned many servants. Some I purchased for myself, both male and female. Others I had born in my own house and considered them in a special way as sons of the house.
Contemporary English V.	I owned slaves, and their sons and daughters became my slaves. I had more sheep and goats than anyone who had ever lived in Jerusalem.
The Living Bible	Next I bought slaves, both men and women, and others were born within my household. I also bred great herds and flocks, more than any of the kings before me.
New Century Version	I bought male and female slaves, and slaves were also born in my house. I had large herds and flocks, more than anyone in Jerusalem had ever had before.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	I bought male and female slaves. Babies who later became my slaves were born in my palace. I also owned more livestock than any of the previous kings in Jerusalem had owned.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	I acquired many slaves (both women and men), And many native servants were born. I also acquired great herds and flocks... More than all who had come before me.
Beck's American Translation	I bought men and women slaves and others were born in my house. I also owned many cows and sheep, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem.
International Standard V	<i>A Testimony to Extravagant Possessions</i> I acquired male and female slaves, and had other slaves born in my house. I also acquired for myself increasing numbers of herds and flocks—more than anyone who had lived before me in Jerusalem.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	Men-slaves I bought and women-slaves, till I had a great retinue of them; herds, too, and abundance of flocks, such as Jerusalem never saw till then.
Translation for Translators	I bought male and female slaves, and babies <i>who later became my slaves</i> were born in my palace. I also owned more livestock than any of the previous kings in Jerusalem had owned.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible	I have acquired servants and maid servants, with their sons in my house. I am to make increased my livestock, the large cattle and small cattle, in Jerusalem turned before me.
Conservapedia Translation	I acquired servants and maidens, and servants were born in my estate; I had vast holdings of cattle both large and small, which were greater than any held within Jerusalem before me.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	I purchased men and women servants, and they had children in my house. I also had herds of cattle and great flocks,—more than all who were before me in Jerusalem...
God's Truth (Tyndale)	I bought servants and maidens, and had a great household. As for cattle and sheep, I had more substance of them, then all that were before me in Jerusalem.
Jubilee Bible 2000	...I got myself slaves and maidens and had sons born in my house; also I had great possessions of cattle and sheep above all that were in Jerusalem before me;...
Tree of Life Version	I purchased male and female servants and had other servants who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than all my predecessors in Jerusalem.
Unlocked Literal Bible	I purchased male slaves and female slaves; I had slaves born in my palace. I also had large herds and flocks of livestock, much more than any king who ruled before me in Jerusalem.
Wikipedia Bible Project	I bought servants and maidservants, and had slave-sons to my household, I had also much livestock of cattle and sheep, from all before me in Jerusalem.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

- Christian Community (1988) I bought slaves and servants and had slaves born in my household. I had flocks and herds in abundance more than anyone before me in Jerusalem.
- The Heritage Bible ...I procured servants and maidservants, and sons were in my house; also livestock of beef cattle and abundant flocks were mine above all who were in Jerusalem before me;...
- New American Bible (2011) I acquired male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I also owned vast herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, more than all who had been before me in Jerusalem.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

- Complete Jewish Bible I bought male and female slaves, and I had my home-born slaves as well. I also had growing herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, more than anyone before me in Yerushalayim.
- exeGesés companion Bible ...I chattelized servants and maids and had sons of my house; I also had abundant chattel of oxen and flocks above all that were in Yeru Shalem at my face:...
- JPS (Tanakh—1985) I bought male and female slaves, and I acquired stewards. I also acquired more cattle, both herds and flocks, than all who were before me in Jerusalem.
- Orthodox Jewish Bible ...I bought me avadim and shfakhot, and had bnei bayit (avadim born in my bais); also I had great possessions of herds and tzon more than all that were in Yerushalayim before me;...
- The Scriptures* 1998 I bought male and female servants, and I came to have sons of the household. Also, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were before me in Yerushalayim.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

- Pastor John Griffith I bought male and female slaves - such a huge establishment that he had, with all his holdings, would need many support staff - since this is a period of peace he had to purchase the slaves needed. and I had homeborn slaves. ...those born to the slaves in his house.
- Known for their great loyalty; Abe had many of these Gen 14:14
Also I possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem.
- Flocks and herds were one of the main ways of determining one's wealth in the Near East at the time.
- Kretzmann's Commentary ...I got me servants and maidens, slaves of both sexes, and had servants born in my house, such slaves usually being distinguished for loyalty to their master; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me, as God had promised him, 2Chron. 1:12;...
- NET Bible® I purchased male and female slaves, and I owned slaves who were born in my house;³²
I also possessed more livestock – both herds and flocks – than any of my predecessors in Jerusalem.
³²^{tn} The phrase “sons of a house” (תֵּיבֵי יָבֵב, vkne vayit) appears to be parallel to “a son of my house” (יְתִיבֵי, ven-beti) which refers to a person born into slavery from male and female servants in the master's possession, e.g., Eleazar of Damascus (Gen 15:3). The phrase appears to denote children born from male and female slaves already in his possession, that is, “homeborn slaves” (NASB) or “other slaves who were born in my house” (NIV). Apparently confusing the sense of the phrase

	with the referent of the phrase in Gen 15:3, NJPS erroneously suggests “stewards” in Eccl 2:7.
Syndein/Thieme	{Happiness Through Having People Do the Hard Work for You and Owning Businesses} I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves that were born in my house. I owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me {agricultural society - represents all types of business prosperity from human ability}.
The Voice	I acquired male and female servants; I even had servants born into my household. I had herds of cattle, flocks of sheep and goats—more than anyone who had ever lived in Jerusalem before me.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Charles Thompson OT	I purchased men servants and maid servants; and had servants born in my family. And my stock of herds and flocks was great above all who were before me in Jerusalem.
Concordant Literal Version	I acquired servants and maids, And any sons born in the house became mine; Moreover, abundant cattle, herds and flocks became mine, More than all who were before me in Jerusalem."
<i>Emphasized Bible</i>	I acquired, men-servants and women-servants, and, the children of the household, were mine,—also possessions, herds and flocks in abundance, were mine, beyond all who had been before me in Jerusalem;...
English Standard Version	I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem.
Modern English Version	I even bought male and female slaves; even some were born to me in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks more than any who had been in Jerusalem before me.
New American Standard B.	I bought male and female slaves and I had homeborn slaves. Also I possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem.
Webster's Bible Translation	I procured <i>me</i> servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:...
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	I got men-servants, and maid-servants, and sons of the house were to me; also, I had much substance—herd and flock—above all who had been before me in Jerusalem.

The gist of this passage: Solomon had male and female slaves; their children; and herds and flocks, more than any one before him in Jerusalem.

Ecclesiastes 2:7a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
qânâh (קָנָה) [pronounced kaw-NAWH]	<i>to get, acquire, obtain; [of God] to found, to originate, to create; to possess; to redeem [His people]; [of Eve] to acquire; to acquire [knowledge, wisdom]; to buy [purchase, redeem]</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #7069 BDB #888

Ecclesiastes 2:7a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
There is a far greater emphasis on this verb in the realm of <i>possessing, buying or purchasing</i> than there is in the realm of <i>creating</i> . There are some scholars who would eliminate the meanings <i>to found, to originate, to create</i> . However, the NET Bible believes this to be simply another set of meanings (not unheard of in the Hebrew).			
עֲבָדִים (עִבְדָּע) [pronounced <i>ġe^b-vaw-DEEM</i>]	<i>slaves, servants; workers; underlings; subjects; slavery, bondage, servitude; this can mean military men, soldiers in the plural</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #5650 BDB #713
In today's world, these people would be understood to be <i>workers, employees, hires</i> .			
וְ (or וֵ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
שִׁפְחֹת (שִׁפְחָת) [pronounced <i>shēf-awkh-OHTH</i>]	<i>maidens, maid-servants, household servants, handmaids, female slaves</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #8198 BDB #1046

Translation: [Over time,] I acquired male and female servants,... Solomon is not necessarily speaking of one of his intentional pursuits regarding his lack of contentment, but he seems to be providing context for things which he has already done and experienced in his life.

There was a time when Solomon collected many servants—slaves, if you will—both male and female.

If ever a person was to be wooed into crass consumerism, it was Solomon.

Ecclesiastes 2:7 Over time, I acquired both male and female servants, along with children born to them in my household. Furthermore, I have acquired livestock—great herds and flocks—which continue to increase in great numbers—more than all who came before me in Jerusalem.

Solomon's slaves (Ecclesiastes 2:7a) (various commentators)

Clarke: [Solomon had] *Servants and maidens* - For my works, fields, folds, and various domestic labors.²³⁵

Dunagan: Any big establishment requires "staff". Gardeners, cooks, butlers, hired hands, etc.... So many people on a lesser scale have followed down the same track! How many people in search for the same thing that Solomon was looking for finally realized that they had to have a "ranch" at sometime in their lives? 1000 acres with a herd of Buffalo-is that the ultimate? And be impressed that Solomon unlike many people, knew what to do with all this stuff.²³⁶

²³⁵ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:7.

²³⁶ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:7.

Solomon's slaves (Ecclesiastes 2:7a) (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *The number of Solomon's attendants excited the wonder of the Queen of Sheba (1Kings 4:26, etc.; 1Kings 10:5), and with good reason, if Josephus's account is to be believed. This writer asserts that the king had some thousand or more chariots, and twenty thousand horses. The drivers and riders were young men of comely aspect, tall and well-made; they had long flowing hair, and wore tunics of Tyrian purple, and powdered their hair with gold dust, which glittered in the rays of the sun ('Ant.,' 8.7. 3). Attended by a cavalcade thus arrayed, Solomon used to betake himself to his "paradise" at Etham, to enjoy the refreshing coolness of its trees and pools.*²³⁷

Dr. John Gill: *Villalpandus computes the number of his servants to be forty eight thousand; if there were any pleasure and happiness in such a numerous attendance, Solomon had it.*²³⁸

Although slaves were seen as possessions, they were granted more rights under Mosaic Law than anywhere else in the world.

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Ecclesiastes 2:7 Over time, I acquired both male and female servants, along with children born to them in my household. Furthermore, I have acquired livestock—great herds and flocks—which continue to increase in great numbers—more than all who came before me in Jerusalem.

Slavery in Israel (Ecclesiastes 2:7a) (various commentators)

Dr. Bob Utley: *Slavery was common in the ancient world. It was not all bad! Many poor Hebrews sold themselves into slavery to another Hebrew to have a better life (cf. Deut. 15:12-18)! Of course, forced slavery (military, economic) was, and is, a tragedy! There was, and is, human exploitation in this area.*²³⁹ I would disagree about slavery in war, which is not always a tragedy for the person who is enslaved as over against being killed.

Whedon: *He who studies the laws of Moses will see that such provision was made for servants that their condition was not one of slavery in its more objectionable sense. In fact, there is no Hebrew word for slave. The Hebrew bondman lost no right but that of the recompense of his own labour. If he was maimed by his master he became free. If he was killed by him, his master was slain by the sword. Greek, Roman, and American slavery was very different from this. The slave was, also, taught in the law; could not be delivered up if he ran away; could marry a daughter of his master; and a maidservant could be the lawful wife of her master or her master's son. Servants, then, either purchased or born on the place, were not what we call slaves.*²⁴⁰

E. W. Bullinger: *Hebrew bondage has nothing in common with Greek, Roman, or African slavery. There is no word for such slavery in Hebrew; 'ebed = labourer, is the name of all Jehovah's servants.*²⁴¹

Slavery existed everywhere. The unusual thing about the Mosaic Law is, it placed restrictions on the owners of slaves.

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²³⁷ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:7.

²³⁸ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:7.

²³⁹ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:7.

²⁴⁰ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 2:7.

²⁴¹ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:7.

Ecclesiastes 2:7b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, וְ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wāw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
bânîym (בְּנֵי) [pronounced <i>baw-NEEM</i>]	<i>sons, descendants; children; people; sometimes rendered men; young men, youths</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
bayith (בַּיִת) [pronounced <i>BAH-yith</i>]	<i>house, residence; household, habitation as well as inward</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1004 BDB #108
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i>]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
I would have expected a plural here.			
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>le</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 1 st person singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

Translation: ...and [their] children [who are born] in [my] palace [also belong] to me. As a part of having male and female servants, they sometimes marry one another and have children; and these children belong to Solomon as well.

Quite frankly, this is presented almost as a breeding program.

Ecclesiastes 2:7 Over time, I acquired both male and female servants, along with children born to them in my household. Furthermore, I have acquired livestock—great herds and flocks—which continue to increase in great numbers—more than all who came before me in Jerusalem.

Ecclesiastes 2:7b: The children born in the house (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *They were much more esteemed by their masters, and showed a much closer attachment to the family than the bought slaves or the conquered aboriginals, who were often reduced to this state (1Kings 9:20–21).*²⁴²

Clarke: *Servants born in any house - Besides those hired from without, he had married couples in the precincts of his grounds, palaces, etc., who, when their children grew up, got them employment with themselves.*²⁴³

Keil and Delitzsch: *There is a distinction between the slaves, male and female (mancipia), obtained by purchase, and those who were home-born (vernae), the בְּנֵי (יְדִילִי) תַּיִב, who were regarded as the chief support of the house (Gen. 14:14), on account of their attachment to it, and to this day are called (Arab.) fada wayyt, as those who offer themselves a sacrifice for it, if need be.*²⁴⁴

²⁴² The Pulpit Commentary; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:7.

²⁴³ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:7.

²⁴⁴ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 2:7.

Ecclesiastes 2:7b: The children born in the house (various commentators)

Dr. Peter Pett presents a somewhat different view of these children who are born: *[Solomon] had menservants to do his bidding, so that he could have anything done for him that he wanted. He had maidens for his pleasure. He indulged in sex whenever he wanted, with the women of his choice, and produced many children who became servants in his house. (As the children of low born concubines they would become high level servants, but not princes. Their service would include high office). But still his heart hungered. He was not satisfied. It all had no final meaning.*²⁴⁵

Dr. John Gill: *and had servants born in my house; and these were all employed by him; either as his retinue and equipage, his attendants and bodyguards; or to take care of his household, his gardens, and pools; or for his horses and chariots, and for various offices; see 1Kings 4:26, Ezra 2:58.*²⁴⁶

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *[The slaves born in Solomon's household] were esteemed more trustworthy servants than those bought (Gen. 14:14; Gen. 15:2, Gen. 15:3; Gen. 17:12, Gen. 17:13, Gen. 17:27; Jer. 2:14), called "songs of one's handmaid" (Ex. 23:12; compare Gen. 12:16; Job. 1:3).*²⁴⁷

Ezra, a few hundred years later, tells us: *All the temple servants and the sons of Solomon's servants were 392.* (Ezra 2:58; ESV)

1Kings 8:63 *Solomon offered as peace offerings to the LORD 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. So the king and all the people of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD.*

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The Cambridge Bible: *Of these slaves each great household had two classes: (1) those "bought with money," men of other races, captives in war, often, probably, negroes (Jer. 38:7) who were employed in the more menial offices (Gen. 11:11–12; Gen. 11:23), and (2) those born in the house (Gen. 14:14; Gen. 15:3; Jer. 2:14).*²⁴⁸

Ecclesiastes 2:7c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
gam (גַּם) [pronounced gahm]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, as well; even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168
mîq ^e neh (מִן־קֶנֶה) [pronounced mik-NEH]	<i>cattle, livestock (specifically sheep, cows and goats); herds, flocks</i>	masculine singular (collective) plural noun	Strong's #4735 BDB #889
bâqâr (בָּקָר) [pronounced baw-KAWR]	<i>bull, cow, ox, collectively: herd, cattle, oxen</i>	masculine singular collective noun	Strong's #1241 BDB #133
w ^e (or v ^e) (וְ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

²⁴⁵ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:7.

²⁴⁶ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:7.

²⁴⁷ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:7.

²⁴⁸ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:7.

Ecclesiastes 2:7c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
tsô'âh (אֵצ) [pronounced tzohn]	<i>small cattle, sheep and goats, flock, flocks</i>	feminine singular collective noun	Strong's #6629 BDB #838
râbâh (הִבָּר) [pronounced raw ^b -VAWH]	<i>to make [do] much; to multiply, to increase; to give much; to lay much; to have much; to make great; many [as a Hiphil infinitive construct]</i>	Hiphil infinitive absolute	Strong's #7235 BDB #915
The Hiphil infinitive absolute is often used as an adverb: <i>in doing much, very much, exceedingly great</i> (the latter two with the adverb <i>m^oôd</i>).			
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
I would have expected a plural here.			
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^o]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 1 st person singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

Translation: Furthermore, [I have acquired] livestock—herds and flocks—[and their] increase [also belongs] to me,... Just as Solomon had acquired slaves of both genders, he has also acquired livestock of all kinds; and their increase belongs to Solomon.

Ecclesiastes 2:7 Over time, I acquired both male and female servants, along with children born to them in my household. Furthermore, I have acquired livestock—great herds and flocks—which continue to increase in great numbers—more than all who came before me in Jerusalem.

Ecclesiastes 2:7c: Solomon's wealth measured in livestock (various commentators)

Ray C. Stedman: *Solomon had ranches to provide diversion and profit in the raising herds and flocks. Many wealthy people invest their money in cattle and horse ranches.*²⁴⁹

J. Vernon McGee: *He had a ranch out at the edge of town where he raised cattle. You may be wondering how he could afford all this. Well, Solomon had cornered the gold in his day. He had plenty of spending money, and he built in all the comforts of life.*²⁵⁰

Cattle were a great measure of wealth in the ancient world. The Pulpit Commentary writes: *The enormous amount of Solomon's herds and flocks is proved by the extraordinary multitude of the sacrifices at the consecration of the temple (1Kings 8:63), and the lavish provision made daily for the wants of his table (1Kings 4:22, 1Kings 4:23). The cattle of David were very numerous, and required special overlookers (1Chron. 27:29–31). Job (Job. 1:3) had, before his troubles, seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and these items were all doubled at the return of his prosperity. Among Solomon's possessions, horses are not here mentioned, though they formed no inconsiderable portion of his live stock, and added greatly to his magnificence.*²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ From www.raystedman.org/ accessed July 27, 2018. Copyright © 2010 by Ray Stedman Ministries

²⁵⁰ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt (chapter 2) accessed September 3, 2018.

²⁵¹ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:7.

Ecclesiastes 2:7c: Solomon's wealth measured in livestock (various commentators)

Chuck Smith: *Do you realize that everyday in order to feed his household, his family, and his servants, that it took ten prime beef and twenty commercial grade beef everyday? A hundred lambs a day. That's 36,000 a year. That's over 10,000 beef that he slaughtered just for his servants and his family needs every year. Plus all of the fowl, and the deer, and the roebuck and so forth that were killed just to take care of the appetites of his family and of his servants. You have a thousand wives; you got to feed them. And they've got kids, they got to be fed. And then they each have to have their servants. Thirty beef a day. So he was right when he said, "I had cattle more than anybody who was in Jerusalem before me."*²⁵²

Clarke: *Oxen, neat, horses, asses, mules, camels, and such like; with sheep and goats. And multitudes of most of these he needed, when we are told that his household consumed daily ten stall-fed oxen, with twenty from the pasture, with a hundred sheep; besides harts, roebucks, fallow deer, fatted fowls, and other kinds of provision, Probably, such another court for splendor and expense was not in the universe.*²⁵³

Dr. John Gill: *also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me; oxen, cows, horses, asses, camels, mules, &c. also sheep and goats; which, as they were profitable, so it was pleasant to see them grazing on the hills and valleys, in the fields, mountains, and meadows.*²⁵⁴

Two comments concerning what Gill wrote: (1) you might think with so much livestock that Solomon would look out at it and think, *that is a lot of trouble*. However, Solomon enjoyed the wealth; he did not labor in it. He had people to take care of his livestock. (2) The enjoyment that Solomon might get from viewing this wealth off in the distance might be the same enjoyment you might have, if you had just purchased 100 ounces of gold; and you haul it out every once and awhile to look at it.

The Pulpit Commentary on Solomon's wealth of livestock: *The enormous amount of Solomon's herds and flocks is proved by the extraordinary multitude of the sacrifices at the consecration of the temple (1Kings 8:63), and the lavish provision made daily for the wants of his table (1Kings 4:22, 1Kings 4:23). The cattle of David were very numerous, and required special overlookers (1Chron. 27:29–31). Job (Job. 1:3) had, before his troubles, seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and these items were all doubled at the return of his prosperity. Among Solomon's possessions, horses are not here mentioned, though they formed no inconsiderable portion of his live stock, and added greatly to his magnificence.*²⁵⁵

Solomon also had horses. J. Vernon McGee: *These were hobbies with Solomon. Even today the ruins of the stables of Solomon can be seen right in Jerusalem and in several other places. At Megiddo a tourist guide will show you ruins of the troughs where the horses ate. Solomon had stables all over that land, although the Mosaic Law had expressly forbidden a king to multiply horses.*²⁵⁶

The Cambridge Bible: *The daily provision for Solomon's household (1Kings 4:22) gives some idea of the magnitude of his flocks and herds.*²⁵⁷

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Happiness and man: The point being made by Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes is, he has tried many different things to have happiness and contentment in his life, and he cannot help but, at every turn, to conclude, it is just empty and chasing after wind.

²⁵² Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1–26.

²⁵³ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:7.

²⁵⁴ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:7.

²⁵⁵ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:7.

²⁵⁶ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt (chapter 2) accessed September 3, 2018.

²⁵⁷ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:7.

J. Vernon McGee makes one statement which I disagree with (I don't disagree with him very much): *It is now known that snow was brought down from Mount Hermon so that he could have cold drinks in the summertime. I think Solomon tried everything that a man could try for pleasure. I doubt that modern man could have anything that Solomon did not have.*²⁵⁸

For Solomon's day, he had an amazing array of things and conveniences—yet, all of that is relative to his time and place. If I could trade my life for Solomon's, and live just as he lived, I would not do it, even if you offered me double what he had. In the United States of America in 2018, we have so many conveniences and such an easy lifestyle—even if we are working two jobs—we have the greatest life in all the world. We have great freedom, great self-determination, and many of us have been able to enjoy having jobs which we liked and found to be fulfilling. We have air conditioning in the summers, heat in the winters, cold and clean water inside our homes, and a wonderful sewage system. Solomon may have had some similar items, but the conveniences that we have are so much better. When it comes to rooms filled with silver and gold, Solomon certainly has me beat. But in terms of everything else, my life is so much better than his. I enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables and virtually any cut of meat that I want, every day of my life.

Furthermore, we have a plethora of entertainment options—Solomon could only have dreamed of what I have. Whereas, he has a house band with a chorus; I can access virtually any person who has ever recorded a record, often in a matter of seconds, and listen to that person; or to any genre music, to any period of time.

My point is, I know that my life is good (as well as undeserved). At the same time, there are people just like me, with the same access to the same things, and they are sad, depressed and they often indulge in legal or illegal drugs to feel better. What every man truly craves is the Creator who made him, and the Savior who saved him. Without that relationship, every man experiences the same sadness and frustration that Solomon expresses here. Our relationship to an invisible **Revealed God** is our key to happiness and an appreciation for life.

You can take two people who have virtually the exact same lifestyle, with the same access to the same things, and one will be happy and appreciative and the other will be angry, frustrated and sad. The difference between the two people is God—one has that relationship with God and the other does not.

Ecclesiastes 2:7d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, off, out from, of, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]; also kol (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kol</i>]	<i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>	masculine singular noun without the definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced <i>sheh</i>]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979

²⁵⁸ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt (chapter 2) accessed September 3, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:7d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
This is spelled shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced <i>sheh</i> l], but apparently is shortened further and affixed to a word or set of words. This relative particle appears to be a form of or a synonym of the relative pronoun 'ăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>uhsh-ER</i>], which means <i>that, which, when, who</i> or <i>how</i> . Strong's #834 BDB #81. Although BDB says that its usage appears to be confined to later Hebrew and passages with a northern Palestine coloring ²⁵⁹ , it occurs as early as Gen. 6:3.			
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i>]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 rd person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
pânîym (פָּנִים) [pronounced <i>paw-NEEM</i>]	<i>face, faces countenance; presence</i>	masculine plural noun (plural acts like English singular); with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
Literally, this would be translated <i>to faces of me, to my faces</i> . Together, these words mean <i>before me, before my face, in my presence, in my sight, in front of me; before me</i> (in the sense of, <i>before my time</i>), <i>prior to my being here</i> .			
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
Y ^e rûwshâlayim (יְרוּשָׁלַיִם) [pronounced <i>y^{oo}-shaw-LAH-yim</i>]	possibly means <i>founded upon peace</i> or <i>city of the Jebusites</i> (or both); it is transliterated <i>Jerusalem</i>	proper singular noun, location	Strong's #3389 BDB #436

Translation: ...[so that my wealth is] greater than all before me in Jerusalem. When it comes to both possession of human servants and animals (both representing a form of wealth in that era), Solomon was greater than all who had come before him.

It ought to be clear that, whatever material items Solomon desired, he got. There does not appear to be anything that was outside of his grasp.

Dr. Bob Utley: [What Solomon says here] clearly shows the egocentric nature of these pursuits (cf. Eccles. 2:9; see note at Eccles. 1:16).²⁶⁰

Dunagan on the size of Solomon's household: According to 1 Kings 4:22, 60 measures of meal or 28,000 pounds of bread were baked for the household of Solomon each and every day! From these figures it appears that the household of Solomon (his wives, their children, their servants and all his servants) included at least 14,000 people.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon; Hendrickson Publishers; ©1996; p. 979.

²⁶⁰ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:7.

²⁶¹ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:7.

Although people tend to be hard on Samuel when it comes to his material wealth, and his lavish lifestyle. This is what he is born into; and people do not tend to strongly question the circumstances to which they are born. The United States is filled with redistributionists and social justice warriors, but these people do not want to redistribute their own wealth; they want to redistribute everyone else's wealth. If you took all of the social justice warriors, they are probably earning perhaps in the top 10% or even top 5% of what people in the world earn. They don't want to share that with the bottom. They don't want to level out at \$10/day income or \$25/day.

If you live in the United States, you may or may not have any appreciation for your prosperity, but, regardless of your color, religion or gender, you are likely in the top 10% of the world's population; and many of us are in the top 1% (you may be surprised how little is required to be in the top 1%). When you are born in America, or if you are able to move to and live in America, you enjoy great privilege. Now, does knowing that suddenly make you a much happier person? I doubt it.

Solomon is simply living his life in how he was born and, even though he taxed his people a lot, he also provided some impressive building projects as a result (I am not justifying this as legitimate for politicians). But, as was pointed out, there were rulers—most of them—who did very insignificant things with their lives. The same cannot be said of Solomon.

Application: Believers in Jesus Christ, those who are mature or growing, often enjoy great blessings at the hand of God (Gen. 13:2 2Kings 3:4 1Chron. 27:29–31 2Chron. 32:27–29 Job. 1:3 42:12). Solomon, in this situation, was given great wealth by God in order for him to be able to use his great wealth to chase happiness.

Ecclesiastes 2:7 Over time, I acquired both male and female servants, along with children born to them in my household. Furthermore, I have acquired livestock—great herds and flocks—which continue to increase in great numbers—more than all who came before me in Jerusalem.

Solomon talks about what he has acquired over time; and his ability to purchase virtually anything that he wants.

I gathered to myself also silver and gold and a treasure of kings and of the provinces. I have made for myself male singers and female singers and delights of sons of the Adam, wives and mistresses.

Ecclesiastes
2:8

I collected for myself silver and gold and [various other] treasures from kings and from [other] provinces. I acquired [and produced] male and female singers, as well as the delights of men [lit., *delights of the sons of man*], [both] wives and mistresses.

I collected just for myself a great amount of gold and silver, as well as various other treasures taken from other kings and various provinces. I acquired and also produced great musical productions involving male and female singers; and I acquired that which men most desire—beautiful women who became my wives and mistresses.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)

I gathered to myself also silver and gold and a treasure of kings and of the provinces. I have made for myself male singers and female singers and delights of sons of the Adam, wives and mistresses.

Revised Douay-Rheims

I heaped together for myself silver and gold, and the wealth of kings, and provinces: I made me singing men, and singing women, and the delights of the sons of men, cups and vessels to serve to pour out wine:...

V. Alexander's Aramaic T.

I gathered also treasures of silver and gold; even right weights and measures I made from good gold; and the treasures of kings and provinces were given to me

as tribute; I made for the temple musical instruments, that the Levites might play them at the sacrifices, and citherns and flutes that the male and female singers might play them in the wine house, and the delights of the children of men; and warm springs, and baths, channels pouring out cold water, and channels pouring out warm water;...

Peshitta (Syriac) I gathered for myself silver and gold and the possessions of kings and cities; I got me men singers and women singers and the delights of the sons of men, and I appointed for myself butlers and waitresses.

Updated Brenton (Greek) Moreover I collected for myself both silver and gold also, and the peculiar treasures of kings and provinces: I procured me singing men and singing women, and delights of the sons of men, a butler and female cupbearers.

Significant differences: The targum, which has gobs of additional text, leaves out *for myself*.

The final two words are found nowhere else, so there are many guesses as to their meanings. I don't know if we should make anything of the translations of the ancient translations above or not. Do these words mean *cups and vessels* or *butlers and waitresses*? There will be plenty of discussion about this below.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English I got together silver and gold and the wealth of kings and of countries. I got makers of song, male and female; and the delights of the sons of men--girls of all sorts to be my brides.

Easy English I ruled many countries. And I got silver and gold for myself from their kings. Men and women sang for me. I got many wives to make me happy. These are all things that people enjoy.

Easy-to-Read Version--2006 I also gathered silver and gold for myself. I took treasures from kings and their nations. I had men and women singing for me. I had everything any man could want.

God's Word™ I also gathered silver and gold for myself.
I gathered the treasures of kings and provinces.
I provided myself with male and female singers
and the pleasures men have with one concubine [A concubine is considered a wife except she has fewer rights under the law.] after another.

Good News Bible (TEV) I also piled up silver and gold from the royal treasuries of the lands I ruled. Men and women sang to entertain me, and I had all the women a man could want.

The Message I piled up silver and gold,
loot from kings and kingdoms.
I gathered a chorus of singers to entertain me with song,
and—most exquisite of all pleasures—
voluptuous maidens for my bed.

NIRV I gathered up the treasures of kings and their kingdoms. I got some male and female singers. I also got many women for myself. Women delight the hearts of men.

New Simplified Bible I gathered silver and gold and the wealth of kings and of countries. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, girls of all sorts to be my brides.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study I collected large amounts of silver and gold. I gathered it together for myself. I also amassed treasures typical of kings and rulers of provinces. I provided male and

	female singers for my own enjoyment and satisfaction. I indulged myself with the pleasure of men—concubine after concubine.
Contemporary English V.	Foreign rulers brought me silver, gold, and precious treasures. Men and women sang for me, and I had many wives who gave me great pleasure.
The Living Bible	I collected silver and gold as taxes from many kings and provinces.
New Berkeley Version	In the cultural arts, I organized men's and women's choirs and orchestras. I also gathered for myself ^d silver and gold and the trasurse of kings and of provinces; I acquired singers, both men and women, and the delights of men — mistresses galore. ^e
	^d All for himself. No wonder it failed to inspire him.
	^e It would be error to consider this book a series of philosophical dissertations. The author tests by experience rather than by theorizing, and gives us the results of his findings. Thus far the author remains the center of interest.
New Life Version	I gathered for myself silver and gold and the riches of kings and lands. I got for myself male and female singers, and kept many women who acted as my wives, the joy of man.
New Living Translation	I collected great sums of silver and gold, the treasure of many kings and provinces. I hired wonderful singers, both men and women, and had many beautiful concubines. I had everything a man could desire!
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	I also accumulated large amounts of silver and gold that were acquired from the treasures of kings and rulers of provinces. I owned men and women who sang for me, and I had many wives and concubines, whom men all over the world would enjoy possessing.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	I collected much silver and gold for myself... The possessions of kings and estates. I prepared for myself many singers... Men and women were brought to amuse me.
Beck's American Translation	I also gathered for myself silver and gold, the treasures of kings and provinces and trained men and women singers. I enjoyed the pleasures men have with concubines.
Common English Bible	I acquired male and female singers for myself, along with every human luxury, treasure chests galore [Or <i>many secondary wives</i>]!
New Advent (Knox) Bible	Gold and silver I amassed, revenues of subject king and subject province; men-singers I had and women-singers, and all that man delights in; beakers a many, and jars of wine to fill them. The last ten words of this verse represent, in the Hebrew text, a passage of uncertain significance
Translation for Translators	I also accumulated large amounts of silver and gold <i>that were paid to me</i> from the treasures of kings and rulers of provinces. <i>I hired</i> men and women to sing for me, and I had many <concubines/slave wives> who gave me <i>much</i> pleasure [EUP].

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Alpha & Omega Bible	MOREOVER I COLLECTED FOR MYSELF BOTH SILVER AND GOLD ALSO, AND THE PECULIAR TREASURES OF KINGS AND PROVINCES: I PROCURED ME SINGING MEN AND SINGING WOMEN, AND DELIGHTS OF THE SONS OF MEN, A BUTLER AND FEMALE CUPBEARERS.
Awful Scroll Bible	I have gathered yearned for silver and shimmering gold, surely that coming to be treasured in the kings' districts. I have prepared men singers and women singers; the exquisitenesses of the sons of mankind, and a harem of harems.
Conservapedia Translation	I amassed silver and gold, and other kingly treasures. I hired men and women to sing for me, and sought out all of the things that men have made for pleasure, such as all sorts of musical instruments.

Ferrar-Fenton Bible	...—I accumulated for myself silver and gold, and royal treasures from my provinces. I had men and women singers trained for myself, with men and women waiters,—···the luxuries of the sons of Adam.
God's Truth (Tyndale)	I gathered silver and gold together, even a treasure of kings and lands. I provided me singers and women which could play of instruments, to make man mirth and pastime. I got me drinking cups also and glasses.
HCSB	I also amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I gathered male and female singers for myself, and many concubines, the delights of men [LXX, Theod, Syr read <i>and male cupbearers and female cupbearers</i> ; Aq, Tg, Vg read <i>a cup and cups</i> ; Hb obscure] [Or <i>many treasures that people delight in</i>].
Lexham English Bible	I also gathered to myself silver and gold--the royal and provincial treasuries. I acquired for myself male and female singers, as well as the delight of {men}, {voluptuous concubines}.
Peter Pett's translation	I also had great possessions of herds and flocks, more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. I also gathered for myself silver and gold, and the most sought after treasure of kings and provinces. I obtained for myself men-singers and women-singers, and the delights of the sons of men, all kinds of musical instruments. V. 7 is included for context.
Tree of Life Version	I also amassed silver and gold for myself, as well as the treasure of kings and the provinces. I acquired male and female singers for myself, as well as the luxuries of humankind—vaults and vaults of them.
Wikipedia Bible Project	I gathered to me silver also and gold, and purple-robos of the kings and the nations. I gathered to me male singers and female singers, and the delights of men--- a woman, then women.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)	I acquired silver and gold - the wealth of kings and nations. I had choirmaster and singers and besides that, what most delights men.
The Heritage Bible	I also gathered for myself silver and gold, and wealth of kings and of the districts; I made men singers and women singers for myself, and the luxury of the sons of men, a wife <i>as queen</i> and other wives.
New American Bible (2011)	I amassed for myself silver and gold, and the treasures of kings and provinces. I provided for myself male and female singers and delights of men, many women. * [2:8] Many women: the final phrase of this verse is difficult to translate. One word, shiddah, which appears here in both singular and plural, is found nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible. A suggested meaning is "woman" or "concubine," as it is interpreted here: "many women." The rest of the section (2:1–12) seems to be a description of Solomon's kingdom, and the "many women" would represent his huge harem (1 Kgs 11:1–3). In rabbinic Hebrew the word comes to mean "chest" or "coffer."
New English Bible–1970	I amassed silver and gold also, the treasure of kings and provinces; I acquired singers, men and women, and all that man delights in [prob. rdg, Heb adds two unintelligible words].
New Jerusalem Bible	I amassed silver and gold, the treasures of kings and provinces; acquired singers, men and women, and every human luxury, chest upon chest of it.
Revised English Bible–1989	I also amassed silver and gold, the treasure of kings and provinces; I got for myself minstrels, male and female, and everything that affords delight.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	I amassed silver and gold, the wealth of kings and provinces. I acquired male and female singers, things that provide sensual delight, and a good many concubines.
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The Complete Tanach	I accumulated for myself also silver and gold, and the treasures of the kings and the provinces; I acquired for myself various types of musical instruments, the delight of the sons of men, wagons and coaches.
<p>and the treasures of the kings: the treasures of the kings-gold, silver and precious stones, which the kings collect in their treasure houses.</p> <p>and the provinces: the treasure of all merchants.</p> <p>various types of musical instruments: Heb. תוֹרְשֵׁי מִיָּהָשׁ, various types of musical instruments.</p> <p>wagons and coaches: Heb. תוֹדֵשׁוֹ הַדָּשׁ beautiful coaches, covered wagons, and in the Gemara, [we find] a coach (שֶׁדֶשׁ) , a chest, and a closet.</p>	
exeGesés companion Bible	I also gathered silver and gold and the peculiar treasure of sovereigns and of the jurisdictions: I worked songsters and songstresses and the delights of the sons of humanity and mistresses of mistresses.
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	I further amassed silver and gold and treasures of kings and provinces; and I got myself male and female singers, as well as the luxuries of commoners—coffers and coffers of them.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	I amassed for me also kesef and zahav, and the treasure of melachim and of the provinces; I acquired for me men singers and women singers, and the delights of bnei haAdam, musical instruments of all kinds.
<i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasures of sovereigns and of the provinces. I provided male and female singers for myself, and the pleasures of men – a woman and women.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible	I also gathered silver and gold for myself, treasures ·from [or of] kings and ·other areas [provinces; 1 Kin. 10:14–25; 2 Chr. 9:27]. I had male and female singers and ·all the women a man could ever want [^l many concubines—the pleasure of men].
Pastor John Griffith	<p>Also, I collected for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Queen of Sheba brought 120 talents of gold as tribute along with many precious stones and great quantities of spices. 1 Kg 10:10 <li>and the pleasures of men-- many concubines. <li>- LIT. the pleasures of the sons of man. (...emph on source fallen man functioning under the sin nature) <li>- sheddah sheddoh (sg + pl) princess/wife/queen & princesses = secondary wives (distinct from concubines who had legal status 1 Kg 11:3) <li>- Many of his wives were like the wife who was the daughter of the Pharaoh (1 Kg 3:1) (married to cement an alliance) <li>- What Solomon did here in marrying many women even taking concubines was the custom, the pattern of the day. It was almost a status symbol, the richer one was the more wives he had. <li>- But it was clearly not Biblical - God's design for man and especially for the King Dt 17:14-17 <p>The statement here that Solomon now turned to the pleasures of the sons of man says that Solomon gave himself to every sexual pleasure and gratification with all these women, the experiment showing once for all to mankind that sex, even in its ultimate sensual expression is not the answer to an empty life as most would imagine.</p>

Kretzmann's Commentary	I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces, 1Kings 9:28; 1Kings 10:24-29; I gat me men singers and women singers, such as were common at Oriental courts for the entertainment of the court and of the royal guests, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts, in great abundance, as befitted his station and wealth.
NET Bible®	I also amassed silver and gold for myself, as well as valuable treasures taken from kingdoms and provinces. I acquired male singers and female singers for myself, and what gives a man sensual delight – a harem of beautiful concubines!
Syndein/Thieme	{Happiness Through Having Great Wealth, Social Events and Lots of Beautiful Women} I amassed silver and gold for myself and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers {his own entertainers} and my own piped in music and I had a harem as well.
The Voice	I amassed a fortune in silver and gold, and I stockpiled the treasures of kings and provinces. I hired men and women to sing and entertain me, and I pampered myself with what every man desires—many women.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Charles Thompson OT	I collected also for myself silver and gold and the choicest treasures of kings and countries. I got me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men; a butler and the requisites to entertainments.
Concordant Literal Version	I collected also silver and gold for myself, The valuables of kings and provinces; I provided male singers and female singers for myself, And with the delicacies of the sons of humanity, a wine waiter and wine waitresses."
<i>Emphasized Bible</i>	I heaped me up, both silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings, and provinces,—I provided me singing-men and singing-women, and the delights of the sons of men, a wife and wives.
English Standard Version	I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the sons of man.
Green's Literal Translation	I also gathered to me silver and gold, and the treasure of kings and of provinces. I made ready male singers and female singers for myself; and the delights of the sons of men, a concubine, and concubines.
New American Standard B.	Also, I collected for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I provided for myself male and female singers and the pleasures of men—many concubines.
Webster's Bible Translation	I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings, and of the provinces: I procured me men-singers and women-singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and of all sorts.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	I gathered for me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces. I prepared for me men-singers and women-singers, and the luxuries of the sons of man--a wife and wives.

The gist of this passage: Solomon gathered silver and gold and other treasures from other countries. He had a band which played command performances, and a great many luxuries—no doubt the greatest of the ancient world.

Ecclesiastes 2:8a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kânaç (כָּנָס) [pronounced kaw-NAHS]	to gather [together], to collect; to heap up	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #3664 BDB #488
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	to, for, towards, in regards to	directional/relational preposition with the 1 st person singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
gam (גַּם) [pronounced gahm]	also, furthermore, in addition to, as well; even, moreover	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168
keçeph (כֶּסֶף) [pronounced KEH-sef]	silver, money; silver [as a metal, ornament, color]; shekels, talents	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3701 BDB #494
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
zâhâb (זָהָב) [pronounced zaw-HAW ^B V]	gold; a measure of weight [related to gold]; [figuratively used for] brilliance, splendor	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2091 BDB #262

Translation: I collected for myself silver and gold... Solomon may have, at first, believed himself to be gathering up gold and silver for his nation; but, in many ways, he gathered it up for himself.

Israel, under Solomon, was clearly rich and prosperous; Solomon was obscenely so.

Have you ever wanted to have a room in your house either filled with hundred dollar bills or with gold and silver, just so you could roll around in it or cover yourself with it? Solomon could do that—any time that he felt like it.

Ecclesiastes 2:8 I collected just for myself a great amount of gold and silver, as well as various other treasures taken from other kings and various provinces. I acquired and also produced great musical productions involving male and female singers; and I acquired that which men most desire—beautiful women who became my wives and mistresses.

Solomon's silver and gold (Ecclesiastes 2:8a) (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *Much is said of the wealth of the historical Solomon, who had all his vessels of gold, armed his body-guard with golden shields, sat on an ivory throne overlaid with gold, received tribute and presents of gold from all quarters, sent his navies to distant lands to import precious metals, and made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones (see 1Kings 9:28; 1Kings 10:14–27; 2Chron. 1:15; 2Chron. 9:20–27).*²⁶²

Benson: *Riches, answerable to the state of a king, or, he means, the greatest jewels and rarities of other kings, which they gave to me, either as a tribute, or by way of present.*²⁶³

²⁶² The Pulpit Commentary; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:8.

²⁶³ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:8.

Solomon's silver and gold (Ecclesiastes 2:8a) (various commentators)

The Cambridge Bible: *[Here is] what is recorded of the [golden] wealth of Solomon, the ships of Hiram that brought gold from Ophir, to the amount of 420 talents (1Kings 9:28), the gifts from the queen of Sheba (1Kings 10:1), the total revenue of 666 talents (1Kings 10:15), the 200 targets and 300 shields of beaten gold, and the throne of gold and ivory and the drinking vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon, and the silver that was in Jerusalem as stones (1Kings 10:16–27).*²⁶⁴

Dr. John Gill: *I gathered me also silver and gold,.... In great quantities: the weight of gold which came to him in one year was six hundred threescore and six talents; see 1Kings 9:14.*²⁶⁵

Steve Zeisler: *"I amassed silver and gold for myself" (Ecclesiastes 2:8). Perhaps life is a competition with money as the measure. The one with the biggest stack wins.*²⁶⁶

Ray C. Stedman: *Bank accounts too give a sense of security. Solomon says he gathered "silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces," and brought it all to Jerusalem. He had all the money he needed.*²⁶⁷

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Remember Solomon's own words, which were written before the book of Ecclesiastes: **Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding, for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.** (Pro 3:13–17; ESV) Solomon here is speaking of divine wisdom, which we call Bible doctrine.

Dr. Peter Pett on Solomon's possessions: *[Solomon] indulged himself to the full with valuable possessions, with herds and flocks, the thing most valued by many of that day, for they reproduced and grew rapidly and enhanced wealth; and with silver and gold, and with every desirable object that could be found in the courts of kings and throughout many provinces. There was no desirable thing that he did not have.*²⁶⁸

Ecclesiastes 2:8b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ç ^e gullâh (סִגְּלָה) [pronounced <i>seh-gool-LAWH</i>]	<i>personal treasure, possession, property, valued property</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #5459 BDB #688

This noun is the feminine passive participle of a verb which means *to shut up, to close up* and is found only five times in the Bible when used as a reference to nation Israel (Ex. 19:5 Deut. 7:6 14:2 20:18 Psalm 135:4).

This adjective is a reference to *personal treasure* which one would *shut up, put away, close up, place under lock and key*, as it were. It is found also in 1Chron. 29:3 Eccles. 2:8 and Mal. 3:17. In all eight places, this can be rendered consistently as *personal treasure*.

²⁶⁴ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:8.*

²⁶⁵ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:8.

²⁶⁶ From pbc.org accessed September 9, 2018.

²⁶⁷ From www.raystedman.org/ accessed July 27, 2018. Copyright © 2010 by Ray Stedman Ministries

²⁶⁸ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:7–8.

Ecclesiastes 2:8b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
The NET Bible: <i>The term סִגְלָה (skgullah) denotes “personal property” (HALOT 742 s.v. סִגְלָה 1) or “valued property, personal treasure” (BDB 688 s.v. סִגְלָה 2). Elsewhere, it refers to a king’s silver and gold (1 Chr 27:3). It is related to Akkadian sug/kullu “flock” (AHw 2:1053-54) and sikiltu “private property [belonging to the king]” (AHw 2:1041). The term refers to the personal, private and valued possessions of kings, which do not pass into the hands of the state.²⁶⁹</i>			
melek ^e (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced MEH-lek]	king, ruler, prince; royal, royalty	masculine plural noun	Strong's #4428 BDB #572
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
m ^e dîynâh (מְדִינָה) [pronounced mehd-ee- NAW]	a judgeship, a jurisdiction; by implication a district (as ruled by a judge); generally a region, province	feminine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #4082 BDB #193

With the exception of two references in Ecclesiastes, this appears to be a late term, used after 1Kings 20, found principally in Esther and Daniel. Time-wise, this is the first appearance of this word in Scripture.

The NET Bible: *Heb “of kings and provinces.” This personal treasure was taken as tribute from other kings and governors. See T. Longman III, Ecclesiastes (NICOT), 92.²⁷⁰*

Translation: ...and [various other] treasures from kings and from [other] provinces. Solomon gathered up all kinds of treasures and things of value from other kings and provinces. If there was something that he wanted which was indicative of wealth, Solomon found a way to get it.

Even though all of the warfare occurred when David was in office, Solomon continued to collect monies from various nations; and he no doubt added new countries to this roster. When King David conquered a country (often in response to its hostile actions against Israel), he could then demand that they pay him tribute. Although we do not fully understand all that entailed, it is possible that this tribute money simply insured that King David would not invade them again. Whether it bought a country anything more than that, we don't know. However, it is also very likely that this opened up commerce between the two countries.

Ecclesiastes 2:8 I collected just for myself a great amount of gold and silver, as well as various other treasures taken from other kings and various provinces. I acquired and also produced great musical productions involving male and female singers; and I acquired that which men most desire—beautiful women who became my wives and mistresses.

Solomon receives wealth from other kings and kingdoms (Ecclesiastes 2:8b)

Dr. John Gill: *[Whatever] was valuable and precious, such as is laid up in the cabinets of kings, as jewels and precious stones; and everything rare and curious, to be found in all provinces of the earth, or which were brought from thence as presents to him.²⁷¹*

²⁶⁹ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 16, 2018.

²⁷⁰ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 16, 2018.

²⁷¹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:8.

Solomon receives wealth from other kings and kingdoms (Ecclesiastes 2:8b)

Barnes: *[Solomon's wealth brought to him from other kings was] Both tributary 1Kings 10:15 and independent 1Kings 5:1; 1Kings 9:14; 1Kings 10:2.*²⁷²

The Pulpit Commentary on *the kings*: *The "kings" may be the tributary monarchs, such as those of Arabia (1Kings 4:21, 1Kings 4:24; 1Kings 10:15); or the expression in the text may imply simply such treasure as only kings, and not private persons, could possess.*²⁷³

The Cambridge Bible: *The words may point to the special gifts which came to Solomon by way of tribute from other lands, from Seba and Sheba (Psalm 72:10), from the "kings of Arabia and the governors of the country" (1Kings 9:15; 1Kings 10:27). Many commentators, however, see in the phrase a description of the treasures of Solomon as being such as were the special possessions of sovereign rulers and sovereign states as distinct from the wealth of private citizens. The word for "province" may be noted as a comparatively late word, hardly coming into use till the time of the Captivity (Lam. 1:1; Ezek. 19:8), and prominent chiefly in the books of the Persian period, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther and Daniel. It probably designates here the twelve districts into which Solomon divided his empire (1Kings 4:7–19).*²⁷⁴

Clarke:

The peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces -

1. The tares levied off his subjects.
2. The tribute given by the neighboring potentates. Both these make the "peculiar treasure of kings;" taxes and tribute.²⁷⁵

Most of what Solomon collected from other countries was a result of the army that his father David dispatched when necessary.

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The Pulpit Commentary: *The word rendered "the provinces" (hammedinoth)...seems to mean, not the twelve districts into which Solomon divided his kingdom for fiscal and economical purposes (1Kings 4:7, etc.), but countries generally exterior to Palestine, with which he had commercial or political relations, and which sent to him the productions for which they were each most celebrated. So the districts of the Persian empire were required to furnish the monarch with a certain portion of their chief commodities.*²⁷⁶

Ecclesiastes 2:8c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿāsâh (אָסָה) [pronounced gaw-SAWH]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to produce, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793

²⁷² Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:8.

²⁷³ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:8.

²⁷⁴ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:8.

²⁷⁵ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:8.

²⁷⁶ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:8.

Ecclesiastes 2:8c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
The full set of Qal meanings from BDB: <i>to do, work, make, produce; to do; to work; to deal (with); to act, act with effect, effect; to produce; to prepare; to make (an offering); to attend to, put in order; to observe, celebrate; to acquire (property); to appoint, ordain, institute; to bring about; to use; to spend, pass.</i> It is possible that this ought to be <i>to provide for</i> .			
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 1 st person singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
shîyr (שׂיָר) [pronounced sheer]	<i>male singers, a male choir; professional male singers; musicians</i>	masculine plural, Qal active participle	Strong's #7891 BDB #1010
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
shîyr (שׂיָר) [pronounced sheer]	<i>female singers, a female choir; professional female singers; musicians</i>	feminine plural, Qal active participle	Strong's #7891 BDB #1010

Translation: I acquired [and produced] male and female singers,... At a time when there was no easy way to access music, Solomon gathered male and female singers for on-demand concerts. They sang for him and for his family and servants. No one of that era enjoyed the existence that Solomon did.

Ecclesiastes 2:8 I collected just for myself a great amount of gold and silver, as well as various other treasures taken from other kings and various provinces. I acquired and also produced great musical productions involving male and female singers; and I acquired that which men most desire—beautiful women who became my wives and mistresses.

The male and female singers (Ecclesiastes 2:8c) (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary on the male and female singers: *These, of course, are not the choir of the temple, of which women formed no part, but musicians introduced at banquets and social festivals, to enhance the pleasures of the scene. They are mentioned in David's days (2Sam. 19:35) and later (see Isa. 5:12; Amos 6:5; Ecclesiasticus 35:5; 49:1).*²⁷⁷

The Cambridge Bible: *The mention of women shews that the singers meant are not those connected with the choir of the Temple, but those who, as in the speech of Barzillai (2Sam. 19:35), figured at state banquets. These women, as in Isa. 23:6, were commonly taken from the class of harlot aliens, and as such were condemned by the counsel of the wise of heart (Sir. 9:4). For the general use of music at feasts, comp. Isa. 5:11–12; Amos 6:5; Sir. 32:5–6; Sir. 49:1.*²⁷⁸

Clarke: *This includes all instrumental and vocal performers. These may be called the delights of the sons of men.*²⁷⁹ This pulls together vv. 8c and 8d.

²⁷⁷ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:8.

²⁷⁸ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:8.

²⁷⁹ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:8.

The male and female singers (Ecclesiastes 2:8c) (various commentators)

J. Vernon McGee exaggerates somewhat: *He brought in the best nightclub acts from Las Vegas. He had all kinds of music — from symphony to rock, but it didn't satisfy his heart.*²⁸⁰

This was live music on demand.

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Ecclesiastes 2:8d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ta'ânug (תַּאֲנוּג) [pronounced <i>tah-ghuh-OOG</i>]	<i>daintiness, delicate; a luxury, an exquisite delight; pleasant; comfort</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #8588 BDB #772
Also spelled ta'ânûwg (תַּאֲנוּגַת) [pronounced <i>tah-ghuh-OOG</i>] and ta'ânugâh (תַּאֲנוּגָה) [pronounced <i>tah-ghuh-oog-AW</i>] (this is the feminine form).			
bânîym (בְּנֵי אִם) [pronounced <i>baw-NEEM</i>]	<i>sons, descendants; children; people; sometimes rendered men; young men, youths</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
'âdâm (אָדָם) [pronounced <i>aw-DAWM</i>]	<i>a man, a human being, mankind; transliterated Adam</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #120 & #121 BDB #9

The word *the Adam* can mean *man, mankind, humankind, men, human beings*.

This phrase was found back in v. 3.

The NET Bible: *Heb "and sensual delights of the sons of man." The noun תַּאֲנוּג (ta'anug) has a three-fold range of meanings: (1) "luxury; comfort" (Mic 2:9; Prov 19:10; Sir 6:28; 11:27; 14:16; 37:29; 41:1); (2) "pleasure; delight" of sexual love (Song 7:7); and (3) "daintiness; feminine" (Mic 1:16); see HALOT 1769 s.v. תַּאֲנוּג; BDB 772 s.v. תַּאֲנוּג. The related adjective נָגַג ('anog, "pampered; dainty") is used to describe a pampered woman (Deut 28:56), to personify Babylon as a delicate woman (Isa 47:1), and to ridicule delicate men (Deut 28:54); see HALOT 851 s.v. נָגַג; BDB 772 s.v. נָגַג. It is related to the noun גִּנֵּג ('oneg, "pleasure; exquisite delight; daintiness"; see HALOT 851 s.v. גִּנֵּג; BDB 772 s.v. גִּנֵּג) and the verb נָגַג which means "to be soft; to be delicate" and "pleasurable" (Pual) and "to pamper oneself" and "to take delight or pleasure in" (HALOT 851 s.v. נָגַג; BDB 772 s.v. נָגַג). The root נָגַג is paralleled with רָךְ (rokh, Deut 28:56), רָךְ (rakh, Deut 28:54), and רַכָּה (rakkah, Deut 28:56) with the meanings "delicate; soft; tender; weak; coddled; pampered." The context of Eccl 2:4-11 suggests that it denotes either "luxury" as in "the luxuries of commoners" (NJPS) or "pleasure; delight" as in "the delights of men" (KJV, NASB, NIV).*

The NET Bible continues: *Part of the difficulty in determining the meaning of this term is caused by the ambiguity in meaning of its referent, namely, the appositional phrase שִׁדְדָה וְשִׁדְדוֹת (shiddah vashiddot), the meaning of which is uncertain (see the note on the phrase "a harem of beautiful concubines" at the end of this verse).*²⁸¹

²⁸⁰ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt (chapter 2) accessed September 3, 2018.

²⁸¹ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 16, 2018.

Translation: ...as well as the delights of men [lit., *delights of the sons of man*],... I think that this phrase, *the delights of men* is properly placed with the next two words, the singular and plural of the same feminine noun.

Ecclesiastes 2:8 I collected just for myself a great amount of gold and silver, as well as various other treasures taken from other kings and various provinces. I acquired and also produced great musical productions involving male and female singers; and I acquired that which men most desire—beautiful women who became my wives and mistresses.

The Delights of the Sons of Men (Ecclesiastes 2:8d) (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary on the delights of men: *[T]he sensual pleasures that men enjoy. The expression is euphemistic (comp. So 1Kings 7:6).*²⁸²

The Cambridge Bible: *The use of the word in Song Song of Songs. 7:6 leaves little doubt that the phrase is an euphemism for sensual pleasures, and as such it helps to determine the meaning of the words that follow.*²⁸³

The Geneva Bible: *That is, whatever men take pleasure in.*²⁸⁴

Steve Zeisler: *“I acquired men and women singers and a harem as well” (Ecclesiastes 2:8). Exquisite music and beautiful women, eye-candy for black-tie soirée’s. A stable of sexual partners responsive to every whim.*²⁸⁵

Most understand this to refer to sensual or sexual delights. It is possible that what this means is expanded on below.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 2:8e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shiddâh (שִׁדְדָה) [pronounced <i>shihd-DAW</i>]	<i>wife; mistress of the house; harem; a musical instrument [generally speaking?]; and many suggest that the meaning is unknown</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #7705 BDB #994
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
shiddôwth (שִׁדְדוֹת) [pronounced <i>shihd-DOHTH</i>]	<i>wives; mistresses of the house; harem; musical instruments [in general]; and many suggest that the meaning is unknown</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #7705 BDB #994

John Dummelow: *The meaning of the Heb. is obscure. Probably, however, the reference is to the grosser sort of sensual enjoyments.*²⁸⁶

²⁸² *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:8.

²⁸³ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:8.

²⁸⁴ Geneva Bible Translation Notes; courtesy of e-sword; 1599; Eccles. 2:8.

²⁸⁵ From pbc.org accessed September 9, 2018.

²⁸⁶ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcb/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 6, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:8e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>The NET Bible: <i>The meaning of the superlative construction תּוֹדֶשֶׁן הַדָּשׁ (shiddah vkshiddot) is uncertain because the term הַדָּשׁ (shiddah) occurs only here in the OT. There are four basic approaches to the phrase: (1) Most scholars suggest that it refers to a royal harem and that it is in apposition to “the sensual delights of man” (יָנִב תְּגוּנְעֵתוֹן, מִדְּאָה יָנִב תְּגוּנְעֵתוֹן, mikt’anuhot bkne ha’adam). There are four variations of this approach: (a) There is a possible connection to the Ugaritic sht “mistress, lady” and the Arabic sitt “lady” (HALOT 1420 s.v. שַׁדָּה). (b) German scholars relate it to Assyrian sadadu “love” (Delitzsch, König, Wildeboer, Siegfried); however, BDB questions this connection (BDB 994 s.v. שַׁדָּה). (c) Ibn Ezra relates it to שַׁדָּה (shad) “plunder; spoil” or שַׁדָּה “[women] taken by violence,” and suggests that it refers to the occupants of the royal harem. (d) BDB connects it to the Hebrew noun שַׁדָּה (shad, “breast”; e.g., Isa 28:9; Ezek 16:7; 23:3, 21, 34; Hos 2:4; 9:14; Song 1:13; 4:5; 7:4, 8, 9; 8:1, 8, 10; Job 3:12) adding that שַׁדָּה is related to the cognate Arabic and Aramaic roots meaning “breast” (BDB 994 s.v.). This would be a synecdoche of part (i.e., breast) for the whole (i.e., woman), similar to the idiom “one womb, two wombs” (רַחֵם רַחֵם, rakhm rakhamatayim) where “womb” = woman (Judg 5:30). This is the approach taken by most English versions: “many concubines” (NASB, RSV, NRSV), “a wife and wives” (YLT), “mistresses galore” (MLB), “many a mistress” (Moffatt), and “a harem” (NIV).</i></p>			
<p>The NET Bible continues: <i>This is the approach suggested by the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project: “une femme et des femmes” = one or two women (e.g., Judg 5:30); see D. Barthélemy, ed., Preliminary and Interim Report on the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project, 3:566. (2) The NJPS connects it to the Mishnaic Hebrew noun הַדָּשׁ which became הַדֵּשׁ (“a strong box, chest”; Jastrow 1558 s.v. הַדֵּשׁ) and renders the phrase “coffers and coffers of them” in apposition to the phrase “the luxuries of commoners” (יָנִב תְּגוּנְעֵתוֹן, מִדְּאָה יָנִב תְּגוּנְעֵתוֹן). (3) KJV and ASV take the phrase in apposition to “male and female singers” and translate it as “musical instruments.” However, there is no known Hebrew term that would justify this approach. (4) The LXX related the term to the Aramaic root שַׁדָּה (“to pour out [wine]”) and rendered the phrase as οἰνοκόων καὶ οἰνοχόας (oinocoon kai oinocoas), “a male-butler and female cupbearers.” Aquila took a similar approach: κουλίκιον καὶ κουλίκια (kulikion kai kulikia), “wine cups and wine vessels.” This is reflected in the Vulgate and Douay: “cups and vessels to serve to pour out wine.”</i></p>			
<p>The NET Bible continues: <i>Although the semantic meaning of the term תּוֹדֶשֶׁן הַדָּשׁ (“a breast of breasts”) is uncertain, the grammatical/syntactical form of the phrase is straightforward: (1) It is in apposition to the preceding line, “the delights of the son of men” (יָנִב תְּגוּנְעֵתוֹן, מִדְּאָה יָנִב תְּגוּנְעֵתוֹן). (2) The phrase is a superlative construction. When the second word is plural and it follows a noun from the same root which is singular, it indicates the best or most outstanding example of the person or thing so described. In addition to the Judg 5:30 parallel cited above, see the expression “a generation, generations” in Pss 72:5; 102:25; Isa 51:8. Unlike, Eccl 2:8, this juxtapositioning of the singular and plural to express the superlative usually involves a construct form. See שְׁדֵּךְ מִן שְׁדֵּךְ (qodesh haqqodashim, “the holy of holies,” i.e., the most holy place”; Exod 26:33), מִירֵי שֵׁה רֵישׁ (shir hashirim, “the song of songs,” i.e., “the most excellent song”; Song 1:1), מִיְהוָה יְהוָה (’elohe ha’elohim va’adone ha’adonim, “the God of gods and Lord of lords,” i.e., “the Highest God and the Supreme Lord”; Deut 10:17), and מִדָּבַע דָּבַע (’eved ’avadim, “a slave of slaves,” i.e., “the most abject slave”; Gen 9:25). See GKC 431 §133.i; R. J. Williams, Hebrew Syntax, 17-18, §80; IBHS 154 §9.5.3j.</i></p>			
<p>The NET Bible continues: <i>If the semantic meaning of the terms תּוֹדֶשֶׁן הַדָּשׁ denotes “a breast (among) breasts” or “a lady (among) ladies” (Eccl 2:8, but see the previous note on the phrase “a man’s sensual delights”), the superlative construction may connote “the most beautiful breasts” (metonymy of part for the whole) or “the most beautiful woman.” This might refer to a harem of concubines or to one woman (the wife of the king?) who was the most beautiful woman in the land.²⁸⁷</i></p>			

Translation:...[\[both\] wives and mistresses](#). Unfortunately, these words occur only here; so we do not really know what they refer to. The two most popular guesses are (1) wives, mistresses, a harem; which is something that

²⁸⁷ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 16, 2018.

Solomon certainly had—but this does not really fit with the immediate context (and there are words which can be translated *wives and mistresses*). (2) Musical instruments. This second fits better with the context; and perhaps this could refer to *compositions and concerts*. In the immediate context, it is possibly related to music and to entertainment; and we certainly know that, whatever this was, nobody had anything like this except for Solomon.

Let me suggest that, right here, you determine what it is in this life that you want more than anything else, and that is what belongs here as the final two items. It does not matter what it is. If you depend upon it for satisfaction and contentment, you will not find it.

Ecclesiastes 2:8 I collected just for myself a great amount of gold and silver, as well as various other treasures taken from other kings and various provinces. I acquired and also produced great musical productions involving male and female singers; and I acquired that which men most desire—beautiful women who became my wives and mistresses.

What categories are named in Ecclesiastes 2:8e? (various commentators)

Musical Instruments:

David Guzik: *The NIV translates, “Harem” and the RSV “Concubines.” The word might be related to the Hebrew word for breast. According to Wright, a Canaanite word of similar form is used to translate the Egyptian word for “concubine.” However, the traditional Jewish rendering is musical instruments.*²⁸⁸

Dr. John Gill: *It seems best to understand it of musical instruments, or of musical compositions; sung either with a single voice, or in concert; which, according to Bochart, were called “sidoth”, from Sido, a Phoenician woman of great note, the inventor of them or rather from giving unequal sounds, which, by their grateful mixture and temperament, broke and destroyed one another.*²⁸⁹

Dr. Peter Pett makes a very persuasive argument for musical instruments: *[Solomon] experimented with music of every kind. He listened to every type of singer. He experimented with every musical instrument. The word translated musical instruments is of unknown meaning. Some translate as concubines. But their equivalent have been mentioned in Eccles. 2:7, and we would expect in a list of pleasures of those times the mention of musical instruments, especially in a verse where music is in mind. Whichever it was it was something that delighted the hearts of men.*²⁹⁰

Women and mistresses:

Wright: *The final item in the list may well refer to Solomon’s wives and concubines, but the Hebrew word does not occur elsewhere in the Bible.*²⁹¹

The NET Bible: *Concubines were slave women in ancient Near Eastern societies who were the legal property of their master, but who could have legitimate sexual relations with their master. A concubine’s status was more elevated than a mere servant, but she was not free and did not have the legal rights of a free wife. The children of a concubine could, in some instances, become equal heirs with the children of the free wife. After the period of the Judges concubines may have become more of a royal prerogative (2 Sam 21:10-14; 1 Kgs 11:3).*²⁹²

The Geneva Bible: *Or, the most beautiful of the women that were taken in war, as in (Judges 5:30).*²⁹³

²⁸⁸ David Guzik’s *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

²⁸⁹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:8. See Gill for additional references.

²⁹⁰ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:8.

²⁹¹ David Guzik’s *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

²⁹² From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 16, 2018.

²⁹³ Geneva Bible Translation Notes; courtesy of e-sword; 1599; Eccles. 2:8.

What categories are named in Ecclesiastes 2:8e? (various commentators)

The Cambridge Bible: *The Hebrew substantive, which is not found elsewhere, is first given in the singular and then in the plural, as an emphatic way of expressing multitude, and has been very variously interpreted, as meaning, with the A.V., following Luther, a "musical instrument," or with the Vulgate "cups," or with the LXX. "cup-bearers," or a "bath," or "heaps" of treasure, or a "chariot," or a "palanquin," or even "male and female demons." Most modern scholars however agree, though differing as to its etymology, some finding its root-meaning in "couch," and some in the "female breast," and others in "captives taken in war," in rendering it as a "concubine." This agrees, it is obvious, with the context and with what is recorded of Solomon's seraglio with its thousand inmates (Song Song of Songs. 6:8; 1Kings 11:3). It was not likely, we may add, that so characteristic a feature in that monarch's prodigal excesses should have been altogether passed over in a picture so elaborate. "Musical instruments," it may be added, would have formed a somewhat poor climax to the long catalogue of kingly luxuries. The interpolated "as" should be omitted.*²⁹⁴

James Burton Coffman: *An authentic rendition of this is: "I provided myself with male and female singers, and with the pleasures of the flesh, concubine after concubine."*²⁹⁵

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown offers a slight twist on this: *[R]ather, "a princess and princesses," from an Arabic root. One regular wife, or queen (Est. 1:9); Pharaoh's daughter (1Kings 3:1); other secondary wives, "princesses," distinct from the "concubines" (1Kings 11:3; Psalm 45:10; Song of Songs. 6:8) [Weiss, Gesenius]. Had these been omitted, the enumeration would be incomplete.*²⁹⁶

Ken Cayce: *The meaning is indicated in an early Egyptian letter that used a similar Canaanite word for "concubines." This fits Solomon's 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3).*²⁹⁷

The NIV Study Bible: *The Hebrew for this word ["harem" in the NIV Study Bible] occurs only here in Scripture... The meaning seems to be indicated in an early Egyptian letter that uses a similar Canaanite term for concubines. It fits the situation of Solomon, who had 300 concubines in addition to 700 wives (1Kings 11:3).*²⁹⁸

Hot water and baths:

*The Targum interprets them of hot waters and baths, having pipes to let out hot water and cold.*²⁹⁹

Don't knock this interpretation. If you have endured a few cold showers because your water heater died, that was par for the course for the ancient world. So if Solomon designed a way to produce warm water, that would have been an amazing luxury for that day.

Not sure:

Dr. John Gill: *Aben Ezra, of women taken captive; Jarchi, of chariots and covered wagons; the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions, of cup bearers, men, and women, that pour out wine and serve it; and the Vulgate Latin version, of cups and pots, to pour out wine.*³⁰⁰

²⁹⁴ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:8.

²⁹⁵ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 2, 2018.

²⁹⁶ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:8.

²⁹⁷ From bible.studys.org accessed September 6, 2018.

²⁹⁸ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 987 (footnote).

²⁹⁹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:8.

³⁰⁰ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:8.

What categories are named in Ecclesiastes 2:8e? (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *The word (given here first in the singular number and then in the plural emphatically to express multitude) occurs nowhere else, and has, therefore, been subjected to various interpretations. The Septuagint gives... "a male cupbearer and female cupbearers;"... After the clause immediately preceding, one might expect mention of Solomon's numerous harem (1Kings 11:3; So 1Kings 6:8), and most modern commentators consider the word to mean "concubine," the whole expression denoting multiplicity, "wife and wives." The Authorized Version is not very probable, though somewhat supported by Kimchi, Luther, etc; and the Greek Venetian, which has, δῦδρημα καὶ συστήματα, a musical term signifying "combination of tones," or harmony.*

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *Other interpretations are "captives," "litters," "coaches," "baths," "treasures," "chests," "demons." Ewald, followed by Motais and others, suggests that the word implies a strong or high degree of a quality, so that, connecting the two clauses together, we should render, "And in a word, all the delights of the sons of men in abundance." This seems a more appropriate termination to the catalogue than any specification of further sources of pleasure; but there is no very strong etymological reason to recommend it; and we can hardly suppose that, in the enumeration of Solomon's prodigalities, his multitudinous seraglio would be omitted. Rather it comes in here naturally as the climax and completion of his pursuit of earthly delight.³⁰¹*

Clarke: *Musical instruments, and that of all sorts* - For these seven words, there are only two in the original, *הדש תודש* *shiddah veshiddoth*. These words are acknowledged on all hands to be utterly unknown, if not utterly inexplicable. Some render them male and female captives; others, cups and flagons; others, cooks and confectioners; others, a species of musical compositions derived from a celebrated Phoenician woman named Sido, to whom Sanchoniatha attributes the invention of music. Others, with more probability, wives and concubines; of the former of whom Solomon had seven hundred, and of the latter, three hundred; and if these be not spoken of here, they are not mentioned at all; whereas music, and every thing connected with that, was referred to before.³⁰²

Field upon fields:

Clarke: *If, after all this, I may add one conjecture, it shall be this; שדה *sadeh*, in Hebrews is a field, and occurs in various parts of the Bible. שדו *sadoth* is fields, 1Sam. 22:7, the points in such a case are of no consideration. May not Solomon be speaking here of farms upon farms, or estates upon estates, which he had added by purchase to the common regal portion? We know that a king of Israel (Ahab) once desired to have a vineyard (Naboth's) which he could not obtain: now, Solomon having spoken before of gardens, orchards, and vineyards, why may he not here speak of supernumerary estates? Perhaps every man who critically examines the place will be dissatisfied, and have a conjecture of his own.³⁰³*

NASB, NRSV	"concubines"
NKJV	"musical instruments of all kinds"
TEV	"all the women a man could want"
NJB, JPSOA	"every human luxury, chest upon chest of it"
NIV	"harem"
REB	"everything that affords delight"
LXX	"a butler and female cupbearers"

³⁰¹ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:8.

³⁰² Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:8.

³⁰³ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:8.

What categories are named in Ecclesiastes 2:8e? (various commentators)

Dr. Bob Utley, who compiled the list above, writes: *The Hebrew word (BDB 994, KB 950) is very uncertain. Obviously from the varied translations this Hebrew hapax legomenon is uncertain. The key is the Semitic root:*

1. From the term for “woman's breast” (BDB 994), NASB, NRSV, TEV, NIV (in apposition to “the delights of men”).
2. The NIV Study Bible's footnote says that an early Egyptian letter uses a similar Canaanite term for concubines (p. 993).
3. In later Hebrew (Mishnah) it refers to a chest or coffer, NJB, JPSOA (in apposition to “the treasure of kings”).
4. KJV, ASV, NKJV see it as in apposition to “singers” (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 4, p. 99).
5. The LXX took the meaning from the Aramaic root, “to pour out (wine)” (NET Bible, p. 116).
6. The REB seems to connect it to “delights of men,” but in the sense of luxuries (cf. Prov. 19:10).³⁰⁴

The problem with either view—whether this is a reference to mistresses or to musical instruments—is there are well-known terms for both things (although I cannot recall if there is a general term for musical instruments in the Hebrew).

My suggestion is, place anything here that you believe will give you happiness and contentment; no matter what it is, it will not yield the intended result.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

There may be a divinely-intended advantage to our not really knowing the meaning of these final two words. We can virtually add anything at this point: ipods and gameboys; recreation and gyms; unlimited travel; status or fame; etc. There are modern inventions—technology, if you will—that Solomon never tried. But, the point is, you can add anything to that list, and it would not affect human happiness or contentment. We would receive temporal stimulation—and some things for a significant amount of time—but there is nothing by way of the material that you can add to this list which would add contentment and happiness to your life.

There have been some people who have come from great wealth and they decide to apply this wealth to the purchase of drugs and various type of stimulants. Certainly they receive a temporary buzz and perhaps even a lasting buzz; but at the end, there is no happiness, regardless of how much money is spent.

Today, in the United States, there are a considerable number of doctors who will prescribe happy pills, in virtually whatever quantities that you want. And there are so many people in the United States who are prematurely retired. Those who are on medicare can often receive whatever kind of happy pill that they want (psychotropic drugs). But too often, this medication robs a person of his drive, stamina, health, and happiness—despite the stimulation. Today, opiate addiction is one of the worst problems that we have in the United States—and this is just as much a problem of those that we would see as being well -off as those who are not.

And just to make certain that I make myself clear here. Not only will these happy pills not make you happy, but they can have the most disastrous results. Taking them is often one of the worst mistakes a person can make.

Ecclesiastes 2:8 I collected just for myself a great amount of gold and silver, as well as various other treasures taken from other kings and various provinces. I acquired and also produced great musical productions involving male and female singers; and I acquired that which men most desire—beautiful women who became my wives and mistresses.

³⁰⁴ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:8.

Ecclesiastes 2:8e: Solomon's enjoyment of sexual delights (various commentators)

Even though it is not certain that this is a reference to Solomon's harem, as it were; Solomon did have 700 wives and 300 mistresses. Therefore, even if this is not mentioned specifically in Ecclesiastes, this is certainly a route that Solomon went searching for pleasure.

Ray C. Stedman: *Finally, they had Playmates, girls with bunny tails running around the palace. Concubines, Solomon calls them, "man's delight." All the joys of untrammelled sexuality were available at all times. This certainly shows how wrong is the idea of some people who say that the Playboy mentality is peculiar to the twentieth century alone. King Solomon tried all of this.*³⁰⁵

If having a multiplicity of sexual and relationship partners was the key to happiness, Solomon would have been the happiest man in the world. He was not.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 2:8 I collected just for myself a great amount of gold and silver, as well as various other treasures taken from other kings and various provinces. I acquired and also produced great musical productions involving male and female singers; and I acquired that which men most desire—beautiful women who became my wives and mistresses.

Solomon tries to find happiness in building and collecting (various commentators)

David Guzik: *If building, improving, and amassing great riches and accomplishments could give true meaning to life, the Preacher would have found it.*³⁰⁶

F. B. Meyer summarizes what Solomon had done: *At the beginning of his search for happiness Solomon erected a splendid home and planned all kinds of delights of an artistic and sensuous nature. There were gardens, pools of crystal water, fruit trees, meadows filled with cattle, regal splendor, musicians who poured into the palace their sweet melodies. He went further, adding to architecture and art his intellectual pursuits. But when he had gone to the furthest limit, he turned from it all, with the old gnawing at his heart—Vanity of vanities!*³⁰⁷

Matthew Henry: *Perceiving it was folly to give himself to wine, he next tried the costly amusements of princes. The poor, when they read such a description, are ready to feel discontent. But the remedy against all such feelings is in the estimate of it all by the owner himself. All was vanity and vexation of spirit: and the same things would yield the same result to us, as to Solomon. Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content. His wisdom remained with him; a strong understanding, with great human knowledge. But every earthly pleasure, when unconnected with better blessings, leaves the mind as eager and unsatisfied as before. Happiness arises not from the situation in which we are placed. It is only through Jesus Christ that final blessedness can be attained.*³⁰⁸

Dr. Bob Utley:

"I collected" (BDB 888, KB 1111, Qal PERFECT):

1. silver and gold, Eccles. 2:8
2. treasure, Eccles. 2:8 (taxes or tribute)
3. singers, Eccles. 2:8
4. concubines, Eccles. 2:8.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁵ From www.raystedman.org/ accessed July 27, 2018. Copyright © 2010 by Ray Stedman Ministries

³⁰⁶ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

³⁰⁷ F. B. Meyer, *Through the Bible by Day (A Devotional Commentary)*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1–17.

³⁰⁸ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1–11.

³⁰⁹ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org/; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:8.

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Solomon's Approaches to Finding Happiness (Dr. Stan Murrell)

Solomon sought happiness in wisdom. “And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith” (Eccl. 1:13). Solomon studied many facets of nature: animals, birds, reptiles, fish and plant life. So great was his wisdom that people from all nations came to listen to him speak (1 Kings 4:32-34). But it was to no avail. “I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. 18 For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow” (Eccl. 1:17-18).

Solomon sought happiness in pleasure. “I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity” (Eccl. 1:16). But pleasure brought Solomon no lasting happiness. “I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?” (Eccl. 2:2).

Solomon sought happiness in wine. “I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine” (Eccl. 2:3).

Solomon sought happiness in building, and agriculture projects. “I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: 5 I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: 6 I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees” (Eccl. 2:4-6)

Solomon sought happiness in power over people, and personal possessions. “I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: 8 I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces.” (Eccl. 2:7-8).

Solomon sought happiness in music. “I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts” (Eccl. 2:8).

Solomon sought happiness in marriage. Despite the Divine prohibition against multiplying wives in Deuteronomy 17:17, Solomon had 700 wives of royal birth, and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3). But marriage did not bring him happiness. In fact, in his old age, his wives “turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God” (1 Kings 11:4).

From <https://stanmurrell.org/2018/05/25/a-frantic-search-for-happiness/> accessed August 21, 2018.

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[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 2:8 I collected just for myself a great amount of gold and silver, as well as various other treasures taken from other kings and various provinces. I acquired and also produced great musical productions involving male and female singers; and I acquired that which men most desire—beautiful women who became my wives and mistresses.

A Frantic Search for Happiness (Grace Notes/R. B. Thieme, Jr.)

Once you have become negative toward doctrine and created the vacuum of the soul, you begin to suck in false concepts which result in the frantic search for happiness.

Once a believer goes negative toward doctrine, he becomes frantic in his search for happiness. The frantic search for happiness is described in one phrase in 2 Tim 3:4: "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God"

The frantic search for happiness has many directions: power, influence, approbation, success, status symbols, money, pleasure, social life, friends, health, sex, material things associated with happiness. There's nothing wrong with many of these things, but when they have number one priority in your life, Bible doctrine will inevitably be neglected and rejected.

If you are not content or happy with what you have now, then you will never be content or happy with what you will have in the future. So if the reversionist is not content with what he has at the moment when the vacuum of the soul is first opened by negative volition and distraction, he will never be content with anything more in the future in reversionism. If you are unhappy with what you have at the moment of implosion, explosion, and reversionism, you will be the same if every wish and desire of your soul were given to you at the moment you entered into reversionism. This is why the frantic search for happiness is frenetic.

Happiness or contentment is based on capacity for life from metabolized Bible doctrine in the right lobe of the soul, not from prosperity. In other words, once you believe in Jesus Christ, happiness is not what you have and unhappiness is not what you have not. Happiness is based on capacity for life, which is based on mental attitude, which is based on the amount of metabolized doctrine in your right lobe.

Prosperity, success, power, approbation, status symbols, money, sex, pleasure, social life, or material things are really not a source of happiness. They are enjoyed by people with capacity for happiness and life, but they are a distraction to believers without capacity from doctrine.

The only true source of happiness for the believer in Jesus Christ is metabolized doctrine in the soul, which develops +H. +H is that problem solving device where we share the happiness of God. You must develop capacity to share the happiness of God. God only sends His happiness to the soul that has doctrine resident therein. The soul in reversionism is no home for God's happiness.

The advance through each stage of spiritual adulthood increases capacity for life. Advance in the plan of God always provides a balance between capacity for what you have and the enjoyment of what you have.

+H or sharing the happiness of God must be distinguished from the misery encountered in the frantic search for happiness. Happiness comes to the believer who executes the plan, but there is no happiness to the believer involved in the frantic search for happiness.

The frantic search for happiness finds the believer going in the direction of the trends of his sin nature. Legalism unchecked results in moral degeneracy. Antinomianism unchecked results in immoral degeneracy.

Heb 13:5, "Let your lifestyle be free from the love for money; be content with what you have, for He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'"

- You cannot be content with what you have unless you have maximum doctrine resident in your soul.
- This contentment begins with spiritual self-esteem, moves into spiritual autonomy, and reaches its peak in spiritual maturity.
- To be content with what you have is +H, which comes from capacity in the soul. Capacity in the soul comes from Bible doctrine. The vacuum in the soul is the opposite of this, and inevitably results in the frantic search for happiness.

A Frantic Search for Happiness (Grace Notes/R. B. Thieme, Jr.)

1 Tim 6:6-7, "But godliness is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment [+H]. _For we brought nothing into this world, with the result that we can take nothing out of it. And if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content._"

Phil 4:11, "Not that we speak on the basis of want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am."

Contentment is something you learn through perception, metabolization, and application of Bible doctrine.

The only thing that improves with spiritual growth is your capacity for life, love, and happiness. The only thing that is different with the attainment of spiritual adulthood is that you have capacity to enjoy whatever you have.

Advance in the plan of God always provides the balance between your capacity for what you have and the enjoyment of what you have. The priority solution to the problems of life is occupation with Christ which provides this capacity.

- The mystery doctrine of the Church Age must be your number one priority. • Concentrate on priority number one.
- Organize your life around priority number one.
- Organize your thinking around priority number one.
- Then you have capacity which increases, producing contentment, not with what you have, but with the doctrine in your soul.

Wrong priorities cause the frantic search for happiness.

- If your number one priority is romance, friendship, business, success, social life, etc., you concentrate on that number one priority.
- You organize your life around that number one priority.
- You organize your thinking around that number one priority.
- You become involved in the frantic search for happiness.

The vacuum of the soul which produces emptiness, futility, and nothingness creates a demand for happiness in your life to replace what is missing in your life; i.e., the mystery doctrine for the Church Age. The frantic search for happiness becomes the alternative to the daily perception of Bible doctrine and execution of the plan. Reversion and the frantic search for happiness replaces your desire for Bible doctrine. The presence of the vacuum in the soul replaces the hunger for doctrine with the lust for happiness. Once you lust for happiness, you'll never find it.

The frantic search for happiness follows the trends of the sin nature in polarized fragmentation.

- The trend toward legalism results in moral degeneracy and no happiness. • The trend toward antinomianism results in immoral degeneracy and no happiness.
- The trend toward legalism includes crusader activism, self-righteous, arrogance, personality arrogance, the arrogance of Christian service, irrational (emotional) arrogance, the arrogance of unhappiness (subjective preoccupation with self), iconoclastic arrogance (role model arrogance, the feet of clay syndrome), so-called "victorious living," the arrogance of asceticism, using Christian service as a means of spirituality.
- The trend toward antinomianism is related to multifarious sexual sins, drug addiction, violence, criminality, total self-indulgence, or debauchery.

A Frantic Search for Happiness (Grace Notes/R. B. Thieme, Jr.)

• Others seek their happiness in a false emphasis on experience, the so-called “victorious life commitment,” holy rollers speaking in tongues, fundy flagellation and self-denial, or in giving gimmicks like tithing for blessing.

The frantic search for happiness includes moving toward either moral or immoral degeneracy depending on the area of weakness of the sin nature, trying to find stimulating circumstances or people, and trying to be entertained as much as possible. In this stage, true objects of love are discarded for pseudo-love objects.

From **Grace Notes**; accessed August 21, 2018. Probably attributable to R. B. Thieme, Jr. (given the vocabulary throughout).

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Arno Gaebelein: *To all this he added servants and maidens, with great possessions. He gathered silver and gold and treasures such which only kings could obtain, gifts, probably from other monarchs, perhaps those which the Queen of Sheba brought. He also paid attention to music, had men singers, women singers, and an orchestra.*³¹⁰

The Expositor's Bible Commentary tells us all that Solomon was able to do, and all that he did: *Cohemoth claims to have started in the quest with the greatest advantages; for "what can he do who comes after the king whom they made king long ago?" He surrounded himself with all the luxuries of an Oriental prince, not out of any vulgar love of show and ostentation, nor out of any strong sensual addictions, but that he might discover wherein the secret and fascination of pleasure lay, and what it could do for a man who pursued it wisely. He built himself new, costly palaces, as the Sultan of Turkey used to do almost every year. He laid out paradises, planted them with vines and fruit trees of every sort, and large shady groves to screen off and to temper the heat of the sun. He dug great tanks and reservoirs of water, and cut channels which carried the cool vital stream through the gardens and to the roots of the trees. He bought men and maids, and surrounded himself with the retinue of servants and slaves requisite to keep his palaces and paradises in order, to serve his sumptuous tables, to swell his pomp: i.e., he gathered together such a train of ministers, attendants, domestics, indoor and outdoor slaves, as is still thought necessary to the dignity of an Oriental "lord." His herds of flocks, a main source of Oriental wealth, were of finer strain and larger in number than had been known before. He amassed enormous treasures of silver and gold, the common Oriental hoard. He collected the peculiar treasures "of kings and of the kingdoms"; whatever special commodity was yielded by any foreign land was caught up for his use by his officers or presented to him by his allies. He hired famous musicians and singers, and gave himself to those delights of harmony which have had a peculiar charm for the Hebrews of all ages. He crowded his harem with the beauties both of his own and of foreign lands. He withheld nothing from them that his eyes desired, and kept not his heart from any pleasure. He set himself seriously and intelligently to make happiness his portion; and, while cherishing or cheering his body with pleasures, he did not rush into them with the blind eagerness "whose violent property fore does itself" and defeats its own ends. His "mind guided him wisely" amid his delights; his "wisdom helped him" to select, and combine, and vary them, to enhance and prolong, their sweetness by a certain art and temperance in the enjoyment of them.*³¹¹

An excellent summary.

Solomon's Possessions (a Summary from College Press Bible Study)

Cultural improvements and pleasures of possessions. (Eccles. 2:7-8)

³¹⁰ Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1–26.

³¹¹ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 2:1-11.

Solomon's Possessions (a Summary from College Press Bible Study)

This third and highest level upon which he experiments involves the pleasures derived from developing cultural projects and accumulating earthly wealth.

(a) Slaves. Solomon purchased some slaves, captured others and had some born in his own house" (1Kings 9:20-22; 1Kings 10:4-8). Those who were born in his house were called "sons of the house (Gen. 15:3)" and were often more desired than other slaves. Solomon's interest in horses alone required literally thousands of slaves to care for his extensive holdings. It was stated that he had 40,000 stalls of horses, a similar number of chariots and 12,000 horsemen (1Kings 4:26). It was said of the Queen of Sheba, as she observed the elaborate attention given to the king by his servants, that "there was no more spirit in her" (1Kings 10:5). She had not believed the colorful reports; however, upon personal observation she confessed that she had not been told half of what was true!

(b) Flocks and herds. Solomon's provision for one day included, among other things, ". . . ten fat oxen, twenty pasture-fed oxen, a hundred sheep besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fattened fowl." Read 1Kings 4:22-23; 1Kings 8:62-63. The large number of dedicatory sacrifices offered to God at the consecration of the Temple, suggests the magnitude of his flocks and herds. He offered the Lord 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep on that one occasion. Cf. 1Chron. 27:29-31.

(c) Silver and gold. The statement, "I collected for myself silver and gold" is more flagrant than it appears on the surface. God specifically commanded the king not to multiply gold for "himself." The detailed accounts found in the Bible depicting Solomon's inordinate desire for gold and silver supports his contention. In the face of the prohibition (Deut. 17:17), Solomon made silver and gold as common in Jerusalem as stones (2Chron. 1:15). The following record of Solomon's extensive use of gold is included here to impress the reader with the magnitude of his personal quest. It is found in 2Chron. 9:13-21 and is followed immediately with the declaration, "So King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom." It reads:

"Now the weight of gold which came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold, besides that which the traders and merchants brought; and all the kings of Arabia and the governors of the country brought gold and silver to Solomon. And King Solomon made 200 large shields of beaten gold, using 600 shekels of beaten gold on each large shield. And he made 300 shields of beaten gold, using three hundred shekels of gold on each shield, and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon. Moreover, the king made a great throne of ivory and overlaid it with pure gold. And there were six steps to the throne and a footstool in gold attached to the throne, and arms on each side of the seat, and two lions standing beside the arms. And twelve lions were standing there on the six steps on the one side and on the other; nothing like it was made for any other kingdom. And all King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; silver was not considered valuable in the days of Solomon. For the king had ships which went to Tarshish with the servants of Hurum; once every three years the ships of Tarshish came bringing gold and silver, ivory and apes and peacocks."

(d) The treasure of kings and provinces. If the treasure is that of great wealth, Solomon qualified (1Kings 4:21; 1Kings 4:24; 1Kings 10:14-15). If it means he possessed such treasure unique to kings and not the common man, he also qualified. He controlled provinces and exacted tribute from them; these provinces bordered or neighbored his own country of Palestine and were in addition to the districts of his own country. There were twelve districts in Israel and each district provided Solomon's needs for one month of the year (1Kings 4:7). Solomon reigned over all the tribes and nations between the Mediterranean and the Euphrates. The promise God gave in Gen. 15:18 was thus fulfilled. Solomon was a dictator. Everything depended upon his will. Although he was not a man of war as his father David had been known, he still subjected the people of his land to his every desire. In addition to Israel, he ruled the Philistines, the Moabites, the Edomites, the Ammonites, the Canaanites, the Hittites and the Syrians. So vast was his wealth that he was greater than all other kings of earth. It was estimated that he provided for 10,000 people in his service.

Solomon's Possessions (a Summary from College Press Bible Study)

(e) Male and female singers. From the reference out of David's life (2Sam. 19:35), singers were employed to entertain and lighten the spirit. These singers were for Solomon's personal enjoyment and should not be confused with the male singers of the choir within the Temple. They were chosen solely because of the satisfaction they brought to the king.

(f) The pleasures of men. This euphemistic phrase suggests the sexual enjoyment of men. The translators of the New American Standard Version suggest that "concubines" represent what is meant by the pleasures of men. This is in harmony with Solomon's experience as he had 700 wives and 300 concubines (1Kings 11:3).

This text, however, has been widely disputed. The Septuagint translates it "a male cupbearer and a female cupbearer." Both the Syriac and Vulgate agree with this. The King James Translation renders it "Musical instruments, and that of all sorts." Other translations supply a variation of ideas. Some of these are: "plenty of all sorts," "combination of tones," "captives," "litters," "coaches," "baths," "treasures," "chests," and even "demons." The original Hebrew expression appears but this one time in the whole of the Bible, and thus the difficulty of determining the proper translation.

The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:1–11 (comments).

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Mark Dunagan: *Solomon possessed wealth which only kings are enabled to acquire (see 2Chron. 1:15; 9:20 "silver was not considered valuable in the days of Solomon"; 1Kings 9:28; 10:14–27). Solomon was also a man of the arts and culture. He was that type of person that people simply envy. He seemed to be perfect, the ultimate man, well-balanced and knowledgeable. An expert in virtually every field. A man who could hunt and yet at the same time write poetry. And the women loved him! He had a large harem (1 Kings 11:1-3). As one writer noted, he had all the recreational sex that he wanted.*³¹²

You, the writings of Solomon, and happiness. With regards to things such as foods and music, the average American today has a much greater selection and variety than Solomon had. Despite Solomon's massive wealth (which was strictly relative to his time and place), if you had to choose between Solomon's life inside his palace and your own life, most of you would choose your own life. You have a terrific arrangement of water and sewer, electricity, heat and air conditioning options within your home that Solomon could not even dream about. What Solomon had was great wealth and luxury for his time; the average American today has far, far more today than Solomon did then. However, most of us take these things for granted. If our internet or phone go out for a day or so, we think it is the end of the world. If our access to video is cut off for some reason—adverse weather or internet problems—we stress out.

However, Solomon's experiments, as found in Ecclesiastes, stand for all time. This is nothing which you can drum up in your own life, regardless of your net worth, that will make you happy and content with life. I guarantee you that you could put two men side-by-side who have virtually the same everything, and one will be happy and thankful for his life; and the other will be angry and frustrated.

Your happiness and contentment with life comes from the Bible doctrine in your soul, not from the things which you own or have control over. Furthermore, there is no psychiatrist, no therapy path, or no combination of drugs (prescribed or illegal) which will make your life better or happier.

Apart from God, there is only one way which gets you close to Christian contentment, and that is by living according to the laws of divine establishment. These are the laws designed by God to preserve a society, and

³¹² Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:8.

these laws are designed for believer and unbeliever alike. The unbeliever can conform to these laws, and he will be, on the whole, happier than the unbeliever who makes it his life mission to oppose these laws.

Ron Snider's translation of Ecclesiastes 2:7–8 I bought male and female slaves, and I had homeborn slaves. Also I possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. Also, I collected for myself silver and gold, even the treasure of kings and provinces. I provided for myself male and female singers and the pleasures of men--many concubines.

Ecclesiastes 2:7–8: Accumulating details does not satisfy (Ron Snider)

1. Qoheleth continues to list his impressive accomplishments and acquisitions in verse seven, moving to the large number of slaves that he had at his disposal.
2. There are two types of slaves that are mentioned here, which include those that Qoheleth obtained by purchase and those that were born to the slaves that were within his household.
3. The verb קָנָה (qanah) specifically refers to buying a commodity with money, which indicates that slaves were not viewed as anything other than another possession.
4. No doubt, Qoheleth would only purchase the finest specimens that were available upon the slave market, both men and women.
5. Given the very large nature of his property and holdings, Qoheleth could easily justify the acquisition of many slaves since a large enterprise would require a lot of manpower to operate and maintain.
6. The second category of slaves included those that were born to the slaves that Qoheleth already owned.
7. Some have suggested that these slaves are to be limited only to the offspring that came when his servants procreated, whose children were automatically Qoheleth's slaves.
8. Leupold points out that these types of slaves were quite valuable and were prized for their loyalty to the master.
9. Others have suggested that Solomon was not above using his female slaves for his pleasure, indulging in sex whenever he wanted, with the women of his choice.
10. Any children produced from such a union would have become servants in his house, who might have occupied a higher position within the house, but who were not considered princes.
11. In any case, this all fits what we know about exceedingly rich and powerful people in this world; they always want someone else to perform menial tasks and do all the hard work for them.
12. Solomon next turns to his other possessions, which would have been in the care of the slaves he owned: his herds and flocks.
13. The distinction here between herds and flocks is that herds would include the larger farm animals, like cattle and oxen, while flocks would include the smaller livestock like sheep and goats.
14. Like having servants, possessing herds and flocks was indicative of those that were wealthy since such animals may multiply quickly and increase one's net worth.
15. In any case, his extensive land holding, building projects, large slave holdings, and huge flocks would only serve to document his great wealth.
16. To emphasize this point, Qoheleth compares his unrivaled holdings to all those that had lived in Jerusalem before him, just as he had compared his wisdom and knowledge in chapter one.
17. Qoheleth concludes the description of his earthly prosperity by listing three final things that surely have appealed to men over the course of human history.
18. The first item in verse eight concludes the section about his possessions and wealth, focusing on the actual liquid financial resources that were readily available to him.
19. According the historical narrative, Solomon had so much silver at his disposal that it became a very common commodity in Jerusalem IIChron. 9:27
20. The biblical accounts of Solomon's reign indicate that gold was also very plentiful in his kingdom; Solomon possessed a bank account that would be the absolute envy of anyone that has ever lived.
21. The historical narrative indicates that Solomon received 666 talents of gold in a given year, which does not appear to be recorded as an unusual fact. 1Kings 10:14
22. Given the fact that the talent ranged from 75 and 90 pounds (and using today's prices), this would indicate that the value of the gold brought into the kingdom during a single year was between \$500,000,000 and \$650,000,000.

Ecclesiastes 2:7–8: Accumulating details does not satisfy (Ron Snider)

23. In fact, gold was so plentiful during the reign of Solomon that it actually devalued the lesser precious metals like silver. 1Kings 10:21
24. The next reference to the treasures of kings and provinces is introduced by וַ (w-waw) that is to be understood in the sense of addition.
25. Silver and gold were the treasures that belonged to kings (genitive of possession), which were brought to Solomon as tribute.
26. However, the term likely went beyond the simple matter of valuable metals to encompass the personal property that would be possessed by those in royal houses. IIChron. 9:23-24
27. As the Bible makes plain, Solomon was the beneficiary of a great deal of tribute that was not limited to the financial realm. 1Kings 10:10
28. The reference to the provinces indicates that Solomon was not only the beneficiary of gifts from others in positions of royalty; he was honored by those that might occupy lesser positions. IIChron. 9:13-14,21
29. Qoheleth moves now from the more tangible blessings and pleasures that he provided for himself to the more intangible and personal pleasures of life.
30. The first realm in which Solomon spared no expense was that of providing for personal entertainment, as seen in the reference to male and female singers.
31. Music has always been enjoyed by people from the most ancient times; very often those that are skilled in the performing arts have been admired and sought out by others. Jerusalem Idol
32. This is simply another area that provides sensory pleasure for mankind, and one which Solomon did not overlook in providing for himself.
33. One should probably not limit this phrase to only those that actually sang; one should see it as being somewhat comprehensive for all forms of musical entertainment and those musicians that provide it.
34. As someone was recently quoted when asked why people love music so much, "Because it distracts them from the misery of their lives...temporarily."
35. It should be observed that many of the things that Qoheleth provided for himself were nothing more than things that would temporarily distract him and provide some measure of satisfaction.
36. However, as he has already told us at the beginning of this chapter, these temporary distractions did nothing to provide any lasting sense of contentment.
37. Although the main verb I provided is not repeated, it governs the last phrase of verse eight, which has generated a great deal of discussion.
38. The Hebrew term תַּעֲנוּג (ta'anug) is used only five times and denotes that which pertains to luxury, that which is pleasurable, delightful, or enjoyable.
39. This is the third time that the phrase translated sons of men, which is literally sons of the man has been used; this phrase is designed to allude to the fallen condition of mankind that came to us through Adam. Rom. 5:12
40. In spite of the fallen condition of mankind, there is generally one thing that all normal men agree upon from the time they enter puberty-women are desirable.
41. In Song of Solomon, our author uses this same term to refer to the woman about whom he is writing, which indicates that a woman is indeed the delight and desire of man.
42. Although the Hebrew term שִׁדְדָה (shiddah) is not attested outside of this usage, the most natural root would be the masculine term שֶׁדֶד (shadh-breast, bosom).
43. Several other suggestions have been offered including, cupbearer (LXX), goblet (Vulgate, Targum), and even demons, which is based on changing the ד (d) to an ר (r).
44. This would yield the translation breast and breasts, which most interpreters understand as referring to the concept of the harem.
45. Any cursory reading of the Song of Solomon indicates that Solomon was quite experienced in the delights of sexual love.
46. The historical narrative further documents the fact that Solomon did not deny himself when it came to sexual gratification.
47. This list is designed to indicate that Qoheleth did not deny himself any sensory or material pleasure, accumulating more (and probably better things) than anyone in the world ever has.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#); accessed September 2, 2018 (will open as a Word Document on your computer).

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

And I became great and I increased more than all who were to my faces in Jerusalem. Furthermore, my wisdom remained to me.

Ecclesiastes
2:9

I became great and I increased more than all who were in Jerusalem before me. Furthermore, my wisdom remained with me.

I became great and I increased more than all who were in Jerusalem before me. And yet, still my wisdom remained with me.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	And I became great and I increased more than all who were to my faces in Jerusalem. Furthermore, my wisdom remained to me.
Revised Douay-Rheims	And I surpassed in riches all that were before me in Jerusalem: my wisdom also remained with me.
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	...and I multiplied goods and increased <u>riches</u> more than all generations before me in Jerusalem, because my wisdom stood with me <u>and assisted me</u> ;...
Peshitta (Syriac)	So I became great, and my wealth increased more than all who were before me in Jerusalem; my wisdom also remained with me.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	So I became great, and advanced beyond all that were before in Jerusalem: also my wisdom was established to me.

Significant differences: There are some additional words found in the targum.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Easy English	I was the most famous person who had ever lived in Jerusalem. And I was very wise.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	I became very rich and famous. I was greater than anyone who lived in Jerusalem before me. My wisdom was always there to help me.
<i>The Message</i>	Oh, how I prospered! I left all my predecessors in Jerusalem far behind, left them behind in the dust. What's more, I kept a clear head through it all.
NIRV	I became far more important than anyone in Jerusalem had ever been before. And in spite of everything, I didn't lose my wisdom.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	None could boast of the possessions and luxuries at my command. I was greater than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. I surveyed the purpose of it all through the eyes of the wisdom which is under the sun. This kind of wisdom I retained as a constant companion.
Contemporary English V.	I was the most famous person who had ever lived in Jerusalem, and I was very wise.
The Living Bible	So I became greater than any of the kings in Jerusalem before me, and with it all I remained clear-eyed, so that I could evaluate all these things.
New Century Version	I became very famous, even greater than anyone who had lived in Jerusalem before me. My wisdom helped me in all this.

Unlocked Dynamic Bible So I gained more power and wealth than any king who had ruled before me in Jerusalem, and I allowed my wisdom to continue to guide me.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible Then, I became great as my wisdom increased
(More than all who had come before me);
And indeed, my wisdom was proven.

Beck's American Translation So I got to be great and richer than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. I also kept my wisdom.

International Standard V ***A Testimony to Extravagant Position***
So I became great, greater than anyone who had lived before me in Jerusalem.
Throughout all of this, I remained wise.

New Advent (Knox) Bible Never had Jerusalem known such wealth; yet in the midst of it, wisdom never left my side.

Translation for Translators So, I became greater than anyone else who had ever lived in Jerusalem, and I was very wise.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Alpha & Omega Bible SO I BECAME GREAT, AND ADVANCED BEYOND ALL THAT WERE BEFORE IN JERUSALEM: ALSO MY WISDOM WAS ESTABLISHED TO ME.

Awful Scroll Bible I am to have greatened and have been made to increase, turned before they in Jerusalem, yet have I stood firm in wisdom.

Conservapedia Translation I was great, and amassed more treasure than all those who came before me in Jerusalem; through this I remained wise.

Ferrar-Fenton Bible Thus I enlarged and increased myself more than all that were before me in Jerusalem.—My scientific idea, however, remained with me.

God's Truth (Tyndale) Shortly, I was greater and in more worship, than all my predecessors in Jerusalem. For wisdom remained with me:...

Lexham English Bible Thus, {I accomplished far more} than anyone who [was] before me in Jerusalem--indeed, my wisdom stood by me.

Peter Pett's translation So I was great, and increased (in possessions and good things) more than all who were before me in Jerusalem, also my wisdom remained with me.

Tree of Life Version So I became far wealthier than all before me in Jerusalem, yet my wisdom stayed with me.

Unlocked Literal Bible So I became greater and wealthier than all who were before me in Jerusalem, and my wisdom remained with me.

Wikipedia Bible Project And I added to me, and grew more, from everything before me in Jerusalem; except my wisdom stood in my way.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988) I became great, surpassing all my predecessors in Jerusalem without losing wisdom.

The Heritage Bible And I was great, and increased more than all who existed facing back in Jerusalem; also my wisdom stood with me.

New American Bible (2002) I became great, and I stored up more than all others before me in Jerusalem; my wisdom, too, stayed with me.

New American Bible (2011) I accumulated much more than all others before me in Jerusalem; my wisdom, too, stayed with me.

Revised English Bible—1989 I achieved greatness, surpassing all my predecessors in Jerusalem; and my wisdom stood me in good stead.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

The Complete Tanach	So I became great, and I increased more than all who were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me.
	also my wisdom remained with me: Also, I did not forsake my wisdom because of all these affairs, and it remained with me; I did not forget it. Another explanation: It stood by me to aid me against all these.
exeGesés companion Bible	Thus I greated and increased more than all ere my face in Yeru Shalem; also my wisdom stayed with me...
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	Thus, I gained more wealth than anyone before me in Jerusalem. In addition, my wisdom remained with me:...
Orthodox Jewish Bible	So I was great, and excelled more than all that were before me in Yerushalayim; also my chochmah remained with me.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible	I became very famous, even greater than [surpassed] anyone who had lived in Jerusalem before me. My wisdom helped me in all this [stayed with me].
Pastor John Griffith	Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. - Make no mistake - THIS INCREASED PROSPERITY IS NOT FROM GOD - Rem: he's reporting on the time when he was clearly operating out of fellowship with God. That is "UNDER THE SUN" My wisdom also stood by me. Through all his pursuits he did not loose his sanity. ** The human viewpoint deception is operative here: If one has all the wealth and great wisdom and the opportunity to pursue whatever they desire they conclude this will make one happy and satisfied.
Kretzmann's Commentary	So I was great, possessed of riches and power, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem, as the historical accounts fully substantiate, 1 Kings 9-11; also my wisdom remained with me, it stood by him in all his experimenting to find happiness, it never left his side, for he was honestly concerned about finding true satisfaction in this life, if possible.
NET Bible®	So I was far wealthier than all my predecessors in Jerusalem, yet I maintained my objectivity: ⁴⁰ ⁴⁰ Heb "yet my wisdom stood for me," meaning he retained his wise perspective despite his great wealth.
Syndein/Thieme	{The Excesses of Solomon Was Beyond David and All Before Him} The delights of the heart/'right lobe' of man! I became greater then anyone in Jerusalem before me. And in all this, my academic wisdom stayed with me. {Note: The base of what Solomon had was inherited from his father David. Solomon received 'grace by association' from one of the Greatest SuperGrace Believers ever. Solomon was taught doctrine in his youth, but he either forgot it or did not see its importance in the scheme of things. So, he had all the trappings of a blessed SuperGrace life, but without the capacity to enjoy them which only comes from divine viewpoint/doctrine resident in your own soul. David could NOT leave THAT to Solomon - he had to LEARN to be content regardless his circumstances - as we also have to learn.}
The Voice	I surrounded myself with all this and became great, far greater than anyone who had ever lived in Jerusalem before me. And still, my wisdom never left my side.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Concordant Literal Version	As I grew greater and added more than anyone who was before me in Jerusalem, Indeed my wisdom, it stayed by me."
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English Standard Version	So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me.
New American Standard B.	Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me.
Young's Literal Translation	And I became great, and increased above every one who had been before me in Jerusalem; also, my wisdom stood with me.

The gist of this passage: Solomon has advanced materially, and he retains his wisdom.

Ecclesiastes 2:9a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
gâdal (גָּדַל) [pronounced gaw-DAHL]	<i>to be [become] great; to grow; to be greatly valued [celebrated, praised]; to twist together, to bind together</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1431 BDB #152

The NET Bible: *The vav prefixed to גָּדַלְתִּי (vav + Qal perfect first common singular from גָּדַל, gadal, "to be great; to increase") functions in a final summarizing sense, that is, it introduces the concluding summary of 2:4-9.*³¹³

Translation: I became great... Of all the kings of his era and before, none were as great as Solomon. And, for the most part, Solomon did not seem to plunder (although, he may have acted as *insurance* for smaller countries; or he may have required payment from smaller countries). In any case, if you will recall during the time of David, virtually every nation around Israel attacked them and tried to harm them. David, employing his top general Joab, handily put down every such aggression. No doubt, much of Solomon's wealth came from those same nations, who continued to pay tribute, having been soundly defeated by Joab.

The Pulpit Commentary: *So I was great... refers to the magnificence and extent of his possessions and luxury, as the former passage to the surpassing excellence of his wisdom. We may compare the mention of Abraham (Gen. 26:13), "The man waxed great, and grew more and more until he became very great" (sc. Job. 1:3).*³¹⁴

Ecclesiastes 2:9b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
yâçaph (יָצַח) [pronounced yaw- SAHPH]	<i>to add, to augment, to increase, to multiply; to add to do = to do again; to continue to</i>	1 st person singular, Hiphil perfect	Strong's #3254 BDB #414

³¹³ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 16, 2018.

³¹⁴ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:9.

Ecclesiastes 2:9b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
The NET Bible: <i>Heb "I became great and I surpassed" (יִתְלַדְגּוּ יְתַפְסֹחֶהָ, vkgadalti vkhosafti). This is a verbal hendiadys in which the second verb functions adverbially, modifying the first: "I became far greater." Most translations miss the hendiadys and render the line in a woodenly literal sense (KJV, ASV, RSV, NEB, NRSV, NAB, NASB, MLB, Moffatt), while only a few recognize the presence of hendiadys here: "I became greater by far" (NIV) and "I gained more" (NJPS).³¹⁵</i>			
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>mihn</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]; also kol (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kol</i>]	<i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>	masculine singular noun without the definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
Literally, min kôl (כֹּל מִן) [pronounced <i>mihn-kohl</i>] means, <i>from all, from every</i> . However, together, various literal translations give the following renderings: <i>about all, of all</i> (1Sam. 23:23); <i>over all, more than all, above all</i> (Gen. 3:14).			
she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced <i>sheh</i>]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
Literally, this means <i>from all who</i> . It can mean <i>more than all who, greater than all who</i> .			
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i>]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l</i> ʰ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
pânîym (פְּנֵי) [pronounced <i>paw-NEEM</i>]	<i>face, faces countenance; presence</i>	masculine plural noun (plural acts like English singular); with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
Literally, this would be translated <i>to faces of me, to my faces</i> . Together, these words mean <i>before me, before my face, in my presence, in my sight, in front of me; before me</i> (in the sense of, <i>before my time</i>), <i>prior to my being here</i> .			
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
Y ^e rûwshâlayim (יְרוּשָׁלַיִם) [pronounced <i>y'roo-shaw-LAH-yim</i>]	possibly means <i>founded upon peace</i> or <i>city of the Jebusites</i> (or both); it is transliterated <i>Jerusalem</i>	proper singular noun, location	Strong's #3389 BDB #436

This exact phrase is found in v. 7.

³¹⁵ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 16, 2018.

Translation: ...and I increased more than all who were in Jerusalem before me. Solomon increased in wealth more than anyone who had come before him, in all the history of Jerusalem. Obviously, his wealth was greater than David's, and that may be all that Solomon is saying here (David was a very wealthy king).

Now, we may want to add in any sovereigns in Jerusalem prior to David, as this was a well-fortified position and stronghold which David took. It is also possible that many wealthy Jebusites chose to live in that region, given that it was so difficult to penetrate.

Ecclesiastes 2:9 I became great and I increased more than all who were in Jerusalem before me. And yet, still my wisdom remained with me.

Solomon's increase being greater than all others (Ecclesiastes 2:9b) (comments)

Matthew Poole: *[Solomon] was great, in riches, and power, and glory.*³¹⁶

The Cambridge Bible: *The king had surpassed all others in wisdom (Eccles. 1:16), he was now surpassing all others in magnificence.*³¹⁷

Dr. John Gill: *[Solomon's increase] may include his increase of wealth, power, and honour, and everything that contributed to his external happiness.*³¹⁸

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown indicates that this greatness is a reference to *opulence.*³¹⁹

Whedon: *The result of all these efforts, his wisdom standing by to guide him, was the unrivalled greatness of the "Grand Monarch." He developed every resource of his kingdom, and by alliances and commerce enhanced his wealth.*³²⁰

1Kings 10:21–23 All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold. None were of silver; silver was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon. For the king had a fleet of ships of Tarshish at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the fleet of ships of Tarshish used to come bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks. Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. See also Eccles. 1:16 1Chron. 29:25 2Chron. 2:19:22–23. Solomon's greatness was in both his wealth and his wisdom.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Chuck Smith: *Now notice that. Who could say this? "And whatsoever my eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy." Very few people can make that kind of a statement. You have to have really the wealth of Solomon and all to be able to say that. It seems to us there's always that, you know, "If I only, if I only, if I only," and we aren't able to fulfill all of the desires of our eyes. We go down and we see a beautiful yacht, we think, "Oh, my, if I only had that yacht." With Solomon, "Buy it." You know, I mean, he didn't withhold anything. Whatever he desired, whatever he wanted, he had. Very few men can say that. "Oh, I would be so happy. Oh man, I'd be so satisfied." Was he?*³²¹

³¹⁶ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:9.

³¹⁷ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:9.

³¹⁸ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:9.

³¹⁹ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:9.

³²⁰ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 2:9.

³²¹ Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1–26.

Solomon was able to satisfy his every desire and purchase anything that he saw or heard about. Yet he never had that complete contentment. Throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, it will be obvious that Solomon is a very unhappy man.

Ecclesiastes 2:9c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
'aph (אף) [pronounced ahf]	<i>in fact, furthermore, also, yea, even, indeed; even though</i>	a conjunction which signifies <i>addition</i> or <i>emphasis</i>	Strong's #637 BDB #64
châk ^e mâh (חָכְמָה) [pronounced khawk ^e -MAW]	<i>wisdom [in all realms of life], doctrine in the soul; skill [in war]</i>	feminine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #2451 BDB #315
'âmad (עָמַד) [pronounced gaw-MAHD]	<i>to take a stand, to stand, to remain, to endure, to withstand; to stop, to cease</i>	3 rd person feminine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5975 BDB #763
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 1 st person singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

Translation: *Furthermore, my wisdom remained with me.* This is an interesting thing to say; and Solomon actually says that his wisdom remained *to me, for me, regarding me*. He does not use the bêyth preposition, which would mean *in me, with me* (other prepositions could be used for *with me* as well). I am certain that I do not fully appreciate what he means here.

If I were to make a guess here, Solomon continues having common sense, he understands divine establishment issues, and he has both scientific and philosophical knowledge. At some point in the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon will recognize where he has gone wrong.

Solomon has no doubt seen men who have given themselves over to alcohol or to other excesses. By retaining his wisdom, Solomon is being careful not to over-indulge to the point of addiction. Whatever he indulges in, it is with a clear head and a careful appraisal of any potential dangers.

Ecclesiastes 2:9 *I became great and I increased more than all who were in Jerusalem before me. And yet, still my wisdom remained with me.*

Ecclesiastes 2:9c: Solomon retains his wisdom (various commentators)

Notice that the wording here does not indicate a continued accumulation of wisdom; just that Solomon continued to retain his wisdom.

Matthew Poole: *[Solomon's thinking:] Also my wisdom remained with me; as yet I was not wholly besotted and seduced from God by these things, as I was afterwards; I still had the use of my reason, whereby I was capable of searching after and finding satisfaction, if it was to be had in those things.*³²²

The problem with Poole's approach is, he is not distinguishing between natural, human wisdom and divine wisdom, increased by the intake of Bible doctrine.

³²² Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:9.

Ecclesiastes 2:9c: Solomon retains his wisdom (various commentators)

Dunagan, as he so often does, gives this a more up-to-date approach: *"My wisdom also stood by me"-that earthly common sense, self-restraint and prudence. The best human wisdom that man can have. Kidner notes, "He has had the sense, for all this, to avoid the rich man's boredom by strenuous activity, enjoyed and valued for its own sake...and he has kept an appraising eye on his projects, even while in full pursuit of them...He has not lost sight of the quest, the search for meaning" (p. 32). This is why I call Solomon a James Bond type of character. He did everything perfectly (from a human standpoint). He was Mr. Cool. From a human standpoint he appeared to be completely together, always one step ahead of everyone else, on the cutting edge, always leading the trend and never following.*³²³

Dr. Peter Pett: *Whatever he wanted he obtained, and to excess. And yet in it all he was not foolishly indulgent, he was sensible in his indulgence. He did not let himself go or become a wastrel or a drunkard.*³²⁴

David Guzik: *In all of this Solomon did not lose his wisdom or ability to genuinely assess meaning and fulfillment — at least in an "under the sun" sense.*³²⁵

The Cambridge Bible: *also my wisdom remained with me] The thought expressed seems to be, as in Eccles. 2:3, that the seeker, though he plunged into the pleasures of a sensual life, was never altogether their slave. They were for him experiments which he watched as with an intellectual impartiality. Like Goethe, he analysed his voluptuousness, and studied his own faculties of enjoyment.*³²⁶

Benson: *My wisdom remained* — *As yet I was not wholly seduced from God.*³²⁷

Dr. John Gill: *[Solomon continued to maintain wisdom], which he exercised and showed in the government of his kingdom, in the conduct of his family, in his personal deportment and behaviour; amidst all his pleasures, he did not neglect the study of natural knowledge, nor give himself up to sordid and sinful lusts; and so was a better judge of pleasure, whether true happiness consisted in it or not.*³²⁸

The Geneva Bible: *For all this God did not take his gift of wisdom from me.*³²⁹

The Pulpit Commentary: *[Solomon] retained command of himself, studying philosophically the effects and nature of the pleasures of which he partook, and keeping ever in view the object of his pursuit. Voluptuousness was not the end which he sought, but one of the means to obtain the end; and what he calls his wisdom is not pure Divine wisdom that comes from above, but an earthly prudence and self-restraint.*³³⁰

James Burton Coffman offers this caveat: *Certainly it [Solomon's retained wisdom] had no element of the true wisdom, the beginning of which is "the fear of the Lord." But is not this book inspired by the Holy Spirit? Oh yes. The Holy Spirit here tells us exactly what Solomon said (and did), in the same manner that the Holy Spirit also tells us exactly what Satan said and did in Eden. The Divine endorsement of Solomon's shameless behavior here is certainly not to be found.*³³¹

Pastor John Griffith says that Solomon retained his sanity.³³²

³²³ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:9.

³²⁴ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:9.

³²⁵ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

³²⁶ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:9.

³²⁷ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:9–10 (slightly edited).

³²⁸ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:9.

³²⁹ Geneva Bible Translation Notes; courtesy of e-sword; 1599; Eccles. 2:9.

³³⁰ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:9.

³³¹ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 2, 2018.

³³² From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_06.html accessed September 1, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:9c: Solomon retains his wisdom (various commentators)

Dr. Dan Hill: *Solomon had the wealth to get anything he wanted, and he did. Also notice that his wisdom when it came to making right decisions for others and for the nation was still there.*³³³

Hill makes an interesting observation here: *God was protecting Israel through out all of Solomon's frantic search for happiness.*³³⁴

Let me give you a modern example of where wisdom is completely and totally lost. Recently (I write this in the summer of 2018), President Trump went to Russia and did not speak disparagingly enough about President Putin (the president of Russia). The media melted down for a full week, [comparing Trump's remarks to 9/11 and the Pearl Harbor](#). This would be the very definition of speaking without wisdom.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

College Press Bible Study: *In this verse he sets forth two ideas which qualify his experiment. The first suggests the extensive nature of his experience. He said that he excelled all who preceded him in Jerusalem. This would include David and Saul and very likely implies any of the Jebusite kings of various chieftains who ruled prior to that time. The second suggests that he was always mentally in control of his activities as elaborate as they may have been. He states, "My wisdom also stood by me." He never lost sight of his objective that he stated in verse three. The type of wisdom that remained with him is not to be confused with the "heavenly" wisdom from above. It is the exercising of common sense and earthly propriety . . . it is the wisdom known to those who live "under the sun." The words "stood by me" carry the idea of "served me" and bring into sharper focus the purpose and value of this kind of wisdom. Solomon was committed to every pleasure conceivable to the mind of man. The only criterion was that his pleasurable experience would not violate his "under the sun" wisdom. As we have noted, this opened the door to endless opportunities for one who had at his command the wealth and resources as the world's richest king.*³³⁵

Ecclesiastes 2:9 I became great and I increased more than all who were in Jerusalem before me. And yet, still my wisdom remained with me.

Some translations treat Eccles. 2:10–11 as poetry.

And all that desired my [two] eyes I did not withhold from them; I did not keep back my heart from all joy; for my heart is glad from all my labor. And this was my reward from all my labor.

Ecclesiastes
2:10

Whatever my eyes desired, [that] I did not withhold from them; I did not keep my heart back from any joy, in fact, my heart [also] found pleasure from all my labor. Therefore, this was my reward for all my labor.

I did not keep my heart from anything I desired or from any joy or happiness which caught my eye. Despite this hedonism, my heart still found great pleasure from all my labor. In fact, I viewed all of this as my appropriate reward based upon all the work that I did.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

³³³ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> accessed September 1, 2018.

³³⁴ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> accessed September 1, 2018.

³³⁵ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:1–11 (comments).

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	And all that desired my [two] eyes I did not withhold from them; I did not keep back my heart from all joy; for my heart is glad from all my labor. And this was my reward from all my labor.
Revised Douay-Rheims	And whatsoever my eyes desired, I refused them not: and I withheld not my heart from enjoying every pleasure, and delighting itself in the things which I had prepared: and esteemed this my portion, to make use of my own labour.
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	...and whatsoever <u>the Rabbis of the Sanhedrin asked of me respecting pure and impure, innocent and guilty</u> , I did not withhold from them <u>any explanation of these things</u> ; and I did not keep my heart from the joy <u>of the law</u> , because I had the inclination of heart to enjoy <u>the wisdom given me by God more than any man</u> , and <u>rejoiced in it more than</u> in all my labour; and this was my good portion <u>which was assigned to me, so</u> that I might receive for it a <u>good reward in the world to come, more than</u> for all my labour.
Peshitta (Syriac)	And whatsoever my eyes desired I did not keep from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labor; and this was my portion of all my labor.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	And whatever mine eyes desired, I withheld not from them, I withheld not my heart from all my mirth: for my heart rejoiced in all my labour; and this was my portion of all my labour.
Significant differences:	The targum inserts additional words and leaves out others to dramatically change the meaning of the first two phrases. There are additional words added to the targum in the third and fourth thoughts to continue to confuse the meaning of the passage.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Easy English	If I wanted to have something, I took it. If I wanted to do something, I did it. And I enjoyed my work. I liked what I got from it.
Easy-to-Read Version—2006	Anything my eyes saw and wanted, I got for myself. My mind was pleased with everything I did. And this happiness was the reward for all my hard work.
<i>God's Word</i> ™	If something appealed to me, I did it. I allowed myself to have any pleasure I wanted, since I found pleasure in my work. This was my reward for all my hard work.
Good News Bible (TEV)	Anything I wanted, I got. I did not deny myself any pleasure. I was proud of everything I had worked for, and all this was my reward.
<i>The Message</i>	Everything I wanted I took—I never said no to myself. I gave in to every impulse, held back nothing. I sucked the marrow of pleasure out of every task—my reward to myself for a hard day's work!
NIRV	I gave myself everything my eyes wanted. There wasn't any pleasure that I refused to give myself. I took delight in everything I did. And that was what I got for all my work.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	I did not deny my eyes anything they wished to see. If my thoughts ran to embrace any pleasure, and I desired it, I provided it for myself. Did I receive a reward from all that I had done? Yes. My heart was delighted that I had accomplished for myself everything that I proposed—this was my reward.
Contemporary English V.	I got whatever I wanted and did whatever made me happy. But most of all, I enjoyed my work.

The Living Bible	Anything I wanted I took and did not restrain myself from any joy. I even found great pleasure in hard work. This pleasure was, indeed, my only reward for all my labors.
New Berkeley Version	Whatever my eyes desired I did not deny them; I did not keep my heart back from any pleasure, for my heart rejoiced in all my toil and that much I got for all my toil.
New Century Version	Anything I saw and wanted, I got for myself; I did not miss any pleasure I desired. I was pleased with everything I did, and this pleasure was the reward for all my hard work.
New Life Version	Whatever my eyes wanted I did not keep away from them. I did not keep my heart from anything that was pleasing, for my heart was pleased with all my work.
New Living Translation	Anything I wanted, I would take. I denied myself no pleasure. I even found great pleasure in hard work, a reward for all my labors.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	I got everything that I saw and wanted. I did everything that I thought would enable me to be happy. All the things that I enjoyed were like a reward for all my hard work.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	Everything that I could ask for Was there in front of my eyes, And no joy was withheld from my heart. But, though these efforts of my heart brought me joy; This was the sum of all I'd achieved.
Beck's American Translation	I didn't keep from my eyes anything they wanted or refused to let my heart have any pleasure since my heart found pleasure in my work. That was what I got for all my work.
Common English Bible	I refrained from nothing that my eyes desired. I refused my heart no pleasure. Indeed, my heart found pleasure from the results of my hard work; that was the reward from all my hard work.
International Standard V	Whenever I wanted something I had seen, I never refused that desire. Instead, I enjoyed everything I did, and this became the reward in what I had undertaken.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	Eyes denied nothing that eyes could covet, a heart stinted of no enjoyment, free of all the pleasures I had devised for myself, this was to be my reward, this the fruit of all my labours.
Translation for Translators	I got everything [LIT] that I [SYN] saw and wanted. I did everything [LIT] that I thought would enable me to be happy. All those things that I [SYN] enjoyed were <i>like</i> a reward for all my hard work.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible	That my eyes are to have asked for - have I withheld them? - am I to keep <i>the sensibility of</i> my heart back from joyfulness? - For <i>the sensibility of</i> my heart is to be joyous in my labor, even the portion of my labor.
Conservapedia Translation	Whatever I desired I acquired, I did not deny my heart any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all that I did: and this was what I achieved in my life at that point. I don't know how to do the last part of this verse [note from Conservapedia translator].
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	—But anything that my eyes demanded I withheld not from them; nor did I restrain my heart from any pleasure; for my heart rejoiced in all my endeavours;—and that was my reward for all my efforts.
God's Truth (Tyndale)	And look whatsoever mine eyes desired, I let them have it: and wherein so ever my heart delighted, or had any pleasure, I withheld it not from it. Thus my heart rejoiced in all that I did, and this I took of all my travail.
HCSB	All that my eyes desired, I did not deny them. I did not refuse myself any pleasure, for I took pleasure in all my struggles. This was my reward for all my struggles.

Unlocked Literal Bible	Whatever my eyes desired, I did not withhold from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, because my heart rejoiced in all my labor and pleasure was my reward for all my work.
Wikipedia Bible Project	And all that my eyes asked to see, I did not lazily avoid: I did not prevent my heart from any happiness, because my heart was happy in all my labors, and this was my portion, from all my labors.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)	I refused myself nothing that my eyes desired nor did I deprive my heart of any pleasure. I enjoyed all I undertook and that was my reward for my work.
The Heritage Bible	And all whatever my eyes demanded I did not refuse them; I did not withhold my heart from any joy, because my heart rejoiced in all my wearisome toil, and this was my allotment of all my wearisome toil.
New American Bible (2011)	Nothing that my eyes desired did I deny them, nor did I deprive myself of any joy; rather, my heart rejoiced in the fruit of all my toil. This was my share for all my toil.
New Jerusalem Bible	I denied my eyes nothing that they desired, refused my heart no pleasure, for I found all my hard work a pleasure, such was the return for all my efforts.
Revised English Bible—1989	I did not refuse my eyes anything they coveted; I did not deny myself any pleasure. Indeed I found pleasure in all my labour, and for all my labour this was my reward.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	I denied my eyes nothing they wanted. I withheld no pleasure from myself; for I took pleasure in all my work, and this was my reward for all my work.
The Complete Tanach	And [of] all that my eyes desired I did not deprive them; I did not deprive my heart of any joy, but my heart rejoiced with all my toil, and this was my portion from all my toil.

I did not deprive: I did not distance them to separate from them, and so (Num. 11: 25): “and He held back (וַיִּצְטַח) some of the spirit... and placed [it] on... the elders,” like a candelabrum from which many candles are kindled, and its light is not at all diminished.

and this was my portion: And after doing all these, I have nothing [left] of all of them but this. Rav and Shmuel [differ]: One says, his staff, and one says, his cup. וְיִדִּיק is an earthenware cup, from which [people] drink (Gittin 68b). Others in the Midrash Aggadah (Ecc. Zuta 2:8) interpret the entire section as referring to study halls, students, and synagogues [as follows]:

[6] a forest sprouting with trees: the ignorant people, for the work of fields and vineyards.

exeGesés companion Bible	...and whatever my eyes asked I set not aside from them, nor withheld my heart from any cheerfulness; for my heart cheered in all my toil: and this was my allotment of all my toil.
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	I withheld from my eyes nothing they asked for, and denied myself no enjoyment; rather, I got enjoyment out of all my wealth. And that was all I got out of my wealth.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my lev from any simchah; for my lev rejoiced in all my amal (labor); and this was my chelek (portion) for all my amal.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible	Anything I saw and wanted [I my eyes requested], I got for [I did not refuse] myself; I did not miss [I deny my heart] any pleasure I desired. I [My heart] was pleased with everything I did, and this pleasure was the reward for all my hard work [toil].
Kretzmann's Commentary	And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy, he tried them all out to see whether he could obtain true profit from any of them; for my heart rejoiced in all my labor, it was an agreeable pursuit, he felt that he would surely find what he was seeking; and this was my portion of all my labor, he found this a recompense for all his troubles and sorrows.
NET Bible®	I did not restrain myself from getting whatever I wanted; ⁴¹ I did not deny myself anything that would bring me pleasure. So all my accomplishments gave me joy; ⁴³ this was my reward for all my effort. ⁴⁴ ^{41tn} Heb “all which my eyes asked for, I did not withhold from them.” ^{43tn} Heb “So my heart was joyful from all my toil.” ^{44tn} Heb “and this was my portion from all my toil.”
Syndein/Thieme	I denied myself nothing that my eyes desired! I refused my heart/'right lobe' no pleasure! My heart/'right lobe' did take delight in my work. And, this was the reward for all my labor {he was stimulated by all the pleasure and his workaholic behavior}.
The Voice	<i>Throughout this experiment</i> , I let myself have anything my eyes desired, and I did not withhold from my mind any pleasure. <i>What was the conclusion?</i> My mind found joy in all the work I did—my work was its own reward!

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Charles Thompson OT	And whatever mine eyes desired I withheld not from them, nor did I restrain my heart from all my pleasure. Because my heart had been gladdened with all my labour, (now this was my portion from all my labour).
Concordant Literal Version	All that my eyes asked for I did not deny to them; I did not withhold my heart from any rejoicing, For my heart had rejoicing from all my toil, And this itself was my portion from all my toil."
<i>Emphasized Bible</i>	...and, nothing that mine eyes asked, withheld I from them,—I did not keep back my heart from any gladness, for, my heart, obtained gladness out of all my toil, and so, this, was my portion, out of all my toil.
English Standard Version	And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil.
Green's Literal Translation	And all that my eyes desired, I did not set aside from them. I withheld not my heart from all joy; for my heart rejoiced from all my labor; and this was my part from all my labor.
Modern English Version	And everything that my eyes wanted I did not refuse them. And I did not withhold my heart from any selfish pleasure, for my heart was glad from all my efforts; and this was my reward for all my efforts.
World English Bible	Whatever my eyes desired, I didn't keep from them. I didn't withhold my heart from any joy, for my heart rejoiced because of all my labor, and this was my portion from all my labor.
Young's Updated LT	And all that mine eyes asked I kept not back from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy, for my heart rejoiced because of all my labour, and this has been my portion, from all my labour, and I have looked on all my works that my hands have done, and on the labour that I have laboured to do, and lo, the whole is vanity and vexation of spirit, and there is no advantage under the sun! V. 11 is included for context.

The gist of this passage: If Solomon wanted something, he got it. He exercised no restraint when it came to collecting things. He saw this as being his portion from all his labor.

Ecclesiastes 2:10a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	<i>the whole, all, the entirety, every</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i>]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
Together, kôl ʾăsher mean <i>all which, all whom, all that [which]; whomever, whatever, whatever else, all whose, all where, wherever.</i>			
shâ'al (שָׁאַל) [pronounced <i>shaw-AHL</i>]	<i>to ask [petition, request, inquire]; to demand [require]; to question, to interrogate; to ask [for a loan]; to consult; to salute</i>	3 rd person plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7592 BDB #981
ʿēynayim (עֵינַיִם) [pronounced <i>ġay-nah-YIM</i>]	<i>eyes, two eyes, literal eye(s), spiritual eyes; face, appearance, form; surface</i>	feminine dual noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #5869 (and #5871) BDB #744
lô' (לֹא or לוֹא) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
ʾătsal (אַצַּל) [pronounced <i>aw-TSAHL</i>]	<i>to set aside, to reserve; to lay aside, to reserve, to withdraw, to withhold</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's 680 BDB #69
This verb + the negative means <i>kept not, did not keep from.</i>			
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>mihn</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation with the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #4480 BDB #577

Translation: *Whatever my eyes desired, [that] I did not withhold from them;...* Solomon, as the great king that he was, saw a great many things in his life; and he desired many things that he saw. At no time did Solomon say, "Yeah, no; I just can't afford this;" or "Yeah, no, do I really need another one of these?" When in doubt, Solomon purchased it.

Quite obviously, considering that he had 700 wives and 300 mistresses, Solomon held back nothing when it came to his personal desires. It is clear in the Song of Songs that Solomon was learned in the realm of flattery and seduction.

As an aside, you may ask, *how can a woman marry Solomon, knowing about all those other women?* These women received stability and a lifelong stipend to keep them going. A wife of Solomon's was not going to starve; she would not go without food, clothing or shelter. Worst case scenario is, they will have to have sex with Solomon, who was the royal Casanova of his day. So, it was not a bad deal, in the mind of many women (an

exception to this is the woman of the Song of Songs, who did not allow herself to be seduced³³⁶). For more information, see the **Song of Solomon** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)).

There are literally millions of women in the United States who are similarly married to Uncle Sam and to their state government. As long as they do not remarry, they will be given a small budget by which to live. If they are smart, they can figure out ways to supplement this income. But, for all intents and purposes, these are kept women, kept by the federal, state and local governments, free to do anything but marry or get a regular job. In this way, they are deftly kept from the 2nd, 3rd and 4th divine institutions (work, marriage, and a proper family).

I mention them because the wives and mistresses of David and the wives and mistresses of Solomon were very much like the welfare mothers of today. They were married, for all intents and purposes, to the state of Israel. They were supported with tax money. No matter how many children they produced, the state paid for them.

One of the things we have studied has been the sons of David, most of whom were worthless sons. They felt entitled, they saw no reason to work, and they would do all manner of wrongdoing to become the next king. Even though David was not gone, he was rarely with his wives or children. There was not enough time. Not until David seduced Bathsheba did he remain with his wife and faithful to her. At that point, the children which they had were raised properly (Solomon is one of those children).

Ecclesiastes 2:10 I did not keep my heart from anything I desired or from any joy or happiness which caught my eye. Despite this hedonism, my heart still found great pleasure from all my labor. In fact, I viewed all of this as my appropriate reward based upon all the work that I did.

Ecclesiastes 2:10a Solomon did not deny himself what his eyes desire (comments)

Dr. Dan Hill: *As he begins to list what he had by way of possessions he knows that could take up many chapters, so in verse 10 he summarizes.*³³⁷ That is, whatever I wanted, I got.

Dr. John Gill: *[Solomon] denied himself of nothing that was agreeable to him, that was pleasing to the eye, to the ear, to the taste, or any other sense; he indulged himself in everything, observing a proper decorum, and keeping himself within the due bounds of sobriety and good sense.*³³⁸

Pastor John Griffith: *[A]ny impulse he had he pursued it - had no limitations, no restraints.*³³⁹

The Pulpit Commentary: *Whatever my eyes desired. The lust of the eyes (1Jn. 2:16), all that he saw and desired, he took measures to obtain. He denied himself no gratification, however foolish.*³⁴⁰

Dunagan: *"all that my eyes desired"-lest anyone try to argue that his search wasn't thorough or extensive. His search was only limited by what he couldn't see and being the king of a nation-he saw plenty!*³⁴¹

Whedon: *This experiment, so broad and full, was not the reckless conduct of a debauchee, but there was method and discretion in it.*³⁴²

J. Vernon McGee on Solomon and sex: *Solomon probably tried everything known in the way of pleasure. We are a sex-mad people. And what do we have to show for it? Well, we certainly have low morals, and we have venereal disease in epidemic proportions. Today the church has entered the field also. I suppose most pastors have a sermon on sex; some of them have a whole series.*

³³⁶ The shepherd-lover, to whom she gave her love, was not Solomon.

³³⁷ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> accessed September 1, 2018.

³³⁸ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:20.

³³⁹ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_06.html accessed September 1, 2018.

³⁴⁰ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:9.

³⁴¹ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:10.

³⁴² *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles 2:10.

Ecclesiastes 2:10a Solomon did not deny himself what his eyes desire (comments)

J. Vernon McGee continues, speaking to Solomon and sex: *There are many who feel that the church should have a course to teach our young people about sex. I think that is a tragic mistake. This generation is getting sex right up to their ears — all they need and more. Now Solomon was an expert in the area of sex. He had one thousand wives and concubines, and they were all available to him. A man who had a thousand women around him is some sort of an expert. Solomon tried that way to seek satisfaction.*³⁴³

Later, McGee writes: *Mrs. McGee and I are out in conferences a great deal of the time. In the evenings after a service we need to get away from everyone for a while, and one of the things we like to do is just go walking through a shopping area. I have said to her, "Would you like sometime to be able to buy everything that you see and want?" She answered that she wondered how it would feel to be able to do that. Well, Solomon did just that. Anything his little heart desired, he bought. As he looked out upon this world, there was nothing that it withheld from him.*³⁴⁴

Matthew Poole: *[Solomon] ascribes desire to the eyes, because the sight of the eyes is the usual and powerful incentive of desires.*³⁴⁵

One could make a doctrine from the passages about the desire of the eyes: Eccles. 3:22, Eccles. 6:9, Eccles. 11:9 Gen. 3:6, Gen. 6:2 Judges 14:2 Job. 31:1 Psalm 119:37 Prov. 23:5 1John 2:16.³⁴⁶

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Despite all the entertainment, Solomon was not happy (a graphic); from [Dwelling in the Word](#); accessed September 7, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:10a [Anything I wanted, I would take. I denied myself no pleasure.](#) (NLT)

We do not know the extent of what Solomon gathered to himself and his palace in order to enjoy life, but whatever interested or amused him, he got; and it never made him happy. He may have enjoyed moments of pleasure and stimulation; but nothing was long-lasting or ultimately satisfying to his soul. Just like the picture, life seem to him empty and as if he is chasing after wind.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)



³⁴³ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt (chapter 2) accessed September 3, 2018.

³⁴⁴ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt (chapter 2) accessed September 3, 2018.

³⁴⁵ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:10.

³⁴⁶ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Eccles. 2:10.

Ecclesiastes 2:10b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lô' (לֹא or לוֹא) [pronounced low]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
<p>There are several ways this negation is used. (1) It is an absolute <i>no</i> given to a question. (2) It can be used as an interrogative when an affirmative answer is expected. 2Kings 5:26 Job 2:10 Jer. 49:9. (3) It can be used to mean <i>without</i>. 1Chron. 2:30 Psalm 59:4 Job 12:24 34:24. (4) It can be translated <i>not yet</i>. 2Kings 20:4 Psalm 139:16. (5) The negative is prefixed to adjective to negate them; to substantives to indicate that they are not that thing. Although some claim that this negation can stand on its own to mean <i>nothing</i>; there is no clear proof of that.³⁴⁷</p>			
mānā' (מָנַע) [pronounced maw-NAHḤ]	<i>to keep back, to restrain, to withhold, to hold back</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #4513 BDB #586
'êth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
lêb (לֵב) [pronounced lay ^b v]	<i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking; midst</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #3820 BDB #524
<p>The NET Bible: <i>Heb</i> "I did not refuse my heart any pleasure." The term לֵבִי (libbi, "my heart") is a synecdoche of part (i.e., heart) for the whole (i.e., whole person); see E. W. Bullinger, <i>Figures of Speech</i>, 648. The term is repeated twice in 2:10 for emphasis.³⁴⁸</p>			
min (מִן) [pronounced mihn]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]	<i>every, each, all of, all; any of, any</i>	masculine singular construct not followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
<p>Literally, min kôl (כֹּל מִן) [pronounced mihn-kohl] means, <i>from all, from every</i>. However, together, various literal translations give the following renderings: <i>about all, of all</i> (1Sam. 23:23); <i>over all, more than all, above all</i> (Gen. 3:14).</p>			
sim ^e châh (שִׂמְחָה) [pronounced sim ^e -KHAH]	<i>joy, gladness, mirth, great joy, rejoicing, enjoyment, pleasure</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #8057 BDB #970

Translation: ...I did not keep my heart back from any joy,... If Solomon believed that there was something that he wanted, something that might bring him joy and happiness, he was able to get it. There was nothing that he saw that he ever thought, "Now, can I afford that?"

³⁴⁷ Taken from H. W. F. Gesenius, *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*; ©1979 by Baker Books; p. 425 (abbreviated).

³⁴⁸ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 16, 2018.

Now, it appears, from time to time, Solomon may have asked himself, “Now, is this really a good idea?” What I mean is, he retain his wisdom, so that, if this or that desire was seen as counterproductive or self-destructive, then he might pull back for that reason (you see, he retain his wisdom). My point here is, he approached this differently than the *if-it-feels-good-then-do-it* movement. He was not just going to do something for stimulation, if he could see with his wisdom that it may lead him in the opposite direction. To try to bring this up to date, Solomon was not going to shoot heroin or crack. He was not going to spend a lot of time getting sloppy drunk.

The “I” Factor

I explored with my mind *how* to stimulate my body with wine.
I enlarged my works: **I** built houses for myself, **I** planted vineyards for myself; **I** made gardens and parks for myself
I collected for myself silver and gold
I provided for myself male and female singers and the pleasures of men
 And all that my eyes desired **I** did not refuse them. **I** did not withhold my heart from any pleasure

The “I” Factor (a graphic); from **Daily Quotes 99**; accessed September 7, 2018.

In case you read through Ecclesiastes and you don’t get it at first, note the quotations from portions of this chapter to your left. Do you see what Solomon’s experiments were all about?

Dr. Bob Utley: *“all that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure”* These are balanced lines. It is hard to know when Qoheleth moves from prose to poetry. Notice the VERBS:

1. “refuse” - BDB 69, KB 82, Qal PERFECT, meaning “withhold”
2. “withhold” - BDB 586, KB 602, Qal PERFECT. NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 991, says this implies that “the searcher for meaning has abandoned all restraint in search of pleasure.”³⁴⁹

Perhaps the two phrases together provide us with an even stronger statement.

Ecclesiastes 2:10 I did not keep my heart from anything I desired or from any joy or happiness which caught my eye. Despite this hedonism, my heart still found great pleasure from all my labor. In fact, I viewed all of this as my appropriate reward based upon all the work that I did.

Ecclesiastes 2:10b: Solomon takes anything that he wants (various commentators)

Keil and Delitzsch: *[Solomon] was not only in a condition to procure for himself every enjoyment, but he also indulged himself in everything; all that his eyes desired, i.e., all that they saw, and after which they made him lust (Deut. 14:26) (cf. 1John 2:16), that he did not refuse to them (αὐτῶν, subtrahere), and he kept not back his heart from any kind of joy.*³⁵⁰

Benson: *Whatever was grateful to my senses, or my heart desired; I kept not from them — I denied myself nothing, at least, of lawful delights, but went to the very bounds of them; which was the occasion of his falling afterward into sinful pleasures. I withheld not my heart, &c. — As my heart was vehemently set upon pleasure, so I did not resist, or curb it therein, but made all possible provision to gratify it.*³⁵¹

³⁴⁹ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:10.

³⁵⁰ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 2:10.

³⁵¹ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:9–10 (slightly edited).

Ecclesiastes 2:10b: Solomon takes anything that he wants (various commentators)

Dr. John Gill: *[This phrase] is to be understood of natural pleasure, and of the gratifications of the senses in a wise and moderate manner.*³⁵²

Matthew Poole: *I kept not from them; I denied myself nothing, at least of lawful delights, but went to the very utmost bounds of them; which was the occasion of his falling afterward into sinful pleasures. I withheld not my heart from any joy; as my heart was vehemently set upon pleasure, so I did not resist or curb it therein, but made all possible provisions to gratify it.*³⁵³

Just as Solomon's wisdom was known all over, so would his lasciviousness become known as well. James Burton Coffman: *All the world knew that Solomon's lustful, extravagant, selfish and inhuman reign was a total disaster, taking Solomon himself to the grave at an early age. His policies wrecked and eventually destroyed Israel; and it was his son's foolish efforts to continue those policies that terminated the united Israel almost before Solomon's body got cold in the grave.*³⁵⁴

As an aside, for those of you who desire fame. You may first become known for this or that thing which you have said or done; but with the right amount of fame, all the rest of the things that you have said and done will become known as well.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 2:10c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
lêb (לֵב) [pronounced lay ^b v]	<i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking; midst</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #3820 BDB #524
sâmêach (שָׂמֵחַ) [pronounced saw-MAY-ahkh]	<i>to be glad, to be joyful, to be merry; to find pleasure</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #8056 BDB #970

Owen has that this is a verb, and that appears to be what is called for by the sentence structure. The BHSE — Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (Enhanced) — lists this as a masculine singular adjective. BDB lists this only as a verbal adjective.

This is a cognate of the feminine singular noun above in v. 10b.

min (מִן) [pronounced mihn]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]	<i>every, each, all of, all; any of, any</i>	masculine singular construct not followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481

³⁵² Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:10.

³⁵³ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:10.

³⁵⁴ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 2, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:10c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Literally, <i>min kôl</i> (מִן כּוֹל) [pronounced <i>mihn-kohl</i>] means, <i>from all, from every</i> . However, together, various literal translations give the following renderings: <i>about all, of all</i> (1Sam. 23:23); <i>over all, more than all, above all</i> (Gen. 3:14).			
‘āmâl (אָמַל) [pronounced <i>gaw-MAWL</i>]	<i>intense labor, exhausting toil, exhaustion, miserable work, work and toil so tiring, you just want to cry; misery, travail; production from labor</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5999 BDB #765

Translation: ...in fact, my heart [also] found pleasure from all my labor. Here is where interpretation becomes a little tricky. In the right balance, there is great pleasure in our labor—the doing of the labor and the results or payoff for the labor. Even the unbeliever who functions within the divine institutions, he receives some enjoyment from his work, his wife and his family. When he is able to provide for them, that is additional happiness.

Solomon, to some degree, has this.

One also has to bear in mind, at the same time, whereas Solomon is actually working, he has millions of slaves doing so much of this work; and he is taxing his people a great deal in order to complete these projects. So, in Ecclesiastes, it sounds as if this is his labor, but that is not the complete story.

Ecclesiastes 2:10 I did not keep my heart from anything I desired or from any joy or happiness which caught my eye. Despite this hedonism, my heart still found great pleasure from all my labor. In fact, I viewed all of this as my appropriate reward based upon all the work that I did.

Ecclesiastes 2:10c: Finding satisfaction in a job well done (various commentators)

Pastor John Griffith: *[Solomon] acknowledges here that there was and is good feeling from these pursuits. There was a reward a joy in his accomplishments.*³⁵⁵

The Pulpit Commentary: *For my heart rejoiced in all my labor; i.e. [I] found joy in what my labor procured for it (comp. Prov. 5:18). This was the reason why he withheld not his heart from any joy; kept it, as it were, ready to taste any pleasure which his exertions might obtain.*³⁵⁶

Benson: *For my heart rejoiced — I had the comfort of all my labours, and was not hindered from the full enjoyment of them by sickness or war, or any other calamity. This was my portion — This present enjoyment of them was all the benefit which I could expect from all my labours. So that I made the best of them.*³⁵⁷

Matthew Poole: *Solomon had the comfort of all his labours, and was not hindered from the free and full enjoyment of them by sickness or war, or any other calamities occurrent.*³⁵⁸

One has to be careful not to say, *nothing in this life gives any lasting pleasure.*

³⁵⁵ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_06.html accessed September 1, 2018.

³⁵⁶ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:10.

³⁵⁷ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:9–10.

³⁵⁸ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:10 (slightly edited).

It ought to be clear to anyone who works or produces anything, that there are times when you are going to have a good day producing things, and that will make you feel good. This tends to have a longer shelf life than many satisfactions that one can have in life. As I have mentioned, I often take shacks or demolished homes and I rebuild them (or oversee their rebuilding), and I feel good viewing the before and after pictures.

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Ecclesiastes 2:10d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced <i>zeh</i>]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	masculine singular demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i>]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
chêleq (חֵלֶק) [pronounced <i>KHAY-lek</i>]	<i>portion, tract, territory, share, allotment; smoothness</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #2506 (and #2511) BDB #324
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>mihn</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	<i>every, each, all of, all; any of, any</i>	masculine singular construct not followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
Literally, min kôl (כֹּל מִן) [pronounced <i>mihn-kohl</i>] means, <i>from all, from every</i> . However, together, various literal translations give the following renderings: <i>about all, of all</i> (1Sam. 23:23); <i>over all, more than all, above all</i> (Gen. 3:14).			
‘âmâl (עָמַל) [pronounced <i>gaw-MAWL</i>]	<i>intense labor, exhausting toil, exhaustion, miserable work, work and toil so tiring, you just want to cry; misery, travail; production from labor</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5999 BDB #765

Translation: [Therefore, this was my reward for all my labor](#). Solomon did work hard; there is no denying that. But, he also had slaves who worked even harder. Their reward was certainly a lot less in terms of material things.

Solomon here is claiming that his reward is whatever he sees he gets. *Of course, he thinks, this ought to be mine; it is my reward for working so hard!*

This particular word for *work, labor* occurs 22 times in this book. This is a real book with the real thoughts of a man under the sun. What could be more universal to mankind than food, drink and work? No man can live without food and drink; the work is the 2nd divine institution. Man worked in the garden; and man worked much harder in the fallen world. It is fundamental to the life of man. Obviously, there are people in this life who do not

work; but that is the exception to the rule. It has been my experience that people who do not work lack structure, definition and direction in their lives. But, quite obviously, when a person works, they expect something as payment. Life seems bereft of meaning if, after working so long and hard every day that there is nothing there to recompense you.

Solomon was not a lazy man. He did not just lay around his palace eating bon bons and watching the soaps. He was out working every day—mostly engaged in building projects (although he certainly did his kingly duties). Here he is, writing and thinking these things at the end of his life, and despite his lavish lifestyle, he is not very happy with his life or the conclusions that he has come to (which will be more thoroughly discussed as we move further along in this chapter).

Ecclesiastes 2:10 I did not keep my heart from anything I desired or from any joy or happiness which caught my eye. Despite this hedonism, my heart still found great pleasure from all my labor. In fact, I viewed all of this as my appropriate reward based upon all the work that I did.

Ecclesiastes 2:10d: Solomon's portion in life (various commentators)

Barnes: *[By is portion in life,] Solomon describes the pleasure found in the act of working and also perhaps the pleasure felt in the process of acquiring wisdom; this pleasure is admitted to be good, if received from God (Eccles. 2:26; Eccles. 5:18; compare 1Tim. 4:4); but being transitory it is subject to vanity, and therefore does not afford a sufficient answer to the repeated question, "What profit etc.?" Eccles. 1:3.*³⁵⁹

The Pulpit Commentary: *This was my portion of all my labor. Such joy was that which he won from his labor, he had his reward, such as it was (Matt. 6:2; Luke 16:25). This term "portion" (cheleq) recurs often (e.g. Eccles. 2:21; Eccles. 3:22; Eccles. 5:18, etc.; so Wis. 2:9) in the sense of the result obtained by labor...And what a meagre and unsatisfying result it was which he gained!*

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *Contrast the apostle's teaching, For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it: but he that does the will of God abides forever. (1Jn. 2:16–17; Webster's updated).*³⁶⁰

Dr. John Gill: *[P]leasure was what he aimed at, and that he enjoyed; this was the fruit and issue of all his laborious works; the part allotted him, the inheritance he possessed, and the thing he sought after.*³⁶¹

Matthew Poole: *[Solomon thought:] This was my portion of all my labour; this present and temporary enjoyment of them was all the benefit which I could expect or receive from all my labours, so that I made the best of them. I had a heart to use them, which many men through covetousness have not; and I tasted the sweetness of them, which many others cannot do; and therefore if any man could arrive at happiness by this means, I had done it.*

Kidner: *[Solomon] creates a little world within a world: multiform, harmonious, exquisite: a secular Garden of Eden, full of civilized and agreeably uncivilized delights, with no forbidden fruits---or none that he regards as such.*³⁶²

Solomon seems to have the opinion that, he should be able to take whatever it is that he wants, as that is his portion in life. Scripture appears to support this: Eccles. 2:22, Eccles. 5:18, Eccles. 9:9 Psalm 128:2.³⁶³

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

³⁵⁹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:10.

³⁶⁰ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:10 (with an updated translation).

³⁶¹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:10.

³⁶² Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:10.

³⁶³ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Eccles. 2:10.

What we have seen so far in Eccles. 2 is three experiments that Solomon has tried. He tried to find satisfaction in life through fun and through pleasure (vv. 1–3). He also tried personal achievement, engaging in massive building projects (vv. 4–6). Then he tried buying things and collecting things, and lots of them. He bought the newest, the best, and the most. He owned things perhaps that no other person owned at that time (vv. 7–10). And yet, he was unsatisfied; he was unfulfilled (v. 11). His life was nothing more than breath chasing after wind.

Ecclesiastes 2:10 I did not keep my heart from anything I desired or from any joy or happiness which caught my eye. Despite this hedonism, my heart still found great pleasure from all my labor. In fact, I viewed all of this as my appropriate reward based upon all the work that I did.

Solomon's search for the good (Ecclesiastes 2:10) (various commentators)

Dr. Peter Pett: *Nothing that he desired was not tried out by him. He indulged in everything that was available. And he enjoyed participating in them and doing them. He was not a killjoy. And he found great delight in them. But that was all he found. It was transient. It was not lasting.*³⁶⁴

Arno Gaebelein on the conclusion to which Solomon was forced: *But to make sure, he did not leave a single desire unsatisfied, for "whatever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy." Well, he had tried everything, every pleasure, everything that is beautiful to the eye; he was surrounded with every comfort, had all honor and glory, was wealthy and esteemed. Does he then sing and in a blessed peace of mind is he content and satisfied? Far from it. "Then—then"—when he had done all these things and had every desire fulfilled—"then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do; and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit; and there was no profit under the sun." It is a groan instead of a song.*

Then Gaebelein concludes: *Whatever man does and seeks in satisfying that old nature, whatever his pursuits, his labors and his achievements in life, if it is that and nothing else, in the end it is nothing but vanity and a chasing of the wind.*³⁶⁵

Elsewhere, Gaebelein writes: *[Solomon] tried everything, every pleasure, everything that is beautiful to the eye; he was surrounded with every comfort, had all honor and glory, was wealthy and esteemed. Does he then sing and in a blessed peace of mind is he content and satisfied? Far from it.*³⁶⁶

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

The College Press Bible Study: *In this verse he speaks of his reward. One would expect glowing and colorful descriptions of an exuberant heart declaring, "I have found it!" A lifetime of searching and millions of dollars expended would surely bring one to the end of the rainbow where the treasure would be discovered and the fortunate man who pursued it could, with the deepest satisfaction, share such fulfillment with his friends. However, no such manifestation of joy is forthcoming. There is a deficiency that manifests itself in his answer. There is a positive note, but it is the rather subdued admission that his reward was simply the fact that he did everything his heart desired. This, however, isn't what he was searching to discover. He wanted to do everything in order to find out what profit there is for the sons of men in all the activities of their days upon the earth. His heart was pleased. In other words, the earthly desires were fulfilled and thus the earthly needs were met. He had at least accomplished this.*³⁶⁷

³⁶⁴ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:10.

³⁶⁵ Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1–26 (slightly edited).

³⁶⁶ Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1–26 (slightly edited).

³⁶⁷ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:1–11 (comments).

The Cambridge Bible: [Solomon] was tasting of the “tree of knowledge of good and evil,” and found that it was “good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise”³⁶⁸

This is an interesting comment; not sure what to take from it or if I agree to it.

Ecclesiastes 2:10 I did not keep my heart from anything I desired or from any joy or happiness which caught my eye. Despite this hedonism, my heart still found great pleasure from all my labor. In fact, I viewed all of this as my appropriate reward based upon all the work that I did.

Whatever Solomon desired, he purchased. There was nothing that he saw or heard of that he denied himself. If it seemed like a cool idea, then he would go for it.

Ron Snider’s translation of Ecclesiastes 2:9–10 Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me. And all that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor.

Ecclesiastes 2:9–10: Fame, wisdom, and self-gratification yield only temporary satisfaction (Ron Snider)

1. Verses 9-11 provide a brief summary statement to this section in which Qoheleth has detailed his attempts to find lasting satisfaction through the pursuit of various types of pleasure.
2. Verse 9 echoes the sentiments that Qoheleth has already expressed previously with respect to his relative place in the history of Jerusalem. Eccles. 1:16, 2:7
3. There can be no doubt that anyone in Israel ever surpassed the splendor of Solomon's kingdom at its zenith.
4. The greatness to which he alludes in verse 9 should be understood as the magnitude of wealth that Solomon enjoyed during his reign.
5. This is his way of saying that money was no object; this fact allowed Solomon to experiment with any and every pleasure, since he could readily afford them all.
6. It should be understood that with all the wealth he possessed, Solomon would have also attained a great measure of fame and celebrity among those inside and outside of Israel.
7. This is confirmed by the historical account, which indicates that Solomon's wisdom and prosperity were apparently a topic of discussion among the royal courts of other nations. 1Kings 10:6-7
8. The second portion of verse 9 once again returns to the matter of how Qoheleth went about this experiment, which he mentioned briefly in verse 3.
9. He apparently wants the readers to understand that he did not lose his objectivity during the course of his experiment with himself.
10. This is not to say that Solomon never sinned, got drunk, gave himself to excess in food, or engaged in illicit sex during this time; it is to say that his rational capacity remained intact.
11. Even when he was in the midst of various pleasures, he remained somewhat detached and sought to evaluate each experience and the results it brought him.
12. He continued to assess things rationally, and did not lose himself in this wild search for pleasure.
13. In order to fully confirm to the reader that he did not deny himself anything, Solomon relates his pursuits to the desires of his eyes and those things that brought pleasure to his heart.
14. He completely surrendered himself to self-gratification; anything his eyes desired (Heb. la;v' sha'al -to ask, request) was procured immediately.
15. His external lusts (the lust of the eyes) and his internal desires (pleasures of his heart) were not restrained in any way; they were instantly gratified.
16. One must not think that Qoheleth only pursued the more noble or higher pleasures in life; in light of what he has said in preceding verses it is clear that he fully explored the delights of wine, food, women, and song.
17. Some of his external pursuits may have been of higher quality (architecture and landscaping), but they

³⁶⁸ The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:10.

Ecclesiastes 2:9–10: Fame, wisdom, and self-gratification yield only temporary satisfaction (Ron Snider)

- were still indulged only for his own personal gratification.
18. These facts (while not particularly edifying) are recorded so that no one could later say that his experiment overlooked or omitted certain human endeavors.
 19. Qoheleth did not overlook any avenue that might bring pleasure or satisfaction to a person; whatever desire presented itself to him at any time was indulged.
 20. He was the wealthiest man alive, had plenty of time to consider his desires, and lived the life of hedonism to the fullest extent that anyone could.
 21. In the last part of the verse, Solomon uses one of his favorite terms עֲמָל ('amal-labor, toil), which denotes the burdensome and unfulfilling aspect of work.
 22. However, Qoheleth surprisingly acknowledges that there was some actual pleasure that he derived when he was engaging in his various pursuits.
 23. This is the first time in the book that we observe a positive note in the proceedings, which have all been described to this point as vanity, fatiguing or wearisome, and striving after wind.
 24. When one is indulging the lust grid and getting what one wants, there is certainly a moment of satisfaction and contentment that comes when desires are fulfilled. Prov. 13:12,19
 - 1) Most people are aware of the pleasurable effects of alcohol, which certainly intensify as one consumes more.
 - 2) The same is true of fine dining; people derive great enjoyment from a quality meal.
 - 3) The accumulation of wealth and the details of life provides momentary stimulation and satisfaction.
 - 4) Sex provides great satisfaction for the human race.
 - 5) When one is planning and executing a project, there is a certain satisfaction that comes from the work involved in bringing the project to fruition.
 25. Qoheleth concludes verse 10 with the statement that the pleasure that came to him as he pursued his various desires was all that he actually derived from them.
 26. The Hebrew literally reads, "this became my allotment, portion, or share", indicating that the momentary and temporary pleasure that Qoheleth got was all he got.
 27. The point is that even the momentary and evanescent (disappearing, dissipating quickly) satisfaction and joy one derives from getting what one wants does not ultimately satisfy or last; this is the very next point Solomon will make in verse 11.
 28. Qoheleth recognized that all his laborious exertion had made him happy, so he felt justified in rewarding himself with everything he wanted.
 29. This is a relatively common theme in today's world, often used in advertising, "You have worked hard, you deserve to reward yourself."

From [Makarios Bible Church](#); accessed September 2, 2018 (will open as a Word Document on your computer).

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It is all empty and meaningless

And I turned myself in all my works which had done my hands and in the toil I had toiled to do [it]—and behold, the all [is] a breath and a grasping of wind; and [there is] no advantage under the sun!

Ecclesiastes
2:11

And I, even I, looked back on all of my works which my hands had done and at the toil I had toiled [lit., *toiled to do*]—and behold, [it is] all breath and chasing after wind; [there is] no gain [to be found] under the sun!

Then I critically looked back on all of the works which my hands had done, and upon all of the great toil which I did—and, quite frankly, it is all just breath and chasing after the wind. In fact, there is no gain or profit to be found in anything I tried to enjoy under the sun.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	And I turned myself in all my works which had done my hands and in the toil I had toiled to do [it]—and behold, the all [is] a breath and a grasping of wind; and [there is] no advantage under the sun!
Revised Douay-Rheims	And when I turned myself to all the works which my hands had wrought, and to the labours wherein I had laboured <u>in vain</u> , I saw in all things vanity, and vexation of mind, and that nothing was lasting under the sun.
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	And I <u>considered</u> all my works which my hands had worked, and my labours which I had laboured to do, and behold! it was all vanity and breaking of spirit; and there is no profit in them under the sun in this world; <u>but I shall have full reward for good work in the world to come.</u>
Peshitta (Syriac)	Then I <u>looked on</u> all the works that my hands had wrought and on the labor that I had labored to do; and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	And I <u>looked on</u> all my works which my hands had wrought, and on my labour which I laboured to perform: and behold, all was vanity and waywardness of spirit, and there is no advantage under the sun.
Significant differences:	The first verb in the Hebrew— <i>turned myself</i> —is somewhat confusing. The targum has <i>considered</i> , the Syriac and Geek both have <i>looked on</i> .

The Latin adds the words *in vain*. The targum adds an additional sentence.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	Then I saw all the works which my hands had made, and everything I had been working to do; and I saw that all was to no purpose and desire for wind, and there was no profit under the sun.
Easy English	Then I thought about the things that I had done. I thought about all my difficult work. But, in the end, I still saw that nothing had a purpose. It was like somebody who tries to catch the wind. None of the things that I had done had any value.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	But then I looked at everything I had done and the wealth I had gained. I decided it was all a waste of time! It was like trying to catch the wind [Or “It is very troubling to the spirit.” The word for “troubling” can also mean “craving,” and the word for “spirit” can also mean “wind.” Also in verses 17, 26]. There is nothing to gain from anything we do in this life [Literally, “under the sun.” Also in verses 17, 22.].
God's Word™	But when I turned to look at all that I had accomplished and all the hard work I had put into it, I saw that it was all pointless. It was like trying to catch the wind. I gained nothing from any of my accomplishments under the sun.
Good News Bible (TEV)	Then I thought about all that I had done and how hard I had worked doing it, and I realized that it didn't mean a thing. It was like chasing the wind—of no use at all. After all, a king can only do what previous kings have done.
The Message	I Hate Life

Then I took a good look at everything I'd done, looked at all the sweat and hard work. But when I looked, I saw nothing but smoke. Smoke and spitting into the wind. There was nothing to any of it. Nothing.

NIRV But then I looked over everything my hands had done.
I saw what I had worked so hard to get.
And nothing had any meaning.
It was like chasing the wind.
Nothing was gained on this earth.

New Simplified Bible I looked at all the works my hands accomplished. I saw everything I had worked to do. I saw that all was vanity and grasping for the wind. It was to no purpose for there was no profit under the sun.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study Now I must return to my original question: What good is there for the sons of men to do the few days of their short lives that they live under heaven? I kept that question in mind and considered all the things that I had done and the energy I expended, and my conclusion is that all of it is unfulfilling, futile, and striving for the wind. None of it is profitable for the man who lives under the sun.

Contemporary English V. Then I thought about everything I had done, including the hard work, and it was simply chasing the wind. Nothing on earth is worth the trouble.

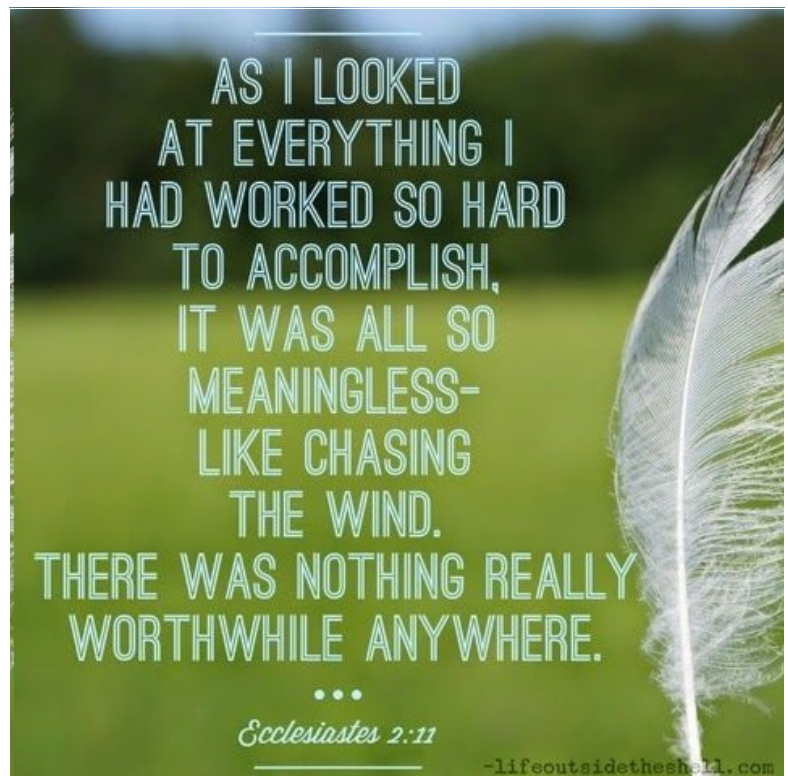
The Living Bible But as I looked at everything I had tried, it was all so useless, a chasing of the wind, and there was nothing really worthwhile anywhere.

New Berkeley Version I then turned to observe^f all the work which my hands had done, and all was worthless, chasing after wind, and there was no gain under the sun.
^f Considered.

Ecclesiastes 2:11 (NLT) (a graphic); from [Pinimg](#); accessed September 7, 2018.

New Century Version But then I looked at what I had done, and I thought about all the hard work. Suddenly I realized it was useless, like chasing the wind. There is nothing to gain from anything we do here on earth.

New Life Version Then I thought about all that my hands had done, and the work I had done. I saw that it was all for nothing. It was like trying to catch the wind, and there was nothing to get for it under the sun.



New Living Translation But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless—like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere.

Unlocked Dynamic Bible But then I thought about all the hard work that I had done to obtain all those things. I saw that none of my work brought me any lasting benefit. It was all like trying to control the wind.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible For, when I looked at the things I had done,
And the things that I'd made with my hands...
When I considered the effort it took,
I saw that it all was just folly.
Since, no matter what our spirits may choose to do;
It brings no advantage under the sun.

Beck's American Translation But when I turned to look at everything I made and all the work I did, it was all a vapor, like trying to catch the wind, with nothing gained under the sun.

Common English Bible But when I surveyed all that my hands had done, and what I had worked so hard to achieve, I realized that it was pointless—a chasing after wind. Nothing is to be gained under the sun.

International Standard V Then I examined all of my accomplishments that I had brought about by my own efforts, including the work that I had labored so hard to complete—and it was all pointless, like chasing after the wind, and there was nothing to be gained on earth.

New Advent (Knox) Bible And now, when I looked round at all I had done, all that ungrateful drudgery, nothing I found there but frustration and labour lost, so fugitive is all we cherish, here under the sun.

Translation for Translators *But* then I thought about all the hard work that I [SYN] had done *to get all those things*,
and none of it seems to bring any lasting benefit [DOU].
It was all *like* chasing the wind.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Alpha & Omega Bible AND I LOOKED ON ALL MY WORKS WHICH MY HANDS HAD WROUGHT, AND ON MY LABOR WHICH I LABORED TO PERFORM: AND BEHOLD, ALL WAS VANITY AND WAYWARDNESS OF SPIRIT, AND THERE IS NO ADVANTAGE UNDER THE SUN.

Awful Scroll Bible I am to have turned toward my works that my hand is to have made, even the labor I am to have labored to prepare them. It is to be vapor and longing after the wind! - is there to be an excelling from them under the sun?

Christian Standard Bible When I considered all that I had accomplished [Lit *all my works that my hands had done*] and what I had labored to achieve, I found everything to be futile and a pursuit of the wind. [Or *a feeding on wind, or an affliction of spirit*; also in vv. 17,26]
There was nothing to be gained under the sun.

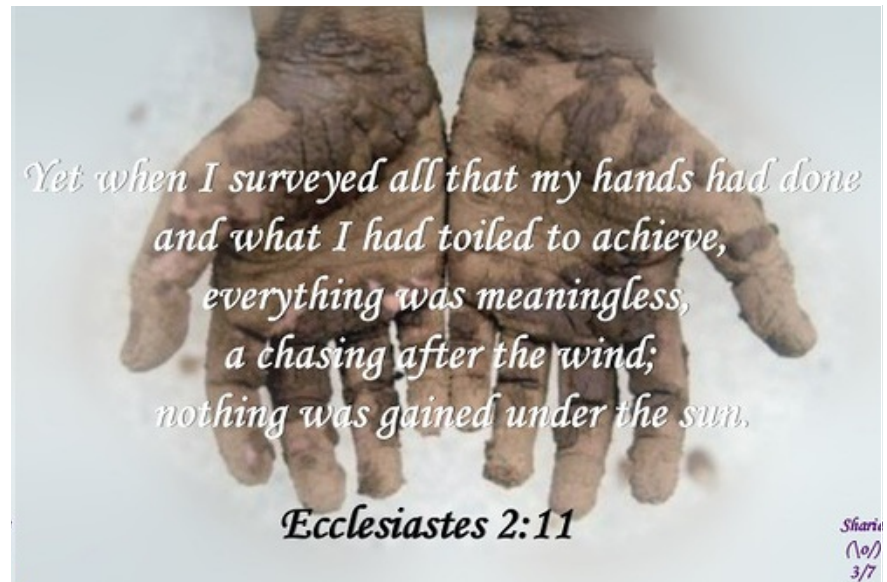
Conservapedia Then I looked upon the accomplishments of my life, and on the efforts I applied to bring them about: and see, all of it was selfishness troubling to my soul, and there was no true worth to it at all.

Ferrar-Fenton Bible But when I reflected on all the work that my hands had done, and all the things I had striven to accomplish, —then I saw they were vanity of vanity, and vexation of spirit! and they had no result under the sun!

God's Truth (Tyndale)

But when I considered all the works that my hands had wrought, and all the labors that I had taken therein: Lo, all was vanity and vexation of mind, and nothing of any value under the Sun.

Ecclesiastes 2:11 (NIV) (a graphic); from [Flickr](#); accessed September 7, 2018.



Lexham English Bible

Yet when I considered all the effort which I expended and the toil with which I toiled to do, then behold, "Everything [is] vanity and chasing wind! There is nothing profitable under the sun!"

Peter Pett's translation

Then I looked on all the activities that my hand had wrought, and on the efforts that I had exerted myself to accomplish. All was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was no profit under the sun.

Tree of Life Version

Yet when I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended to accomplish it, behold, it all was futile and chasing after the wind. There was nothing to be gained under the sun.

Unlocked Literal Bible

Then I looked on all the deeds that my hands had accomplished, and on the work that I had done, but again, everything was vapor and an attempt to shepherd the wind. There was no profit under the sun in it.

Urim-Thummim Version

Then I looked on all the works that my hands had accomplished and on the labor that I had labored to do: and behold, all was vanity and a striving of mind, and there was no profit under the sun.

Wikipedia Bible Project

And I faced all the things that my hands have done, and the labor that I labored to do, and everything is mirage and herding the wind, and there is no benefit under the sun.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

The Heritage Bible

And I faced about to look on all the works that my hands had done, and on the wearisome toil that I had wearily toiled to do, and behold, all was vanity and a grasping of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

New American Bible (2011)

But when I turned to all the works that my hands had wrought, and to the fruit of the toil for which I had toiled so much, see! all was vanity and a chase after wind. There is no profit under the sun. Eccl 1:3, 17; Sir 44:9.

New English Bible—1970

Then I turned and reviewed all my handiwork, all my labour and toil, and I saw that everything was emptiness and chasing the wind, of no profit under the sun.

New Jerusalem Bible

I then reflected on all that my hands had achieved and all the effort I had put into its achieving. What futility it all was, what chasing after the wind! There is nothing to be gained under the sun.

Revised English Bible—1989 I considered my handiwork, all my labour and toil: it was futility, all of it, and a chasing of the wind, of no profit under the sun.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible Then I looked at all that my hands had accomplished and at the work I had toiled at; and I saw that it was all meaningless and feeding on wind, and that there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

The Complete Tanach Then I turned [to look] at all my deeds that my hands had wrought and upon the toil that I had toiled to do, and behold everything is vanity and frustration, and there is no profit under the sun.

Then I turned: now in all my deeds, and I see that there is no profit in them, for from all of them I am lacking.

exeGesés companion Bible Then I faced all the works my hands worked and on the toil I toiled to work; and behold, all is vanity and gnawing of spirit and there is no advantage under the sun.

JPS (Tanakh—1985) Then my thoughts turned to all the fortune my hands had built up, to the wealth I had acquired and won—and oh, it was all futile and pursuit of wind; there was no real value under the sun!

Orthodox Jewish Bible Then I looked on kol ma'asim that my hands had wrought, and on the amal that I had labored to do; and, hinei, all was hevel and chasing after ruach, and there was no profit under the shemesh.

The Scriptures 1998 But when I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labour in which I had toiled, see, all was futile and feeding on wind, and there was no gain under the sun.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Amplified Bible Then I considered all which my hands had done and labored to do, and behold, all was vanity and chasing after the wind and there was no profit (nothing of lasting value) under the sun.

The Expanded Bible But then I looked at [turned my attention to] what I had done, and I thought about all the hard work [toil]. Suddenly I realized it was useless [1:2], like chasing the wind. There is nothing to gain [no profit/advantage] from anything we do here on earth [under the sun; 1:3].

Pastor John Griffith Thus I considered all my activities He carefully weighed all the things he had accomplished - building projects - gardens all the entertainment pursuits - the pursuits of sensual pleasure with all his princesses - increasing of his wealth by collecting gold/silver in tribute paid to him. which my hands had done (only looking at himself no one else) and the labor which I had exerted, (toil, sweat, energy expended in the doing) and behold (hinneh – says pay attention) all was vanity (hebel) and striving after wind (1:14) and there was no profit under the sun. - no profit - no yitron (1:3) there is no advantage - nothing left after the transaction Many people appear to be stable, to have it all together and are successful but who are inside in turmoil, dreadfully frustrated!

Kretzmann's Commentary Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, he carefully surveyed the results of his experiment, and on the labor that I had labored to do, which he had planned and carried out with so much pains; and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, there was no lasting satisfaction in the possession and enjoyment of all earthly goods and pleasures, and there was no profit under the sun.

NET Bible® Yet when I reflected on everything I had accomplished⁴⁵

and on all the effort that I had expended to accomplish it,⁴⁶
I concluded.⁴⁷ “All these achievements and possessions⁴⁹ are ultimately⁵⁰ profitless—
like chasing the wind!

There is nothing gained from them⁵³ on earth.”⁵⁴

^{45tn} Heb “all my works that my hands had done.”

^{46tn} Heb “and all the toil with which I had toiled in doing it.” The term *אמל* (*‘amal*, “toil”) is repeated to emphasize the burden and weariness of the labor which Qoheleth exerted in his accomplishments.

^{47tn} Heb “Behold!”

^{49tn} The phrase “achievements and possessions” does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in translation for clarity.

^{50tn} The term “ultimately” does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

^{53tn} The phrase “from them” does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

^{54tn} Heb “under the sun.”

Syndein/Thieme

Yet, when I surveyed all the work my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve . . . everything was meaningless. It was like chasing the wind. Nothing was gained under the sun.

The Voice

As I continued musing over all I had accomplished and the hard work it took, I concluded that all this, too, was fleeting, like trying to embrace the wind. Is there any real gain by all our hard work under the sun?

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

C. Thompson (updated) OT

...therefore I looked back on all the works which my hands had done, and on the labour with which I had toiled to execute them; and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit and there is no lasting advantage under the sun.

Concordant Literal Version

Yet when I faced all my deeds that my hands had done, And the toil that I had toiled in doing them, Behold, the whole was vanity and a grazing on wind, And there was nothing of advantage under the sun."

Context Group Version

Then I looked on all the works that my hands had produced, and on the labor that I had labored to do; and, look, all was emptiness and a striving after wind, and there was no profit under the sun.

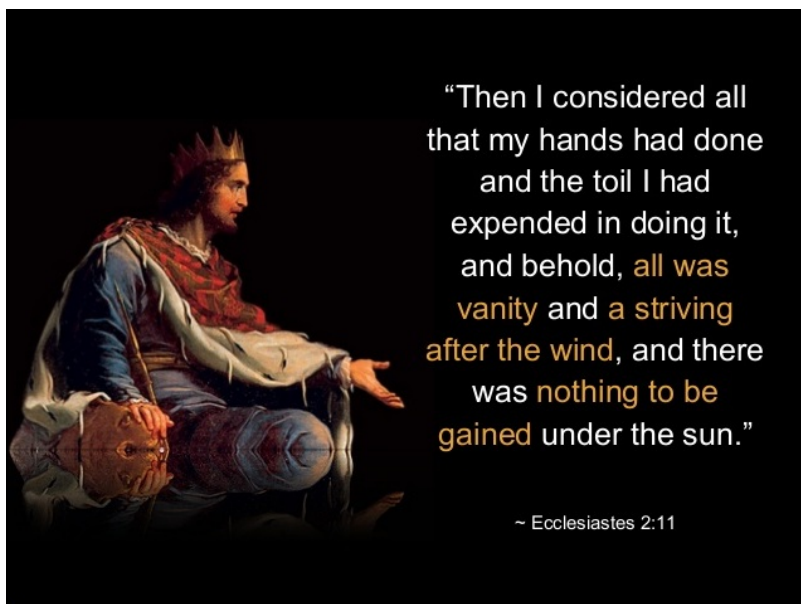
English Standard Version

Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 2:11 (ESV) (a graphic); from ; accessed September 7, 2018.

New King James Version

Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done
And on the labor in which I had toiled;
And indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind.



Webster's Bible Translation	<i>There was no profit under the sun.</i> Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do: and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and <i>there was no profit under the sun.</i>
World English Bible	Then I looked at all the works that my hands had worked, and at the labor that I had labored to do; and behold, all was vanity and a chasing after wind, and there was no profit under the sun.
Young's Updated LT	And I have looked on all my works that my hands have done, and on the labour that I have laboured to do, and lo, the whole is vanity and vexation of spirit, and there is no advantage under the sun!
The gist of this passage:	Solomon considers all of the works that he did, and it was all unsubstantial and chasing after the wind.

Ecclesiastes 2:11a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
pânâh (פָּנָה) [pronounced <i>paw-NAWH</i>]	<i>to turn, to turn away from, to turn toward, to turn one's face away from, to turn one's face to; to look back [at, after, for]</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #6437 BDB #815
'ânîy (אֲנִי) [pronounced <i>aw-NEE</i>]	<i>I, me; in answer to a question, it means I am, it is I</i>	1 st person singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #589 BDB #58
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's # none BDB #88
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	with a plural noun, it is rendered <i>all of, all; any of</i>	masculine singular construct with a masculine plural noun	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
Literally, <i>in all</i> . Although I don't have this in the lexicons, it is rendered by the most literal translations as <i>among all, through all, throughout all, with all</i> .			
ma'ăšîym (מַעֲשֵׂי) [pronounced <i>mah-ġuh-SEEM</i>]	<i>deeds, works, production, that which is produced or done [crops, property, goods]; profession, occupation</i>	masculine plural noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #4639 BDB #795
she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced <i>sheh</i>]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
'âsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>ġaw-SAWH</i>]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to produce, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish</i>	3 rd person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793

Ecclesiastes 2:11a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
yâdayim (יָדַיִם) [pronounced yaw-dah-YIHM]	[two] hands; both hands figuratively for strength, power, control of a particular person	feminine dual noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #3027 BDB #388

Translation: *And I, even I, looked back on all of my works which my hands had done...* The general feel of this passage is, Solomon takes a cold, hard honest look at all that he has accomplished. He makes an honest evaluation of his time, efforts and accomplishment based upon where he is at this time. However, bear in mind, that this assessment is made from the view of a man under the sun (human viewpoint).

The Pulpit Commentary: *Then I looked on—I turned to contemplate—all the works which my hands had wrought. He examined carefully the effects of the conduct and proceedings mentioned in Eccles. 2:1-10, and he now gives his matured judgment concerning them. They had contributed nothing to his anxious inquiry for man's real good. His sorrowful conclusion again is that all was vanity, a hunting of wind; in all the pursuits and labors that men undertake there is no real profit (Eccles. 1:3), no lasting happiness, nothing to satisfy the cravings of the spirit.*³⁶⁹

Ecclesiastes 2:11b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within	a preposition of proximity	Strong's# none BDB #88
'âmâl (עָמַל) [pronounced ġaw-MAWL]	intense labor, exhausting toil, exhaustion, miserable work, work and toil so tiring, you just want to cry; misery, travail; production from labor	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #5999 BDB #765
she- (-שׁ) [pronounced sheh] or shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced sheh/]	who, which, that	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
'âmal (עָמַל) [pronounced ġaw-MAHL]	to labor, to toil, to work [hard]	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5998 BDB #765
This verb is found primarily in the poetry of the Bible (Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes). It occurs one time in Jonah 4:1 (and just once in Psalm 127:1 and Prov. 16:26) but most of its occurrences are in Ecclesiastes.			
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	to, for, towards, in regards to	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510

³⁶⁹ The Pulpit Commentary; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:11.

Ecclesiastes 2:11b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿāsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i>]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to produce, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #6213 BDB #793

Translation: ...and at the toil I had toiled [lit., *toiled to do*]*—*... He has spent years toiling over a great number of projects. No doubt, this has taken up at least 20 years of his life, based upon the narrative in Kings. It is my opinion that Solomon likely built much more in subsequent years. 1Kings focused on the Temple and on the palace, but Solomon no doubt oversaw a great deal more building.

It is interesting how Solomon words this. He speaks of himself only as the one toiling and working; he is the only one he speaks of, as if he built all the marvelous buildings in and around Jerusalem by himself. None of this gets done without the labor of thousands of slaves and citizens.

You know that so much of our lives is spend moving this and that from point A to point B. I am about to move easily 20 boxes of stuff from my upstairs to my garage. I recognize that this may not mean very much; but it is of some importance to me. However, my satisfaction with this job will last for maybe a day or a week. But long term, looking back, I don't know that this will be that important.

Ecclesiastes 2:11c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
hinnêh (הִנֵּה) [pronounced <i>hin-NAY</i>]	<i>lo, behold, or more freely, observe, look here, look, listen, note, take note, duly note [that]; pay attention, get this, check this out</i>	interjection, exclamatory particle, demonstrative particle	Strong's #2009 (and #518, 2006) BDB #243
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]; also kol (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kol</i>]	<i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
The NET Bible: <i>The term לְכֹל (hakkol, "everything" or "all") must be qualified and limited in reference to the topic that is dealt with in 2:4-11. This is an example of synecdoche of general for the specific; the general term "all" is used only in reference to the topic at hand. This is clear from the repetition of כֹּל (kol, "everything") and ("all these things") in 2:11.</i> ³⁷⁰			
hebel (לְבָה) [pronounced <i>HEH^B-vef</i>]	<i>vapor, breath; mist, darkness; unsubstantial, emptiness, empty, vanity, meaningless, vacuous; vain, vainly; idol</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1892 BDB #210

³⁷⁰ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 16, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:11c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
The NET Bible: <i>The parallelism with יוֹרְתִי (yitron), "profit; advantage; gain" indicates that לְבָהּ (hevel) should be nuanced as "profitless, fruitless, futile" in this context. While labor offers some relative and temporal benefits, such as material acquisitions and the enjoyment of the work of one's hands, there is no ultimate benefit to be gained from secular human achievement.</i> ³⁷¹			
Used figuratively for something transitory and unsatisfactory. Often used of things which are transitory, evanescent or frail.			
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or וּ) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
r ^e טwth (תוּעַר) [pronounced reh- GŌOTH]	longing, striving; grasping after; chasing after; a vexation	feminine singular construct	Strong's #7469 BDB #946
rûwach (חֹר) [pronounced ROO-ahkh]	wind, breath, spirit, apparition	feminine singular noun	Strong's #7307 BDB #924

Translation: ...and behold, [it is] all breath and chasing after wind;... Solomon comes to the conclusion that it is all empty; what he has done is just breath; and it has been as if he has been chasing the wind.

This is another way of saying, *he is not accomplishing anything; he is working and putting forth a great effort, but with nothing substantial to show for it.* Solomon is looking past the buildings which he has designed and built and asking, *was all the work really worth it?* He is looking at his great accumulation of things, and, having no contentment and no true happiness, concluding, *this is so empty; this means nothing.*

Ecclesiastes 2:11 Then I critically looked back on all of the works which my hands had done, and upon all of the great toil which I did—and, quite frankly, it is all just breath and chasing after the wind. In fact, there is no gain or profit to be found in anything I tried to enjoy under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 2:11a-c: All Solomon's works are but a wind (various commentators)

Benson (speaking for Solomon): *I looked on all the works, &c. — I made a serious review of my former works and labours, and considered whether I had obtained that satisfaction in them which I had expected to find; and behold, all was vanity — I found myself disappointed, and wholly dissatisfied in this course.*³⁷²

Dr. John Gill: *Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do,.... He had looked at them, and on them, over and over again, and had taken pleasure therein; but now he sits down and enters into a serious consideration of them, what prodigious expenses he had been at; what care and thought, what toil and labour of mind, he had taken in contriving, designing, and bringing these works to perfection; what pleasure and delight he had found in them, and what happiness upon the whole arose from them: he now passes his judgment, and gives his sentiments concerning these things, having had it in his power to make himself master of everything delightful, which he did; was a competent judge, and thoroughly qualified to give a just estimate of matters; and it is as follows;...*

³⁷¹ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 16, 2018.

³⁷² Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:11.

Ecclesiastes 2:11a-c: All Solomon's works are but a wind (various commentators)

Gill continues: *and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit; nothing solid and substantial in the whole; no true pleasure and real joy, and no satisfaction or happiness in that pleasure; these pleasing things perished with the using, and the pleasure of them faded and died in the enjoyment of them; and instead of yielding solid delight, only proved vexations, because the pleasure was so soon over.*³⁷³

Kidner: *A less exacting mind than Qoheleth's would have found a great to report with satisfaction. The achievements had been brilliant. On the material level, the farmer's perennial ambition to make (in our phrase) 'two blades of grass grow where one had grown before' had been overwhelming fulfilled; while aesthetically he had produced a connoisseur's paradise. If 'a thing of beauty is a joy for ever', he had not searched in vain for what is timeless and absolute. So we tend to think. Qoheleth will have none of it. To call such things eternal is no more than rhetoric...In the brutal colloquial terms of Today's English Version, his report is, 'I realized that it didn't mean a thing'*³⁷⁴

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 2:11 Then I critically looked back on all of the works which my hands had done, and upon all of the great toil which I did—and, quite frankly, it is all just breath and chasing after the wind. In fact, there is no gain or profit to be found in anything I tried to enjoy under the sun.

Not only were Solomon's works empty and chasing after wind, but so his pleasures and satiated desires as well.

Ecclesiastes 2:11a-c: Solomon's delights are but a wind (various commentators)

James Waddey: *The modern playboy still dreams of finding the ultimate pleasure in 'recreational sex' and free love, only to find out that venereal disease and early old age and death turn his dream into a nightmare.*³⁷⁵

Dunagan: *Solomon was honest! Solomon is giving us insight into the world of the rich and famous. He is saying, "Those people may look happy, but many of them are empty, miserable and depressed. The person who lives in that mansion, or just passed you in that fancy car might be less fulfilled than you are!" "People put up a good front, but here is a picture of what is really going on inside!"*³⁷⁶

Whedon: *The result is, that not one or all of these gathered delights quieted the craving of the mind or gave lasting happiness. All was vanity and a grasping at wind, and there was no gain from them at all.*³⁷⁷

The Cambridge Bible: *Here also, however, the result was as before. There came the afterthought which scrutinised the enjoyments and found them wanting. The pursuit of pleasure was as unsatisfying as the pursuit of knowledge. Like others who have trodden the same path, he had to confess that... "from the centre of the fount of joys; There springs an element of bitterness."*³⁷⁸

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

³⁷³ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:11.

³⁷⁴ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:11.

³⁷⁵ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 2, 2018.

³⁷⁶ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:11.

³⁷⁷ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 2:11.

³⁷⁸ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:11.

Ecclesiastes 2:11d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wāw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
'ēyn (אין) [pronounced <i>ān</i>]	<i>nothing, not, [is] not; not present, not ready; expresses non-existence, absence or non-possession; [there is] no [none, not one, no one, not]</i>	particle of negation; substantive of negation	Strong's #369 BDB #34
yithrôn (יִתְרוֹן) [pronounced <i>yihth-ROWN</i>]	<i>advantage, profit; preeminence, gain</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3504 BDB #452

This word is found 10 times in the Bible; and only in the book of Ecclesiastes.

The NET Bible: *The noun יִתְרוֹן (yitron, "profit") has a two-fold range of meanings: (1) "what comes of [something]; result" (Eccl 1:3; 2:11; 3:9; 5:8, 15; 7:12; 10:10) and (2) "profit; advantage" (Eccl 2:13; 10:11); see HALOT 452–53 s.v. יִתְרוֹן. It is derived from the noun יֶתֶר (yeter, "what is left behind; remainder"; HALOT 452 s.v. יֶתֶר). The related verb יָתַר (yatar) denotes "to be left over; to survive" (Niphal) and "to have left over" (Hiphil); see HALOT 451–52 s.v. יָתַר. When used literally, יִתְרוֹן refers to what is left over after expenses (gain or profit); when used figuratively, it refers to what is advantageous or of benefit. Though some things have relative advantage over others (e.g., light over darkness, and wisdom over folly in 2:13), there is no ultimate profit in man's labor due to death.³⁷⁹*

tachath (תַּחַת) [pronounced <i>TAH-khahth</i>]	<i>underneath, below, under, beneath; instead of, in lieu of; in the place [in which one stands]; in exchange for; on the basis of</i>	preposition of location or foundation	Strong's #8478 BDB #1065
shemesh (שֶׁמֶשׁ) [pronounced <i>SHEH-mesh</i>]	<i>sun; sunrise, sun-rising, east, sun-setting, west (of direction); openly, publically</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article; pausal form	Strong's #8121 BDB #1039

Translation: ...[there is] no gain [to be found] under the sun! He concludes that there is no true gain or profit to be had as a result of all this work. Again, Solomon is viewing all of this as a man under the sun. He does not truly appreciate the eternal, at this point in his life.

Ecclesiastes 2:11 Then I critically looked back on all of the works which my hands had done, and upon all of the great toil which I did—and, quite frankly, it is all just breath and chasing after the wind. In fact, there is no gain or profit to be found in anything I tried to enjoy under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 2:11d: There is no profit under the sun (various commentators)

Benson (speaking for Solomon): *And there was no profit, &c. — The pleasure was past, and I was never the better for it, but as empty as before.*³⁸⁰

³⁷⁹ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 16, 2018.

³⁸⁰ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:11.

Ecclesiastes 2:11d: There is no profit under the sun (various commentators)

Dr. John Gill: *and there was no profit under the sun; by those things; to improve and satisfy the mind of man, to raise him to true happiness, to be of any service to him in the hour of death, or fit him for an eternal world.*³⁸¹

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown (speaking for Solomon): *But all these I felt were only "vanity," and of "no profit" as to the chief good. "Wisdom" (worldly common sense, sagacity), which still "remained with me" (Ecc_2:9), showed me that these could not give solid happiness.*³⁸²

Dunagan: *Solomon really looked at what he had accomplished and honestly realized that none of this had given him what he was really looking for---lasting happiness, real satisfaction, true meaning and purpose for his existence. The answer was clear, there is no real and enduring happiness to be found in things "under the sun". Nothing here, in this life can satisfy the needs of our soul, our true selves. But how many people ignore what Solomon said? Ignore the plain and clear sign which is positioned on the roads which Solomon traveled?*³⁸³

Matthew Poole: *There was no profit; the pleasure was past and gone, and I was never the better for it, but as empty as before, and had nothing left but sorrowful reflections upon it.*³⁸⁴

Keith Simons: *[I]n Ecclesiastes 2:11, he tells us what he discovered. He had discovered absolutely nothing and he had achieved absolutely nothing. It was a complete waste of time.*³⁸⁵

Ultimately, all that Solomon has done is not considered profit to him.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

David Guzik sees these 3 verses as Hebrew poetry:

So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me.

Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them.

I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure,

For my heart rejoiced in all my labor;

And this was my reward from all my labor.

Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done

And on the labor in which I had toiled;

And indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind.

*There was no profit under the sun.*³⁸⁶

There are some people—and you know them—and their life is but a frantic search for happiness. This does not mean that they are always after material things, but material things might be a part of what they try out. They may have a sin nature which tends towards lasciviousness, so they try sex, drugs, alcohol; they may be more disciplined and their sin nature has more of an ascetic trend, so they try hobbies, sports, intellectual pursuits, entertainment options. This is not to say that many of these pursuits are illegitimate—it is okay to have hobbies, to enjoy sports, reading; but when there is no spiritual dimension to your life (and I refer specifically to being saved and then pursuing Bible doctrine), these things eventually become meaningless or tedious.

³⁸¹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:11.

³⁸² Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:11.

³⁸³ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:11.

³⁸⁴ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:11.

³⁸⁵ From [Useful Bible.com](http://UsefulBible.com) accessed September 8, 2018.

³⁸⁶ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26. I don't know if Guzik did this translation, but he tends to be pretty careful about citing other people's work.

It is all about your primary focus in life and your priorities. There are legitimate things in this life which you may legitimately enjoy. But, your priority needs to be the Word of God.

Ecclesiastes 2:11 Then I critically looked back on all of the works which my hands had done, and upon all of the great toil which I did—and, quite frankly, it is all just breath and chasing after the wind. In fact, there is no gain or profit to be found in anything I tried to enjoy under the sun.

Solomon's Search and His Conclusions (various commentators)

Even though a person can enjoy a satisfaction in a job well-done, and a project well-executed, that does not mean that this is the answer to Solomon's search—*what is there in life to give me a contented and satisfied life?*

Pastor John Griffith: *3 Things mark his conclusions:*

#1 - they're all hebel - empty - worthless – futile

#2 - their chasing after the wind - you've as much prospect of attaining your objectives as catching the wind

#3 - There was no profit - no advantage under the sun.³⁸⁷

Gary Everett: *Throughout this passage the author searches for the true meaning of life. He asks the question in Eccles. 1:3, "What profit has a man of all his labor which he takes under the sun?" He experiences different interests throughout life for periods of time, just like people today have fads, or hobbies, which are always changing. Illustration: My father would go through phases in his life of being interested in playing the guitar, working on cars, hunting, and various projects. I watched as these interests changed during the course of his life.*

Everett continues: *The preacher will soon recognize the divine seasons that God orchestrates in the lives of those who obey His Word and keep His commandments (Eccles. 12:13). The king has seasons of pursuits in his life. Because he orchestrated them himself, he found no satisfaction in them. Although none of these pursuits are evil in themselves, they are vanity when a person does not follow God's plan for his life.*³⁸⁸

Dr. Bob Utley: *All of these "things" did provide a moment of joy and satisfaction, but it did not last! If the wisest, wealthiest, and most powerful person (i.e. Solomon) cannot find real lasting joy and satisfaction, how can anyone? This is the conclusion of Eccles. 2:11 (cf. Eccles. 1:14; Eccles. 2:17; Eccles. 2:22–23)! This is the question of how to find purpose in life without God; without God, life becomes just physical existence! Where is lasting value or gain found?*³⁸⁹

The Expositor's Bible Commentary speaks of Solomon's conclusions: *Even his choice delights soon palled upon his taste, and brought on conclusions of disgust. Even in his lordly pleasure house he was haunted by the grim, menacing spectres which troubled him before it was built. In the harem, in the paradise he had planted, under the groves, beside the fountains, at the sumptuous banquet, -a bursting bubble, a falling leaf, an empty wine cup, a passing blush, sufficed to bring back the thought of the brevity and the emptiness of life. When he had run the full career of pleasure, and turned to contemplate his delights and the labour they had cost him, he found that these also were vanity and vexation of spirit, that there was no "profit" in them, that they could not satisfy the deep, incessant craving of the soul for a true and lasting Good.*³⁹⁰

David Guzik: *Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done . . . indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind: Solomon examined his life lived for pleasure — even legitimate pleasures — and saw that it too was meaningless. All was vanity. There was no enduring, eternal sense of meaning to life lived for these earthly pleasures and accomplishments.*³⁹¹

³⁸⁷ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_06.html accessed September 1, 2018.

³⁸⁸ Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:11.

³⁸⁹ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:9–11.

³⁹⁰ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 2:1-11.

³⁹¹ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

Solomon's Search and His Conclusions (various commentators)

Morgan: *This is as modern as ennui [a feeling of dissatisfaction and uselessness] of every human soul which seeks knowledge, mirth, wealth, life — and forgets God.*³⁹²

Dr. Peter Pett: *But when he considered all that he had done and experienced and accomplished, he recognised within himself that it was all useless and empty, unsatisfying and meaningless. It was searching for the undiscoverable, and had no lasting value. It still left his heart empty and deeply dissatisfied.*

Pett continues: *Note the constantly repeated ideas, 'vanity (useless, transient, empty, without lasting significance)', 'striving after wind', (seeking what cannot be seen or grasped hold of), 'no profit under the sun' (of no lasting value). This summed up his experience of all his efforts. He had achieved nothing. He had gained nothing.*³⁹³

Dr. Bob Utley: *"What does the worker gain from his toil?" resounds! Earthly effort will fail, fade, and forever pass away!*³⁹⁴

Ray C. Stedman: *That is a very honest reporting. Solomon says there were some positive things, apparently. First, he gained a degree of notoriety, he says. He became great, surpassing all who went before him in Jerusalem. Many people think that fame will satisfy the emptiness of the heart. Solomon found fame. He adds that he kept his objectivity, though. "My wisdom remained with me," he says. In other words, "I was able to assess this as I went along. I did not lose myself in this wild search for pleasure. I was able to look at myself and evaluate it as I went along. But I tried everything. I did not miss or set aside anything." He belonged to the jet-set of that day. "I enjoyed it for a while," he says. "I found pleasure in all my toil, but that was all the reward I got for my labor -- momentary enjoyment. Each time I repeated it I got a little less enjoyment out of it." "My conclusion," Solomon says, "is that it was not worth it. Like a candle, it all burned away, leaving me jaded and surfeited. Nothing could excite me after that." He concludes that it was all emptiness, a striving after wind. He was burned out.*³⁹⁵

J. Vernon McGee: *What a statement from a man who had everything! A great many people will not take Solomon's word for it; they have to make the same experiments — although not to the extent that Solomon did. Eventually they arrive at the same conclusion. They say, "Life is empty." Solomon said, "All was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun."*³⁹⁶

John W. Ritenbaugh: *Solomon admits that his quest rewarded him with a certain amount of joy, but he still found it unsatisfactory. We might think that with all his wealth, good health, and a discerning mind, he would have had joy in abundance. What he accomplished, however, did not leave him with an enduring sense of well-being because his search continued after this experiment ended.*³⁹⁷

Elsewhere, John W. Ritenbaugh writes: *Solomon kept his wits about him through all of this, but verse 11 concedes that the morning after the night before finally arrived—the time he had to give sober thought to what he had accomplished in his life. "I looked on all the works that my hands had done" coincides with the English expression, "The time came to face the facts."*

Ritenbaugh: *He finds that, though there had been pleasure in accomplishing, he concludes there had been no real gain in terms of meaning of life. By calling his accomplishments "vanity," he does not mean that nothing was gained from them. Certainly a measure of good came from them, but they were disillusioning. They did not give him lasting satisfaction.*

³⁹² David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

³⁹³ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:11.

³⁹⁴ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:10.

³⁹⁵ From www.raystedman.org/ accessed July 27, 2018. Copyright © 2010 by Ray Stedman Ministries

³⁹⁶ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt (chapter 2) accessed September 3, 2018.

³⁹⁷ From [Bible Tools.org](http://BibleTools.org); accessed September 3, 2018.

Solomon's Search and His Conclusions (various commentators)

Ritenbaugh: *Money and the pleasures it can buy do not lift us out of our earthbound frustration. What is going on under the sun has to be connected to something that is happening somewhere else—in the purpose of God.*³⁹⁸

Keith Simons: *Only afterwards did Solomon realise that all this work had no useful purpose. That feeling of satisfaction was the only reward for all his hard work. And that feeling did not even last.*³⁹⁹

Keil and Delitzsch: *Of all this enjoyment, there remained nothing but the feeling of emptiness. What he strove after appeared to him as the wind; the satisfaction he sought to obtain at such an expense was nothing else than a momentary delusion. And since in this search after the true happiness of life he was in a position more favourable for such a purpose than almost any other man, he is constrained to draw the conclusion that there is no *וורתו*, i.e., no real enduring and true happiness, from all labour under the sun.*⁴⁰⁰

J. Vernon McGee tells this story: *You would think that all men in that position would be happy. Well, I don't know why, but they are not. I am told that we have more suicides here in Southern California than the average for the country. One would think it would be the bums on skid row, the down-and-outers, who would be the ones to commit suicide. Life certainly wouldn't seem to be worth much to them. Actually, those are not the ones with the high suicide rate. It is the rich, the famous, the Hollywood movie and television stars, the folk who seem to have made it. They are the ones who commit suicide. Why? They have come to the same conclusion that Solomon did. He had tried everything in the way of pleasure and concluded: *Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.**⁴⁰¹

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

The Expositor's Bible Commentary on Solomon saving us the time of such a search: *Is not his sad verdict as true as it is sad? We have not his wealth of resources. Nevertheless there may have been a time when our hearts were as intent on pleasure as was his. We may have pursued whatever sensuous, intellectual, or aesthetic excitements were open to us with a growing eagerness till we have lived in a whirl of craving and stimulating desire and indulgence, in which the claims of duty have been neglected and the rebukes of conscience unheeded. And if we have passed through this experience, if we have been carried for a time into this giddy round, have we not come out of it jaded, exhausted, despising ourselves for our folly, disgusted with what once seemed the very top and crown of delight? Do we not mourn, our after life through, over energies wasted and opportunities lost? Are we not sadder, if wiser, men for our brief frenzy? As we return to the sober duties and simple joys of life, do not we say to Mirth, "You are mad!" and to Pleasure, "What can't you do for us?" Yes, our verdict is that of the Preacher, "Lo, this too is vanity!"*⁴⁰²

Gary Everett draws a parallel between our lives today and Solomon's search: *[Solomon] pursued wisdom and understanding first, followed by mirth and then the construction of great projects and the gathering of wealth. This represents the order of pursuits in the lives of many people. For example, in our society, we start out in our youth focusing upon school and education. When we go into our college years, we find that the influences for party and mirth are everywhere. We later find our place in society by focusing upon a career and learning to work hard towards success. For those who*

³⁹⁸ From [Bible Tools.org](https://www.bibletools.org); accessed September 3, 2018.

³⁹⁹ From [Useful Bible.com](https://www.usefulbible.com) accessed September 8, 2018.

⁴⁰⁰ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 2:11.

⁴⁰¹ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt (chapter 2) accessed September 3, 2018.

⁴⁰² *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 2:1-11 (slightly edited).

*achieve financial success, they are left still searching for a meaning and purpose to their lives, having learned that all of these pursuits did not bring inner peace.*⁴⁰³

Then Everett suggests that we can enjoy the seasons of our life, and yet be in the plan of God: *Just as Solomon, we too can have seasons of interests in various things of this world. These interests seem to fade in one area, and refocus on a new area through the years. When we follow God's plan for our lives, we can still enjoy those seasons of change, but in a greater and more dynamic way. His plan for our lives will take us to new levels of interest and adventures. Our own pursuits will produce vain interests, as Solomon has stated here. However, when we follow God's will for our lives, these seasons of interests will be satisfying. Seasons of changing interests are normal for us, but they do not satisfy until God is directing these seasons. Life is made up of seasons of change. When we learn to go with God's seasons in our lives, we will find that they are not vain, but very rewarding.*⁴⁰⁴

This may not be everyone's exact order in approaching these questions (and, indeed, some never really clearly ask these questions). Nevertheless, the principles still stand true, and, ideally speaking, can stop some people from ruining their lives at an early age, trying to seek out pleasure or possessions as the solution to happiness or contentment in life.

The College Press Bible Study: *Solomon is after a profit. He intends to review all his labors, satisfied that he had exhausted every opportunity for some new thrill of experience. One panoramic flashback over his life brought into focus all the fruit of all his labors. He searches in his mind's eye to discover something of lasting value, something that abides. He isn't interested in speaking to the empty feeling within the one who has so indulged himself, but rather to the "profit" that comes to one who has thus so lavishly lived. He doesn't deny the emptiness, such grief, he admits, is very much the fiber of one who lives "under the sun." His conclusion is pointedly harsh: "there was no profit under the sun." Men today should learn this lesson from Solomon. Who can find the time or the resources to run the course as skillfully as Solomon? Even if he does, the signpost at the end of the road points to "no profit." How unlike the Christian who discovers that in Christ are "hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 3:2).*⁴⁰⁵

Solomon has done all of this exploration for us. He already knows that his search for fulfillment will be empty, as long as God is not the focus of his life.

Ecclesiastes 2:11 *Then I critically looked back on all of the works which my hands had done, and upon all of the great toil which I did—and, quite frankly, it is all just breath and chasing after the wind. In fact, there is no gain or profit to be found in anything I tried to enjoy under the sun.*

Solomon is doing some amazing building, some of the greatest work of his day and time (perhaps the greatest), and what about it? There is no gain in all that he has done. It is nothing more than breath and chasing after the wind. It is typical in a large city to preserve some of the ancient architecture. In many cities in the United States, that may be 100 years old, which is a pretty small amount of time in human history. So, what Solomon is doing seems important and seems long-lasting, but those buildings are not around today—in fact, most of what Solomon built was not around at all after 300–500 years. And for those people who do not know the Bible, they don't know who Solomon is and they certainly don't know what he did. Those things are empty, as if he spent his entire life chasing after wind.

There is only one kind of permanence for us today, and that is the doing of divine good. If we are filled with the Spirit and operating according to doctrine, the things that we do are eternal, even if it is only giving a cup of cold water in the LORD's name.

⁴⁰³ Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:11.

⁴⁰⁴ Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:11.

⁴⁰⁵ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:1–11 (comments).

Consider this, when you give the gospel to an unbeliever, or even share an accurate point of doctrine with a believer, that is something which may last for eternity; and you have done so much more than Solomon did in much of his building. The gospel and the teaching of the Word of God are eternal things. These have lasting repercussions in this world and the next.

Ron Snider's translation of Ecclesiastes 2:11 [Then I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun.](#)

Eccles. 2:11: Temporary satisfaction is not permanent satisfaction (Ron Snider)

1. Qoheleth lived the life that many people can only dream about; he was among the privileged few in the Kingdom of Israel (and probably on the planet), who never denied himself anything he wanted.
2. He was the equivalent of the modern jet-setter, who could eat and drink what he chose, who surrounded himself with playboy bunnies, and provided only the best in entertainment for his own amusement.
3. He created a world of grand design, which would have been the envy of anyone that saw his accomplishments.
4. For all his pursuits, which were designed to provide him satisfaction or profit, his lot or portion was only the momentary stimulation that each particular pursuit could provide.
5. It should be clear that each of the things he pursued did provide some level of enjoyment and satisfaction.
6. His hard work in planning and executing his agricultural and architectural feats had brought him some happiness and the sense that he deserved to reward himself.
7. And yet, as we will see, his overt building projects that are the focus of this verse, did not satisfy a critical need of Qoheleth.
8. The initial phrase is introduced with a waw, which should be understood here in a temporal sense and translated then.
9. Following this period of self-indulgence (which likely lasted for years) Qoheleth pauses from his pursuits and engages in a period of self-examination.
10. He has lived in a world of his own design (Crenshaw has called it a dreamland), and now stops to consider the reality of it all.
11. He has now passed the period when he was absorbed in the pursuit of sensual satisfaction and all his extravagant building projects have been completed.
12. Qoheleth stops to consider and evaluate his life, which apparently has been devoted to the search for some ultimate profit, which has eluded him.
13. Qoheleth defines the person he was at the time he stops to consider what he has for all that he has done as he says, I turned, I with all my works, which my hands have manufactured.
14. A less exacting thinker might well have found a great deal to report with a large measure of satisfaction since his achievements had been spectacular and amazing.
15. On a material level, he had no doubt produced vineyards that yielded the highest quality grapes, which were no doubt used to produce the highest quality wine.
16. He must have produced a virtual paradise with his carefully manicured gardens and parks, which would have had tremendous aesthetic value.
17. As Qoheleth observed all his achievements, the hard work that he had put into them, and recognized that they were all his, he did not feel satisfied.
18. Although Qoheleth refers to the works which he had worked with his two hands, there can be little doubt the he actually performed much (if any) of the manual labor that was necessary to construct all that he constructed.
19. However, the use of this term would likely suggest that Qoheleth was not uninvolved in these egotistic projects, he was likely a hands-on supervisor.
20. In a general sense, the hands are used to denote the physical agents that perform man's will.
21. Again, the phrase the labor with which I toiled is designed to communicate the unpleasant, laborious drudgery of work.
22. These projects did not come to fruition easily; there was a real sense in which they wore on Qoheleth as he labored to complete them.

Eccles. 2:11: Temporary satisfaction is not permanent satisfaction (Ron Snider)

23. The use of waw with the interjection הִנֵּה (hinneh-behold) has the sense of Now look at this, pay attention.
24. Qoheleth uses the definite article with the noun כֹּל (kol-all, every, every) to express totality; it can be translated as everything, the whole thing, or all of it.
25. The last portion of the verse now summarizes the important teachings of Qoheleth to this point as he reiterates the key terms that he introduced in chapter one.
26. His conclusion after fulfilling all his desires is that everything was vain; his work provided no real profit, and did not provide lasting satisfaction.
27. The term הֶבֶל (hebhel) is also used to denote that which is unsubstantial, fruitless, senseless, absurd, or that which lacks purpose and does not ultimately matter.
28. As we saw in chapter one, the next phrase may be translated in several ways, but it makes little difference which option one chooses since they are all designed to communicate futility.
29. The term that follows is the noun רוּחַ (ruach-breath, wind, or spirit) should be understood in this context as referring to the wind.
30. Whether one is chasing the wind, striving after the wind, or herding the wind makes no real difference; all these translations suggest that he is engaged in a fruitless endeavor.
31. The final clause answers the question that Qoheleth posed at the beginning of chapter one, as he now states that there does not exist profit under the sun.
32. The judgement here is based on his own personal experiences, from which he has concluded that there is no profit or advantage in doing all that he had done.
33. This conclusion may sound pessimistic; however, it is the realistic assessment of Qoheleth following his self-indulgent phase.
34. Neither the more noble pursuit of wisdom nor the unbridled pursuit of pleasure has brought anything that resulted in permanent satisfaction to Qoheleth.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#); accessed September 2, 2018 (will open as a Word Document on your computer).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Pastor John Griffith translation of Ecclesiastes 2:4–6 I enlarged my works: I built houses for myself, I planted vineyards for myself; I made gardens and parks for myself and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees; I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees.

Ecclesiastes 2:7–11 I bought male and female slaves and I had homeborn slaves. Also I possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. Also, I collected for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces and the pleasures of men-- many concubines. - LIT. the pleasures of the sons of man. Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me. All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done (only looking at himself no one else) and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity (hebel) and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun.

Observations of Ecclesiastes 2:4–11 (Pastor John Griffith)

1. We live in a time when it seems that the predominate philosophy motivating people is, if I could just earn enough money to buy into my dream, that would do it, I would be happy - satisfied!
2. Solomon very strongly says - don't bother - it doesn't do it, it's fleeting at best!!
3. Only that which is eternal - above the sun will provide the satisfaction that the real you, your soul is seeking.
4. Sensual pleasures hold out great promises but lack staying power!
5. Sensual pleasures offer to open our eyes - open us to new exciting worlds, but in reality they end up blinding us.
6. Sensual pleasures disillusion us, making us cover-up artists.
- Its so easy to forget that there is a flip side to the "If it feels good do it" mentality which is neither

Observations of Ecclesiastes 2:4–11 (Pastor John Griffith)

attractive nor satisfying.

7. The only light at the end of the tunnel is a relationship with Jesus Christ and living the Christian way of life.

From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_06.html accessed September 1, 2018.

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This is from a sermon of Zeisler's.

Sating one's every desire (Steve Zeisler)

At the end of this research we read in Ecclesiastes 2:9-11:

⁹"In all this my wisdom stayed with me.

¹⁰I denied myself nothing my eyes desired...

¹¹Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun."

The Searcher had everything and it was empty. Considering this experiment as a whole we can make two observations.

First, it was refined rather than sleazy, "My wisdom stayed with me and I sated every appetite in a way that generated respect from sophisticated people."

Second, the experiment opened every door, followed every possibility. The Searcher was not like the prodigal son who ran out of money and ended up having to eat with the pigs. There was nothing left undone and yet the result was emptiness.

Let me also make two observations about what is missing.

First, there are no relationships. Recall the Beatles song, "Can't Buy Me Love."¹ where they sing, "I don't care too much for money, money can't buy me love."¹ When we read of Koheleth's experiment, there is not a single reference to a friend, teammate, child, or companion. He has a harem, but no partner; estates, but no home; no band of brothers; no circle of sisters; no joyful memories of common battles or shared celebrations. Friends can open their hearts in talk around a campfire and nothing is added by moving the conversation to an elegant dining hall. Wealth does not connect one heart to another.

Secondly, the Searcher makes no examination of himself. All of the five senses are pampered in his telling. There are soft fabrics that cover the skin, there are bursts of flavor that break on the palate, there is banishment of ungainly sights and sounds and smells—but nothing that penetrates the heart. The most important discoveries are made about ourselves. The world is meaningless because our souls are damaged, not because we do not have all the toys our neighbors have. None of the Searcher's expenditures gave him insight into himself.

¹ Beatles : Can't Buy Me Love, Songwriters: Paul McCartney; John Lennon.

From pbc.org accessed September 9, 2018.

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Dr. Dan Hill: *NOTE: Bitterness comes in life when we see these things we seek after not bringing us the anticipated significance or security. Why do we find older people who are bitter? Because they went through middle age and saw the things that ones brought then significance slip away. They continue to try to find significance but they don't so bitterness sets in.*⁴⁰⁶

As an addendum to what Hill writes, so many people in this life search for happiness—in many of the same ways that Solomon does—and they come to the same conclusion that Solomon came to: *I am not very happy. Life is as empty to me as one's breath.* And this is why the mid-life crisis is such a thing.

What are people doing today? They are trying to manage their happiness with psychotropic drugs. Or, some try to do this with regular marijuana use (as it is legal in many states now).

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Solomon compares wisdom and folly, light and darkness

In this second half of Ecclesiastes 2, Solomon ponders whether wisdom is really better than foolishness; and what about the man who follows him—he did not work for any of what Solomon has accomplished.

Introducing the second half of Ecclesiastes 2 (various commentators)

John Dummelow: *Wisdom is to folly as light to darkness; yet the same end awaits both. Life, therefore, is nothing but a weariness. The cycle of experiments being completed, there is nothing to do but to hark back to the first of them, and to consider knowledge and its opposites.*⁴⁰⁷

Arno Gaebelein introduces the rest of this chapter: *[Solomon] now turns in search for happiness in another direction. The old, old question, "Is life worth living?" after all he had stated must be answered negatively—if all is vanity and vexation of spirit and there is no profit under the sun, in anything that man enjoys, labors for and obtains, then life is not worth living. He had been disappointed in his search, but now he turns to something more ideal and not materialistic as the former things. "Then I saw that wisdom is greater than folly, just as light is greater than darkness." He turns philosopher, but it is of no avail, for it [all] leads [to]...vanity and vexation of spirit.*⁴⁰⁸

Pastor John Griffith: *In the next two paragraphs Solomon gives us a more in-depth analysis of the experiments he has already performed. (2:12-17; 2:18-23) What he gives us is a true analysis, a true appraisal of his experience of the ultimate and the best of life, the value of life apart from God's revealed grace resources and what it can offer the natural unregenerate person or the reversionistic believer.*⁴⁰⁹

The Pulpit Commentary: *Eccles. 2:12–26 Section 3. Vanity of wisdom, in view of the fate that awaits the wise man equally with the fool, and the uncertainty of the future of his labors, especially as man is not master of his own fate.*⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁶ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> accessed September 1, 2018.

⁴⁰⁷ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcb/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 6, 2018.

⁴⁰⁸ Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1–26 (slightly edited).

⁴⁰⁹ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_07.html accessed September 1, 2018.

⁴¹⁰ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:1–26.

Introducing the second half of Ecclesiastes 2 (various commentators)

B. H. Carroll divides up the remainder of Ecclesiastes 2: *In Eccles. 2:12–17 we have his comparison between wisdom and folly, with the result that wisdom far excels folly or pleasure, yet the same thing happens to the fool and to the wise man, viz: both die and are forgotten. So he was made to hate life because his work was grievous and a striving after wind. There is ground for the hatred of labor because he must die and leave it to another (Eccles. 2:18–23). The reference in Eccles. 2:19 is to Rehoboam; Solomon evidently suspected his course. Therefore, the conclusion of Eccles. 2:24 is that there is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and to make his soul enjoy his labor, but the thought (Eccles. 2:24–25 f) that it is all from God and that it is all subject to God's disposal, knocks it over.*⁴¹¹

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *[Solomon] had tried (worldly) wisdom (Eccles. 1:12–18) and folly (foolish pleasure) (Eccles. 2:1–11); he now compares them (Eccles. 2:12) and finds that while (worldly), wisdom is more excellent than folly (Eccles. 2:13, Eccles. 2:14), yet the one event, death, befalls both (Eccles. 2:14–16), and that thus the wealth acquired by the wise man's "labor" may descend to a "fool" that has not labored (Eccles. 2:18, Eccles. 2:19, Eccles. 2:21); therefore all his labor is vanity (Eccles. 2:22, Eccles. 2:23).*⁴¹²

Solomon is not trying experiments in the latter half of Ecclesiastes 12; he is consider a variety of other issues.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

There is a portion of this verse which is found in two different ways in the ancient manuscripts; and there are an abundant number of translations and interpretations for this verse. Also, at least one translation switches the two thoughts around in this verse, and that leads to some interesting results.

And I have turned to see wisdom and madness and folly, for what the man who comes behind the king—that already they have done him. Ecclesiastes 2:12

And I looked back to see wisdom, madness and folly, for what [of] the man who comes after the king? They [those who came before him] had done it already.

Then I looked back to consider wisdom, madness and folly; and I thought, what about the man who comes along after me? What sort of person is he? And he steps into a world where it has all been done already.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	And I have turned to see wisdom and madness and folly, for what the man who comes behind the king—that already they have done him.
Revised Douay-Rheims	I <u>passed further</u> to behold wisdom, and errors and folly, (What is man, <u>said I</u> , that he can follow the King his maker?)
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	And I gave attention to consider wisdom, <u>and the fear of the kingdom and understanding, because what use is there to a man to pray after the decree of the King, and after retribution? behold!</u> it is then already decreed about him <u>and executed on him.</u>
Peshitta (Syriac)	So I looked around to behold wisdom and transgression and folly; for who is the man who can enter into <u>judgment</u> with the king? Especially with him who had created him.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	Then I looked on to see wisdom, and madness, and folly: for who is the man who will follow after <u>counsel</u> , in all things where in he employs it?

⁴¹¹ B. H. Carroll, *An interpretation of the English Bible*; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 1:2-5:9.

⁴¹² Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:12.

Significant differences: The Latin has *passed further* rather than *turned [about]*. The Greek appears to leave that verb out. In the second half of this verse, the Latin has some additional words and the meaning does not appear to be the same as is found in the Hebrew.

The targum has a lot of additional text.

Both the Syriac and the Greek have an additional word in the second half (*judge, counsel*). The final phrase is confusing in the Hebrew; missing in the Latin; and very different in the Syriac and Greek (which is often true when a phrase is confusing and makes little sense).

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	And I went again in search of wisdom and of foolish ways. What may the man do who comes after the king? The thing which he has done before.
Easy English	Then I decided to think about how a wise person lives. I wanted to think also about how a fool lives.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	I said to myself, ‘The next king will not do any more than I have done.’ No person can do more than a king can do. Some king has already done anything you might want to do. {And I learned that even the things a king does are a waste of time.} So I again began to think about being wise, being foolish, and doing crazy things.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	Maybe Wisdom Is the Answer Then I decided to think about what it means to be wise or to be foolish or to do crazy things. And I thought about the one who will be the next king. The new king will do the same as the kings before him [The Hebrew text here is hard to understand].
Good News Bible (TEV)	After all, a king can only do what previous kings have done. I have placed the other part of v. 13 with v. 14.
<i>The Message</i>	And then I took a hard look at what’s smart and what’s stupid. What’s left to do after you’ve been king? That’s a hard act to follow. You just do what you can, and that’s it. Sometimes, a paraphrase can really capture the meaning better than a completely literal rendering.
Names of God Bible	Death Is the Common Destiny of All Life Then I turned my attention to experience wisdom, madness, and foolishness. For instance, what can the man who replaces the king do?
NIRV	Wisdom and Foolish Pleasure Are Meaningless I decided to think about wisdom. I also thought about foolish pleasure. What more can a new king do? Can he do anything more than others have already done?

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	I turned my attention to another matter. I was interested in making a comparison of wisdom with foolishness and stupidity to determine the value of wisdom. My intention as king was to thoroughly examine this proposal. I did examine it with greater detail than any man who preceded me or any man who would follow me.
Contemporary English V.	I asked myself, "What can the next king do that I haven't done?" Then I decided to compare wisdom with foolishness and stupidity.
The Living Bible	Now I began a study of the comparative virtues of wisdom and folly, and anyone else would come to the same conclusion I did [literally, “for what can the man do who comes after the king?”]— that wisdom is of more value than foolishness, just

as light is better than darkness; for the wise man sees, while the fool is blind. V. 13 is included for context.

New Century Version

Maybe Wisdom Is the Answer

Then I began to think again about being wise,
and also about being foolish and doing crazy things.

But after all, what more can anyone do?

He can't do more than what the other king has already done.

New Life Version

The End of the Wise Man or Fool

So I turned to think about wisdom and what is crazy and foolish. For what can the man do who comes after the king, except what has already been done?

New Living Translation

The Wise and the Foolish

So I decided to compare wisdom with foolishness and madness (for who can do this better than I, the king [The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.]?)

Unlocked Dynamic Bible

Then I started to think about being wise, and also about being foolish. I said to myself, "I certainly do not think that anybody will be able to do anything better than I can."

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible

So thereafter, I examined my wisdom,
And I saw that it too was just folly.
For who under the sun will follow my words...
Which man will do [what I've said]?

Beck's American Translation

Wisdom

So I turned to look at wisdom, madness, and foolishness. What, for instance, can the man do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done.

Common English Bible

My reflections then turned to wisdom, madness, and folly. What can the king's heir do but what has already been done?

International Standard V

Next I turned to examine wisdom, insanity, and foolishness, because what can a person do who succeeds the king except what has already been accomplished?

New Advent (Knox) Bible

Then my mind went back to the thought of wisdom, of ignorance, too, and folly. What (thought I), should mortal king strive to imitate the sovereign power that made him? The Hebrew text, in the latter half of this verse, runs: 'For what (shall) the man (do) that comes after the king? Why, what they have already done', perhaps a footnote recalling the follies of king Roboam (see verse 19 below). The literal sense of the Latin is: 'What (said I) is man, that he should be able to follow the King, his Maker?'

Translation for Translators

Being wise also seemed useless

Then I started to think about being wise, and *also about* being foolish [DOU].
I said to myself, "I certainly do not think that [RHQ] the next king will be able to do anything better than I can."

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Alpha & Omega Bible

THEN I LOOKED ON TO SEE WISDOM, AND MADNESS, AND FOLLY: FOR WHO IS THE MAN WHO WILL FOLLOW AFTER COUNSEL, IN ALL THINGS WHERE IN HE EMPLOYS IT?

Awful Scroll Bible

I am to have turned toward to look upon wisdom, over bragging and languorousness - is there to be he of mankind, which remains to come afterward the king, either of long ago, who is to have prepare these things?

Conservapedia Translation

I looked within myself, finding wisdom, madness, and folly: for what can a mere man do that follows the accomplishments of the king? At most only what has already been done. I think the second part is about humility - the best of a man's efforts

	pales against what God has already done, and at our best we are only emulating Him.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	Then I reflected, and examined my Science, and Madness, and Folly! And what kind of man would succeed the King? With what he might be able to do?
God's Truth (Tyndale)	Then turned I me to consider wisdom, error and foolishness, for what is he among men, that might be compared to me the king in such work?
HCSB	The Relative Value of Wisdom Then I turned to consider wisdom, madness, and folly, for what will the man be like who comes after the king? He [Some Hb mss read <i>They</i>] will do what has already been done.
Jubilee Bible 2000	And I turned myself to behold wisdom and those <i>who are</i> mad, and folly; for what <i>can</i> the man <i>do</i> that comes after the king? <i>even</i> that which has already been done.
Lexham English Bible	The Living Must Abandon the Work of their Hands to Others at Death Next, I considered wisdom, as well as delusion and folly. What can anyone [do] who will come after the king that has not already been done?
NIV, ©2011	Wisdom and Folly Are Meaningless Then I turned my thoughts to consider wisdom, and also madness and folly. What more can the king's successor do than what has already been done?
Peter Pett's translation	And I turned my mind to observing wisdom and madness and folly. For what can a man do who follows what a king has done? Only what he has already done.
Tree of Life Version	Futility of Human Wisdom Then I turned to consider wisdom, madness and folly. For what more can the one who succeeds the king do than what he has already done?
Urim-Thummim Version	And I turned myself to observe Wisdom, and madness, and folly: because what can the man do that comes after the king? even what has been already done.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)	I then decided to compare wisdom with folly and madness and I thought, "What will my successor as king do?" (We know what he did!).
The Heritage Bible	And I faced myself about to see wisdom, and folly, and stupidity, because what <i>can</i> the man who comes after the king <i>do</i> when they have done it long ago?
New American Bible (2002)	For what will the man do who is to come after the king? What men have already done! I went on to the consideration of wisdom, madness and folly.
New American Bible (2011)	What about one who succeeds a king? He can do only what has already been done.* <i>Study of Wisdom and Folly.</i> I went on to the consideration of wisdom, madness and folly. * [2:12] What...been done: the verse is difficult and elliptical. The words "He can do only" have been added for clarity. The two halves of the verse have been reversed. The author argues that it is useless to repeat the royal experiment described in vv. 1–11. The results would only be the same.
New English Bible–1970	I set myself to look at wisdom and at madness and folly. [The rest of v12 transposed to follow v18]
New Jerusalem Bible	My reflections then turned to wisdom, stupidity and folly. For instance, what can the successor of a king do? What has been done already.
New RSV	Wisdom and Joy Given to One Who Pleases God So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly; for what can the one do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done.
Revised English Bible–1989	Then I considered wisdom and madness and folly.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	So I decided to look more carefully at wisdom, stupidity and foolishness; for what can the man who succeeds the king do, except what has already been done?
The Complete Tanach	And I turned to see wisdom and madness and folly, for what is the man who will come after the king, concerning that which they have already done?
	<p>And I turned to see wisdom: I turn from all my affairs to ponder over the Torah and madness and folly, [meaning] the punishment for transgressions.</p> <p>for what is the man who will come after the king: to supplicate him concerning a decree that they decreed upon him, and they already executed the decree. It is better for him to ponder at first upon his deeds, and he will find it unnecessary to beg.</p>
exeGesés companion Bible	And I turned my face to see wisdom and madness and folly: but what of the human who comes after the sovereign - when that which is, was already worked?
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	For what will the man be like who will succeed the one who is ruling over what was built up long ago? My thoughts also turned to appraising wisdom and madness and folly.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	And I turned myself to consider chochmah, and holelot, and sichlut; for what can the adam do who cometh after HaMelech? Even that which hath been done already.
<i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	And I turned myself to look at wisdom, and madness, and folly. For what would the man do who comes after the sovereign <i>except</i> what already has been done?

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	<p>Wisdom Excels Folly So I turned to consider [secular] wisdom, madness, and folly; for what will the man do who succeeds the king? Nothing except what has already been done.</p>
The Expanded Bible	<p>Maybe Wisdom Is the Answer Then I began to think again about being wise, and also about being foolish and doing crazy things [I turned my attention to observe wisdom and mad folly]. After all, what more can anyone who comes after the king do? He can't do more than what the king has already done [If the king couldn't find meaning in life, then no one could].</p>
Pastor John Griffith	<p>So I turned (the idea here is that he stopped his activity and experimentation to evaluate the results he had obtained more thoroughly.) to consider wisdom, madness and folly; - makes a mental comparison - which is the best course to pursue in life. for what will the man do who will come after the king except what has already been done?</p>
Kretzmann's Commentary	<p>And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly, to compare them, to consider their relative value, 1:17; for what can the man do that cometh after the king? Solomon surely had the best chance to make his experiment in happiness, and if he had not succeeded, any one else would have still smaller chance of success. Even that which hath been already done, the same foolish mistakes having been made by men from the beginning.</p>
NET Bible®	<p><i>Wisdom is Better than Folly</i> Next, I decided to consider⁵⁵ wisdom, as well as foolish behavior and ideas. For what more can the king's successor do than what the king has already done? ⁵⁵Heb "and I turned to see."</p>

Syndein/Thieme {4th Experiment of Solomon - Having Children to find Happiness in the Cosmic System}
 And then I turned myself to consider with academic wisdom and psychology . . . {idiom: literally 'and madness, and folly'} what more can the king's successor do then what has already been done?
 {Note: Solomon is saying someday one of his sons will take over and what can he achieve that Solomon has not already achieved?}.
 The Voice I turned my attention to *the ways of wisdom* and folly and madness. *I asked*, "What is left for those who come after the king to do? They can only repeat what he has already done [Meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain]."

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

- C. Thompson (updated) OT Then I looked back to take a view of wisdom and madness and folly. In all the particulars which formed this deliberation (for who is the man equal to a complete investigation)
- Context Group Version And I turned myself to look at wisdom, and madness, and senseless shame: for what [can] man [do] that comes after the king? [Even] that which has been done long ago.
- Modern English Version **The Fate of the Wise and the Fool**
 So I turned to consider wisdom,
 the folly of ideas, and foolish behavior;
 for what else can a man do who comes after the king?
 Or what more than those have already done?
- New American Standard B. **Wisdom Excels Folly**
 So I turned to consider wisdom, madness and folly; for what will the man do who will come after the king except what has already been done?
- New European Version **The Preacher Despairs of Earthly Life**
 I turned myself to consider wisdom, madness, and folly: for what can the king's successor do? Just that which has been done long ago.
- New King James Version **The End of the Wise and the Fool**
 Then I turned myself to consider wisdom and madness and folly;
 For what can the man do who succeeds the king?—
Only what he has already done.
- Updated Bible Version 2.11 And I turned myself to look at wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what [can] man [do] who comes after the king? [Even] that which has been done long ago.
- Young's Updated LT And I turned to see wisdom, and madness, and folly, but what is the man who comes after the king? That which is already—they have done it!

The gist of this passage: Solomon asks, What can the next king do that Solomon has not already done?

Ecclesiastes 2:12a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
pânâh (פָּנָה) [pronounced paw-NAWH]	<i>to turn, to turn away from, to turn toward, to turn one's face away from, to turn one's face to; to look back [at, after, for]</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #6437 BDB #815

Ecclesiastes 2:12a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
râ'âh (רָאָה) [pronounced raw-AWH]	<i>to see, to look, to look at, to view, to behold; to observe; to perceive, to understand, to learn, to know</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #7200 BDB #906
châk ^e mâh (חָכְמָה) [pronounced khawk ^e -MAW]	<i>wisdom [in all realms of life], doctrine in the soul; skill [in war]</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #2451 BDB #315
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
hôlêlâh (הִלְלוּ) [pronounced hō-lay-LAW]	<i>madness, folly</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #1947 BDB #239

This word is only found in Ecclesiastes and comes from the verb hâlal (הָלַל) [pronounced haw-LAHL], which means, *to shine, to give light; to be clear, to be brilliant; to be boastful, to praise; to be foolish*. Strong's #1984 BDB #237. I believe that this definition is given primarily based upon the other thing (word) that Solomon studies.

w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
sik ^e luwth (סִכְלוּת) [pronounced sihk-LOOTH]	<i>folly, silliness, foolishness</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #5531 BDB #698

Also spelled çik^eluwth (סִכְלוּת) [pronounced sihk-LOOTH]. The verb it comes from means *to be foolish, to be a fool*. This noun is only found here in Ecclesiastes.

Translation: *And I looked back to see wisdom, madness and folly,...* Solomon considered these things back in the first chapter. Perhaps he is saying, *I thought about these things before and now I am thinking about them again*. That seems to be the general consensus below. Perhaps the idea is, he has been wise and productive for all of his life, so he tried some new things—and now he is returning to think about wisdom again in the light of what experiments that he has just tried.

Ecclesiastes 2:12 *Then I looked back to consider wisdom, madness and folly; and I thought, what about the man who comes along after me? What sort of person is he? And he steps into a world where it has all been done already.*

Ecclesiastes 2:12a: Solomon turns back (various commentators)

Benson: *Being frustrated of my hopes in pleasure, I returned to a second consideration of my first choice, to see whether there was not more satisfaction to be gotten from wisdom, than I discovered at my first view.*⁴¹³

⁴¹³ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:12.

Ecclesiastes 2:12a: Solomon turns back (various commentators)

The Cambridge Bible: *We enter on yet another phase of the life of the seeker after happiness. He falls back with a cynical despair, when mere pleasure left him a prey to satiety and ennui, upon his former study of human nature in its contrasted developments of wisdom, and madness, and folly.*⁴¹⁴

The College Press Bible Study: *"I turned" does not indicate a new experiment, but additional conclusions to be drawn from testing the meaning of life with pleasure. He has already indicated that he is aware that history repeats itself. He stated that God seeks what has passed by (Eccles. 3:15); that what happens in the future has already happened in the past (Eccles. 1:9).*

The College Press Bible Study continues: *"I set my mind" (Eccles. 1:17), and "I turned to consider" (Eccles. 2:12), should be understood as similar statements. In each instance, the objective is to know wisdom, madness and folly (cf. Eccles. 7:25).*⁴¹⁵

Dr. John Gill: *Being disappointed in his pursuit of pleasure, and not finding satisfaction and happiness in that, he turns from it, and reassumes his study of natural wisdom and knowledge, to make a fresh trial, and see whether there might be some things he had overlooked in his former inquiries; and whether upon a revise of what he had looked into he might not find more satisfaction than before; being convinced however that the pursuit of pleasure was less satisfying than the study of wisdom, and therefore relinquished the one for the sake of the other: and in order, if possible, to gain more satisfaction in this point, he determined to look more narrowly, and penetrate into the secrets of wisdom, and find out the nature of it, and examine its contraries; that by setting them in a contrast, and comparing them together, he might be the better able to form a judgment of them.*⁴¹⁶

After his experiments in life, Solomon reconsiders his life.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 2:12 Then I looked back to consider wisdom, madness and folly; and I thought, what about the man who comes along after me? What sort of person is he? And he steps into a world where it has all been done already.

Wisdom, Madness and Folly (Ecclesiastes 2:12a) (various commentators)

The Geneva Bible: *I thought to myself whether it was better to follow wisdom, or my own affections and pleasures, which he calls madness.*⁴¹⁷

The Pulpit Commentary: *And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly (Eccles. 1:17). He studied the three in their mutual connection and relation, comparing them in their results and effects on man's nature and life, and deducing thence their real value. On one side he set wisdom, on the other the action, and habits which he rightly terms "madness and folly," and examined them calmly and critically.*⁴¹⁸

Dunagan: *What is the relative worth of wisdom in contrast to folly and madness? Which is more profitable? It is better to go through life serious, prudent and circumspect, or should I throw caution to the wind? Who finds more fun and enjoyment in life? The cautious person or the carefree individual?*⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁴ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:12.

⁴¹⁵ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:12–17 (comment).

⁴¹⁶ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:12.

⁴¹⁷ Geneva Bible Translation Notes; courtesy of e-sword; 1599; Eccles. 2:12.

⁴¹⁸ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:12.

⁴¹⁹ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:12.

Wisdom, Madness and Folly (Ecclesiastes 2:12a) (various commentators)

Nisbet (from Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary): *He who contemplates human nature must be prepared to find it a mixed scene of wisdom, madness, and folly. There are wise men who govern their conduct by reason, and maxims gained from experience and observation. There are others who have some intellectual power, but it is rashly applied. There is no sufficient guiding principle—their conduct is madness—power wasted in an irregular manner, without order or plan. There are simple men who are easily led, and become the willing dupes of cunning craft.*

Nisbet continues: *The evils of the world are incurable by human means. We can only expect that the future will be as the past. The dream of human perfection is not realised. The paths of sin and folly are old and well worn. Generations to come will be content to travel in them. Posterity may forget our wisdom, and destroy the fruits of our labours. But he who works with eternity in view will find the grave a place of restitution.*⁴²⁰

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

How does Solomon logically connect this to the rest of this verse? Perhaps the idea is, he spent time trying to find happiness through a variety of experiments; but now he stops and considers what he has done in his life and what his future is.

Ecclesiastes 2:12b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כי) [pronounced kee]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
mâh (מה) [pronounced maw]	<i>what, how, why</i>	interrogative; exclamatory particle	Strong's #4100 BDB #552
Not sure yet if there is a meaning which may be assigned to this combination. Literally, <i>for what</i> ; possibly, <i>what</i> .			
ʾādām (אָדָם) [pronounced aw-DAWM]	<i>a man, a human being, mankind; transliterated Adam</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #120 & #121 BDB #9
The word <i>the Adam</i> can mean <i>man, mankind, humankind, men, human beings</i> .			
she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced sheh] or shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced shehl]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
bôw' (בָּוֹא) [pronounced boh]	<i>to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter, to advance; to attain</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #935 BDB #97
ʾachārêy (אַחֲרָי) [pronounced ah-kuh-RAY]	<i>behind, after; following; after that, afterwards; hinder parts</i>	preposition; plural form	Strong's #310 BDB #29
melek ^e (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced MEH-lek]	<i>king, ruler, prince; royal, royalty</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #4428 BDB #572

⁴²⁰ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:12 (Suggestive comments).

Translation: ...for what [of] the man who comes after the king? Solomon no doubt has an idea who will follow after him as king—but, bear in mind, Solomon must have a thousand children (most of whom are ever spoken of).

In any case, Solomon considers who he believes will follow him, and I suspect that Solomon is not very happy with that person. Perhaps he thinks, *where the heck did this little heathen come from?*

We do not know exactly why his successor is brought into the conversation at this time. (1) Is Solomon looking at his successor as one who will continue his search—and therefore, be unfruitful? (2) Or is Solomon suggesting that, despite his own research, he will die and be replaced—and possibly by a very inferior man. I think the latter is Solomon's actual concern.

The College Press Bible Study asks the same question: *He is manifesting this same truth when he draws our attention to the question, "What will the man do who will come after the king except what has already been done?" In this question, Solomon indicates that one will come after the king. Is Solomon speaking only of one who might experiment in the same manner, if such were possible, or is he speaking historically of one who is already standing in the wings waiting his turn to rule over the kingdom? It is difficult to determine. However, the import of his question appears to be that whoever follows, whether in his authority or by his example, will certainly reach similar conclusions. Human nature is the same generation after generation.*⁴²¹

Application: Regarding one's successor, how many times have adults bemoaned the next generation? Bear in mind, this is a generation which they themselves raised and they themselves imparted values to. Is it not problematic to complain about the generation that you yourself have raised (or, failed to raise)? Should they not be the beneficiaries of knowing the things that you learned the hard way? Is it not your job to help guide them towards the things that you got right? For instance your faith in Christ—did that not turn your life around? Or, after exercising faith in Christ, did your relationship with the Word of God not become the most important change in your life? We can complain all we want about the next generation, but we should help guide them and allow them to benefit from our successes and our mistakes.

One thing we have studied is David's insistence that Solomon follow him. They co-reigned for awhile, as David taught his son the ropes. David's concerns appear to have been twofold: (1) he wanted his son to continue with the spiritual benefits that he himself had enjoyed all of his life; and (2) David wanted the right man to rule over Israel. Nation Israel had a close relationship to God, and David wanted that relationship to be continued with the right leadership. It is fascinating that neither of these things appear to specifically concern Solomon.

The NET Bible: *See 1:17 for the same expression. Throughout 2:1-11, Qoheleth evaluated the merits of merrymaking (2:1-3), accomplishing grand things (2:4-6), amassing great wealth (2:7-8), and secular acquisitions and accomplishments (2:9-10). Now, he reflects on the benefit in life in living wisely and not giving oneself over to frivolous self-indulgence.*⁴²²

Ecclesiastes 2:12 Then I looked back to consider wisdom, madness and folly; and I thought, what about the man who comes along after me? What sort of person is he? And he steps into a world where it has all been done already.

Ecclesiastes 2:12b: What of the man who comes after the king? (Commentators)

Dr. John Gill: *[i]t is...a vain thing for another man to come after me in the search of knowledge, in hopes of finding more than I have done.*⁴²³

⁴²¹ The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:12–17 (comment).

⁴²² From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 16, 2018.

⁴²³ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:12.

Ecclesiastes 2:12b: What of the man who comes after the king? (Commentators)

Dunagan: Solomon realizes that while someone after him might be able to duplicate his experiment, no man could ever exceed what he had done. So, others aren't going to find any different results than he found. He found the answer! Solomon didn't say, "Maybe I missed something, maybe I overlooked something..." What hope has anyone else in finding happiness in earthly things, seeing that he, the ideal candidate, failed?⁴²⁴

The Cambridge Bible: [These] words are apparently a kind of proverb. No other child of man could try the experiment under more promising conditions than a king like the Solomon of history, and therefore the answer to the question, What can such a man be or do?⁴²⁵

Clarke (speaking for Solomon): I have examined every thing proposed by science, by maddening pleasure, and by more refined and regulated mirth. I seized on the whole, and used them to the uttermost; and so far, that none ever shall be able to exceed me; as none can, in the course of things, ever have such power and means of gratification.⁴²⁶

Matthew Poole: *What can the man do*, to find out the truth in this matter, to discover the utmost satisfaction which was possibly to be found in pleasures? So this is added as a reason why he gave over the thoughts of pleasures, and directed them to another object, and why he so confidently asserted their vanity from his own particular experience, because he had made the best of them, and it was a vain thing for any private man to expect that from them which could not be found by a king, and such a king, who had so much wisdom to invent, and such vast riches to pursue and enjoy, all imaginary delights, and who had made it his design and business to search this to the bottom...[even a new] king...[he could] make no new discoveries as to this point.⁴²⁷

Benson: *For what can the man do* — To find out the truth in this matter; to discover the utmost satisfaction possible to be found in pleasure; *that comes after the king* — That succeeds me in this inquiry. So this is added as a reason why he gave over the pursuit of pleasures, and directed his thoughts to another object; and why he so confidently asserted the vanity of pleasures, from his own particular experience; namely, because he had made the best of them, and it was a vain thing for any private man to expect that from them which could not be found by a king, and such a king, who had so much wisdom to invent, and such great riches to pursue and enjoy all imaginable delights; and who had made it his design and business to search this matter to the bottom.⁴²⁸

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: A future investigator can strike nothing out "new," so as to draw a different conclusion from what I draw by comparing "wisdom and madness."...Grotius [translates], "*What man can come after (compete with) the king in the things which are done?*" None ever can have the same means of testing what all earthly things can do towards satisfying the soul; namely, worldly wisdom, science, riches, power, longevity, all combined.⁴²⁹

James Burton Coffman: Solomon meant by this that no one after him would be able to surpass his pursuit of fulfillment by his unlimited indulgence in everything that came to his mind. He had already done it all; and with the nearly limitless resources in his power, no one after him would be able to exceed the variety and extent of Solomon's extravagant and lustful indulgences.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁴ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:12.

⁴²⁵ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:12.

⁴²⁶ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:12.

⁴²⁷ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:12.

⁴²⁸ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:12 (slightly edited).

⁴²⁹ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:12.

⁴³⁰ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 2, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:12b: What of the man who comes after the king? (Commentators)

I think that Keil and Delitzsch probably expressed it the best: *The motive of Koheleth's purpose, to weigh wisdom and folly against each other as to their worth, consists in this, that a king, especially such an one as Solomon was, has in the means at his disposal and in the extent of his observation so much more than every other, that no one who comes after him will reach a different experience...Solomon...has a richer experience, [and] a more comprehensive knowledge.*⁴³¹

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *What can the man do that cometh after the King?* What will my successor do? He will probably, like the rest of the world, follow the well-worn path of sin and folly—even that which hath been already done—fulfilled in Rehoboam.⁴³²

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 2:12c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾêth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced ash-ER]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
kebâr (כֶּבֶד) [pronounced keh-b-AWR]	<i>an extent of time; formerly, already, long ago, a great while</i>	adverb	Strong's #3528 BDB #460
ʾāsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced ʿaw-SAWH]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to produce, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish</i>	3 rd person plural, Qal perfect; with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #6213 BDB #793

The NET Bible: *The Hebrew text reads עָשׂוּהוּ (ʿasuhu, “they have done it”; Qal perfect 3rd person masculine plural from עָשָׂה [ʿasah] + 3rd person masculine singular suffix). However, many medieval Hebrew mss read עָשָׂהוּ (ʿasahu, “he has done”; Qal perfect 3rd person masculine singular from עָשָׂה), reflected in the LXX and Syriac. The error was caused by dittography (ו, vav, written twice) or by orthographic confusion between ו and ה (hey) in הוּ (confused as הוּה) at the end of 2:12 and beginning of 2:13. The 3rd person masculine singular referent of עָשׂוּהוּ “what he has done” is the king, that is, Qoheleth himself. The referent (the king) has been specified in the translation for clarity.*⁴³³

The Pulpit Commentary: *For what can the man do that comes after the king? even that which has been already done. Both the Authorized Version and Revised Version render the passage thus, though the latter, in the margin, gives two alternative renderings of the second clause, viz. even him whom they made king long ago, and, as in the Authorized Version margin, in those things which have been already done.*

⁴³¹ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 2:12.

⁴³² *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:12.

⁴³³ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 17, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:12c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>The Pulpit Commentary continues: <i>The LXX; following a different reading, gives, "For what man is there who will follow after counsel in whatsoever things he employed it?" Vulgate, "What is man, said I, that he should be able to follow the King, his Maker?" Wright, Delitzsch, Nowack, etc; "For what is the man that is to come after the king whom they made so long ago?" i.e. who can have greater experience than Solomon made king in old time amid universal acclamation (1Chron. 29:22)? or, who can hope to equal his fame?—which does not seem quite suitable, as it is the abnormal opportunities of investigation given by his unique position which would be the point of the query...But the passage is obscure, and every interpretation has its own difficulty.</i>⁴³⁴</p>			

Translation: *They [those who came before him] had done it already.* I believe the idea here is, Solomon has gone out of his way to do all of the building and planting he believed necessary; he has left nothing for his son to do as king (but that clearly will not bother the king coming up).

Another translation and approach to this verse is, *he has done it already.* The idea being, Solomon can leave everything to his son to further his work, but really, what can his son do that Solomon himself has not already done?

There are differences in the text of the original book of Ecclesiastes, which would result in a difference in translation and then interpretation.

Stedman provides one interpretation, that Solomon had enough resources to virtually try every approach to life. "In case you want to try this or that," Solomon warns, "I already tried that and was able to do it bigger than you can. I have already registered my findings in this book."

The Cambridge Bible: *Even that which men did before. He shall tread the same weary round with the same unsatisfying results.*⁴³⁵

Benson: *As by others, so especially by myself. They can make no new discoveries as to this point. They can make no more of the pleasures of sense than I have done. Let me then try, once more, whether wisdom can give happiness.*⁴³⁶

Ecclesiastes 2:12 *Then I looked back to consider wisdom, madness and folly; and I thought, what about the man who comes along after me? What sort of person is he? And he steps into a world where it has all been done already.*

Summing up Ecclesiastes 2:12 (various commentators)

The Cambridge Bible tells us: *The verse is, however, obscure, and has been very variously rendered. So (1) the LXX., following another text, gives "What man will follow after counsel in whatsoever things they wrought it;" (2) the Vulgate, "What is man, said I, that he can follow the King, his Maker;" and (3) many modern interpreters. "What can the man do that comes after the king, whom they made long ago?" i.e. Who can equal the time-honoured fame of Solomon?*⁴³⁷

⁴³⁴ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:12 (slightly edited).

⁴³⁵ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:12.

⁴³⁶ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:12.

⁴³⁷ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:12.

Summing up Ecclesiastes 2:12 (various commentators)

Ray C. Stedman: *So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly; for what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what he has already done.* (Eccles. 2:12 RSV) *By that he means that no one can challenge or contest his judgment in this area because no one could exceed his resources; people who follow him can only repeat what he himself has done.*⁴³⁸

Barnes (speaking for Solomon): *What is any man – in this study of wisdom and folly – after one like me, who, from my position, have had such special advantages (see Eccles. 1:16, and compare Eccles. 2:25)...he can but do [the study] again: he is not likely to add to the result of my researches, nor even to equal them.*⁴³⁹

Dr. Peter Pett: *His next step was again to consider the combined ‘wisdom’ of men. He studied what was wise, he studied what was madness, he studied what was foolish and absurd. Having as king indulged himself in all the pleasures open to a king, and having found them to fail, what was left for him? Only to return to what he had already done. This was in itself proof of the folly of it all.*

Pett continues: *‘For what can a man (any man) do who follows what a king has done? Only what the king has already done’ This does not necessarily contrast himself as a man with the king. He is both the king and a man. As king he had had special advantages not open to ordinary men. Yet as a king, with the resources of a king, he had tried everything out, he had covered all the ground, he looked into everything. So what was any man, including himself, to do to follow that? All any man could do was repeat the same old thing.*⁴⁴⁰

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Solomon, even though he complained in the previous chapter that no one remembers what has been done in the past, his book, Ecclesiastes, still stands as a testimony to Solomon’s attempt to find contentment under the sun. His is one of the many books found in the Word of God, which remains the world’s #1 best seller, at the top of the charts for roughly 500 years now (since the invention of printing and the KJV of the Bible was developed).

The Pulpit Commentary: *What can any one effect who tries the same experiment as the king did? He could not do so under more favorable conditions, and will only repeat the same process and reach the same result.*

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *Many critics consider that Solomon is here speaking of his successor, asking what kind of man he will be who comes after him—the man whom some have already chosen? And certainly there is some ground for this interpretation in Eccles. 2:18–19, where the complaint is that all the king’s greatness and glory will be left to an unworthy successor. But this view requires the Solomonic authorship of the book, and makes him to refer to Rehoboam or some illegitimate usurper. The wording of the text is too general to admit of this explanation; nor does it exactly suit the immediate context, or duly connect the two clauses of the verse. It seems best to take the successor, not as one who comes to the kingdom, but as one who pursues similar investigations, repeats Koheleth’s experiments.*⁴⁴¹

Ecclesiastes 2:12 *Then I looked back to consider wisdom, madness and folly; and I thought, what about the man who comes along after me? What sort of person is he? And he steps into a world where it has all been done already.*

We often say, *this is for the children*; but what if they grow up to be useless adults?

⁴³⁸ From www.raystedman.org/ accessed July 27, 2018. Copyright © 2010 by Ray Stedman Ministries

⁴³⁹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:12.

⁴⁴⁰ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:12–17.

⁴⁴¹ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:12.

In giving another look at vv. 13–14, they appear to be closely connected. I put those translations together in many cases.

And I saw that there [is] an advantage to the wisdom more than the folly, as an advantage of the light more than the darkness.

Ecclesiastes
2:13

I observed that there [is] an advantage to wisdom over folly, just as [there is] an advantage of light over darkness.

I observed that wisdom is superior to folly, just as light is better than darkness.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	And I saw that there [is] an advantage to the wisdom more than the folly, as an advantage of the light more than the darkness.
Revised Douay-Rheims	And I saw that wisdom excelled folly, as much as light differs from darkness.
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	And I saw <u>by the spirit of prophecy</u> that there is an advantage to wisdom over folly, above the advantage of the light of the day over the darkness of night.
Peshitta (Syriac)	Then I saw that wisdom excels folly, just as light excels darkness.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	And I saw that wisdom excels folly, as much as light excels darkness.

Significant differences: Additional verbiage in the targum. In the Hebrew, there is an *advantage* of light over darkness; in the Latin, it is simply a difference between them.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	Then I saw that wisdom is better than foolish ways--as the light is better than the dark.
Easy English	I know that light is better than the dark. And I saw that it is better to be wise. To be a fool is worse.
Easy-to-Read Version--2001	I saw that wisdom is better than foolishness in the same way that light is better than darkness. It is like this: A wise man uses his mind like eyes to see where he is going. But a fool is like someone walking in the dark. But I also saw that the foolish man and the wise man both end the same way. {They both die.}. V. 14 is included for context.
Good News Bible (TEV)	So I started thinking about what it meant to be wise or reckless or foolish. Oh, I know, "Wisdom is better than foolishness, just as light is better than darkness. The wise can see where they are going, and fools cannot." But I also know that the same fate is waiting for us all. The GNB placed a portion of v. 13 with v. 14, which appears to make better sense. Vv. 13–14 are kept together here for context.
NIRV	I saw that wisdom is better than foolishness, just as light is better than darkness. The eyes of a wise person see things clearly. A person who is foolish lives in darkness. But I finally realized that death catches up with both of them. V. 14 is included for context.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	I reached the conclusion that wisdom is an advantage over folly just as light is an advantage over darkness.
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Contemporary English V.	And I discovered that wisdom is better than foolishness, just as light is better than darkness. Wisdom is like having two good eyes; foolishness leaves you in the dark. But wise or foolish, we all end up the same. V. 14 is included for context..
New Berkeley Version New Century Version	Then I realized that as light is better than darkness, so wisdom is better than folly. I saw that being wise is certainly better than being foolish, just as light is better than darkness. Wise people see where they are going, but fools walk around in the dark. Yet I saw that both wise and foolish people end the same way. V. 14 is included for context.
New Life Version	And I saw that wisdom is better than what is foolish, as light is better than darkness.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible Common English Bible	Missing from the AEB (which follows the LXX). I saw that wisdom is more beneficial than folly, as light is more beneficial than darkness.
Translation for Translators	And I thought, "Surely it is better to be wise than to be foolish, like light is better than darkness, <i>because wise people walk in the daylight and [IDI] can see where they are going, but foolish people walk in the darkness and cannot see where they are going.</i> " But I <i>also</i> realized that both wise people and foolish people eventually die. V. 14 is included for context.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible	I am to have perceived, there persists to wisdom an excelling over languorousness, as light excels over darkness.
Conservapedia Translation Ferrar-Fenton Bible	Then I realized that wisdom conquers folly, in the way that light conquers darkness. Then I saw that there is a result to Science, more than to Ignorance, as there is a result to Light, more than to Darkness.
HCSB	And I realized that there is an advantage to wisdom over folly, like the advantage of light over darkness.
Unlocked Literal Bible	Then I began to understand that wisdom has advantages over folly, just as light is better than darkness.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)	And I saw that there is profit in wisdom more than stupidity, as profit is in light more than darkness.
New English Bible–1970	Then I perceived that wisdom is more profitable than folly, as light is more profitable than darkness:...
New Jerusalem Bible	More is to be gained from wisdom than from folly, just as one gains more from light than from darkness; this, of course, I see:...
Revised English Bible–1989	I saw that wisdom is more profitable than folly, as light is more profitable than darkness:...

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	I saw that wisdom is more useful than foolishness, just as light is more useful than darkness.
The Complete Tanach	And I saw that wisdom has an advantage over folly, as the advantage of light over darkness.

over folly: That is wickedness.

exeGesés companion Bible And I saw that wisdom advantages over folly,
as far as light advantages over darkness.
JPS (Tanakh—1985) I found that Wisdom is superior to folly As light is superior to darkness;...
Orthodox Jewish Bible Then I saw that chochmah excelleth sichlut, as far as ohr excelleth choshech.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Amplified Bible Then I saw that [even secular] wisdom [that brings sorrow] is better than [the pleasures of] folly and self-indulgence as light excels darkness.
The Expanded Bible I saw that ·being wise is certainly better than being foolish [·there was more profit in wisdom than folly],
just as light is ·better [more profitable] than darkness.
Pastor John Griffith And I saw that wisdom excels folly (yatar - advantage - profit) The analogy he gives shows the breadth of the difference between the two! as light excels darkness.
- the wise person goes thru life with their eyes wide open – using clear thinking, discernment, while the fool operates as if in a dark room....no clue as to what is coming next.
Kretzmann's Commentary Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly as far as light excelleth darkness, he recognized the absolute worth of wisdom, he found that the one excluded the other, that folly is vain, empty, and unsubstantial.
NET Bible® I realized that wisdom is preferable to folly,⁵⁸
just as light is preferable to darkness:...
⁵⁸ Heb “and I saw that there is profit for wisdom more than folly.”
The Voice I realized that wisdom is better than folly, just as light is better than darkness.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Concordant Literal Version And I saw there is more advantage for wisdom than for frivolity Just as there is more advantage for light than for darkness;...
Context Group Version Then I saw that wisdom excels senseless shame, as far as light excels darkness.

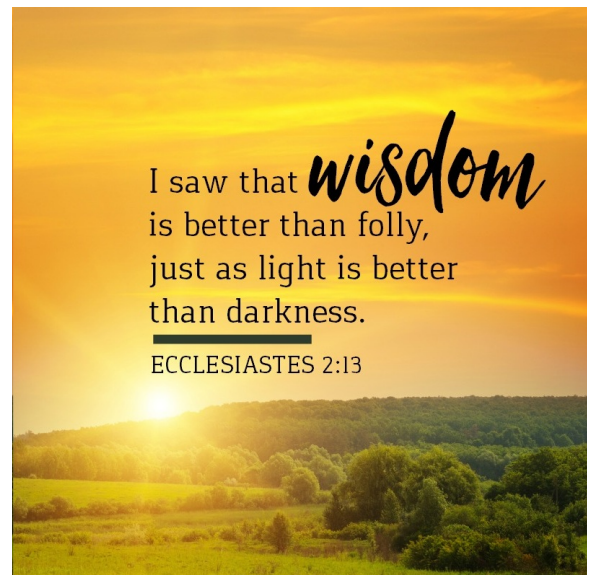
Ecclesiastes 2:13 (a graphic); from **KCIS 630 (Daily Verse)**; accessed September 7, 2018.

English Standard Version Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in light than in darkness.
Modern English Version Then I saw that there is more benefit in wisdom than in foolishness,
more benefit in light than in darkness.

World English Bible Then I saw that wisdom excels folly, as far as light excels darkness.

Young's Literal Translation And I saw that there is an advantage to wisdom above folly, like the advantage of the light above the darkness.

The gist of this passage: Solomon acknowledges wisdom is better than folly, just as light is better than darkness.



Ecclesiastes 2:13a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
râ'âh (רָאָה) [pronounced <i>raw-AWH</i>]	<i>to see, to look, to look at, to view, to behold; to observe; to perceive, to understand, to learn, to know</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #7200 BDB #906
'ânîy (אֲנִי) [pronounced <i>aw-NEE</i>]	<i>I, me; in answer to a question, it means I am, it is I</i>	1 st person singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #589 BDB #58
she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced <i>sheh</i>] or shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced <i>shehl</i>]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
yêsh (יֵשׁ) [pronounced <i>yaysh</i>]	<i>being, substance, existence; used as a substitute for to be (without reference to number or tense); there [is, are]; to be present, to be ready, to exist</i>	substantive	Strong's #3426 BDB #441
yithrôn (יֹתֵר) [pronounced <i>yihth-ROWN</i>]	<i>advantage, profit; preeminence, gain</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3504 BDB #452
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
châk ^e mâh (חָכְמָה) [pronounced <i>khawk^e-MAW</i>]	<i>wisdom [in all realms of life], doctrine in the soul; skill [in war]</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #2451 BDB #315
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>mihn</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
sik ^e luwth (תּוֹלָכֵשׁ) [pronounced <i>sihk-LOOTH</i>]	<i>folly, silliness, foolishness</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #5531 BDB #698

Translation: I observed that there [is] an advantage to wisdom over folly,... Solomon, in his study of life and wisdom has concluded that it is advantageous to be wise over against the person who can play the fool. One might assume that he came across this rather simple point by either playing the fool or being around those who were fools. That would have been when he looked to enjoy drinking, laughing and pleasure. He could see those living in the realm of folly from the inside, as it were.

There are things in life which seem to be maxims, if you will; or the very postulates of life—one of them being that wisdom is clearly better than folly. So Solomon takes what he believes to be a fundamental truth of life, and follows it out to its logical end.

We must bear in mind here that there are 2 kinds of wisdom—there is divine wisdom, which is what we learn in Bible class; and there is human viewpoint wisdom. In fact, human viewpoint wisdom can be divided up into two classes: divine establishment wisdom and current political climate wisdom. The former is somewhat worthwhile, even to the unbeliever. The latter is a collection of Satanic lies.

Ecclesiastes 2:13 I observed that wisdom is superior to folly, just as light is better than darkness.

Ecclesiastes 2:13a: The advantage of wisdom over folly (various commentators)

Matthew Poole: *Wisdom excels folly; although wisdom is not sufficient to make men truly and perfectly happy, yet it is of a far greater use and excellency than vain pleasures, or any other follies.*⁴⁴²

The Cambridge Bible: *There is profit in wisdom more than in folly, and so in the second clause. Something then had been gained by the experience. In language like that of the Stoics he sings the praises of wisdom. Even the wisdom that brings sorrow (ch. Eccles. 1:13) is better than the mirth of fools. A man is conscious of being more truly man when he looks before and after, and knows how to observe.*⁴⁴³

Benson: *Although wisdom is not sufficient to make men happy, yet it is of far greater use than vain pleasures, or any other follies.*⁴⁴⁴

Gill: *However, this upon a review of things he could not but own, that natural wisdom and knowledge, though there was no true happiness and satisfaction in them, yet they greatly exceeded folly and madness.*⁴⁴⁵

Dunagan: *Yes, prudence, caution, common-sense, wise planning and so on has its advantages (but for how long?).*⁴⁴⁶

Whedon: *Wisdom excels over folly — The verdict follows the comparison. While culture and study cannot bring abiding good, or freedom from sorrow, yet they yield a noble and delightful joy as compared with the indulgences of passions which we share with the brutes.*⁴⁴⁷

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge on the superiority of wisdom: Eccles. 7:11–12 9:16 Prov. 4:5–7 16:16 Mal. 3:18 4:1–2.⁴⁴⁸

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

The College Press Bible Study: *Wisdom here is the “earthly” wisdom previously discussed. Although it is not of the high level where “wisdom from above” is discovered, it still excels madness and folly as light excels darkness. Madness and folly have been identified as foolishness and silliness which is so often associated with those who are caught up in the sheer enjoyment of earthly things.*⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴² Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:13.

⁴⁴³ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:13.

⁴⁴⁴ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:13–14.

⁴⁴⁵ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:13.

⁴⁴⁶ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:13.

⁴⁴⁷ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 2:13 (slightly edited).

⁴⁴⁸ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Eccles. 2:13.

⁴⁴⁹ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:12–17 (comment).

Ecclesiastes 2:13b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kaph or k ^e (כ) [pronounced k ^e]	<i>like, as, just as; according to, after; about, approximately</i>	preposition of comparison, resemblance or approximation	No Strong's # BDB #453
yithrôn (יִתְרוֹן) [pronounced yihth- ROWN]	<i>advantage, profit; preeminence, gain</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #3504 BDB #452
'ôwr (אוֹר) [pronounced ohr]	<i>light [of the moon, of stars]; morning light, day-break, dawn; light [of life; of one's face]; light [of prosperity, of Bible doctrine, of Jehovah]</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #216 BDB #21
min (מִן) [pronounced mihn]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
chôshek ^e (חֹשֶׁק) [pronounced KHOH-shek ^e]	<i>darkness, obscurity, extraordinary [extreme] darkness; metaphorically for misery, adversity, sadness, wickedness; destruction; ignorance</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #2822 BDB #365

Translation: ...just as [there is] an advantage of light over darkness. Solomon says that this advantage of wisdom over folly is much like the advantage of light over darkness.

Light reveals all that is; darkness conceals it. So actual wisdom reveals to us what is; foolishness conceals or obscures it. So the first words of God at the restoration of the earth: "Let there be light!"

Ecclesiastes 2:13 I observed that wisdom is superior to folly, just as light is better than darkness.

Ecclesiastes 2:13b: Light excels darkness (various commentators)

Gill: *as far as light excels darkness; as the light of the day the darkness of the night; the one is pleasant and delightful, the other very uncomfortable; the one useful to direct in walking, the other very unsafe to walk in: light sometimes signifies joy and prosperity, and darkness adversity; the one is used to express the light of grace, and the other the darkness of sin and ignorance.*⁴⁵⁰

The Cambridge Bible: *Light is, after all, better than darkness, even if it only shows us that we are treading the path that leads to nothingness. The human heart obeys its instincts when it cries out with Aias, ἐν δὲ φάει καὶ ὄλεσσον. "And if our fate be death, give light, and let us die."*⁴⁵¹

⁴⁵⁰ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:13 (slightly edited).

⁴⁵¹ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:13 (slightly edited).

Ecclesiastes 2:13b: Light excels darkness (various commentators)

Matthew Poole: *Light is very pleasant and comfortable, and withal of great necessity and singular use to discover the differences of persons and things, to prevent mistakes and dangers, and to direct all a man's paths in the right way; whereas darkness is in itself doleful, and leads men into innumerable confusions, and errors, and miseries.*⁴⁵²

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge on light: Eccles. 11:7 Psalm 119:105, 130 Prov. 4:18–19 Matt. 6:23 Luke 11:34–35 Eph. 5:8.⁴⁵³

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 2:13 I observed that wisdom is superior to folly, just as light is better than darkness.

Ecclesiastes 2:13: Wisdom over folly is like light over darkness (commentators)

Arno Gaebelein: *While wisdom is superior to folly as far as light is superior to darkness, yet [human] wisdom cannot help man, cannot give him peace nor give him happiness.*⁴⁵⁴

The Pulpit Commentary: *[T]here is profit, advantage to wisdom over folly, as the advantage of light over darkness. This result, at any rate, was obtained—he learned that wisdom had a certain value, that it was as much superior to folly, in its effects on men, as light is more beneficial than darkness. It is a natural metaphor to represent spiritual and intellectual development as light, and mental and moral depravity as darkness (comp. Eph. 5:8; 1Thess. 5:5).*⁴⁵⁵

Ray C. Stedman has an interesting take on this verse: *Then I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness.* (Eccles. 2:13 RSV) *It is much better to go at it with your eyes open, he says. If you are going to pursue pleasure, at least do not throw yourself into it like a wild man. If you do so you will burn yourself out; you will get involved in things that you cannot imagine. It is like the difference between light and darkness. If there is any advantage to walking in light versus stumbling about in the darkness that is the difference between a wise and careful planning of pleasure and a foolish abandonment to it.*⁴⁵⁶

Clarke: *Then I saw that wisdom excels folly - Though in none of these pursuits I found the supreme good, the happiness my soul longed after; yet I could easily perceive that wisdom excelled the others, as far as light excels darkness.*⁴⁵⁷

Expositor's Bible Commentary: *It is characteristic of the philosophic temper of our author, I think, that, after pronouncing Wisdom and Mirth vanities in which the true Good is not to be found, he does not at once proceed to try a new experiment, but pauses to compare these two "vanities," and to reason out his preference of one over the other. His vanity is wisdom. For it is only in one respect that he puts mirth and wisdom on an equality, viz., that they neither of them are, or lead up to, the supreme Good. In all other respects he affirms wisdom to be as much better than pleasure as light is better than darkness, as much better as it is to have eyes that see the light than to be blind and walk in a constant gloom (Eccles. 2:12–14).*

⁴⁵² Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:13.

⁴⁵³ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Eccles. 2:13.

⁴⁵⁴ Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1–26.

⁴⁵⁵ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:13.

⁴⁵⁶ From www.raystedman.org/ accessed July 27, 2018. Copyright © 2010 by Ray Stedman Ministries

⁴⁵⁷ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:13 (slightly edited).

Ecclesiastes 2:13: Wisdom over folly is like light over darkness (commentators)

The Expositor's Bible Commentary continues: *It is because wisdom is a light and enables men to see that he accords it his preference. It is by the light of wisdom that he has learned the vanity of mirth, nay, the insufficiency of wisdom itself. But for that light he might still be pursuing pleasures which could not satisfy, or laboriously acquiring a knowledge which would only deepen his sadness. Wisdom had opened his eyes to see that he must seek the Good which gives rest and peace in other regions. He no longer goes on his quest in utter blindness, with all the world before him where to choose, but with no indication of the course he should, or should not, take. He has already learned that two large provinces of human life will not yield him what he seeks.*⁴⁵⁸

Dr. John Gill: *Now, just as the natural light exceeds darkness, and prosperity exceeds adversity and calamities, and a state of grace exceeds a state of sin and wickedness, so wisdom exceeds folly.*⁴⁵⁹

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 2:13 I observed that wisdom is superior to folly, just as light is better than darkness.

Many place vv. 13 and 14 together.

In the book of Proverbs, in many places, Solomon draws a distinction between the wise man and the fool. They are very different people and they lead very different lives. But here, in the next few verses, Solomon appears to question that point of view, suggesting that (1) both the wise and the foolish all die; (2) they go to the same place; and (3) both are forgotten.

In the previous verse, Solomon asserts that there is some benefit in having wisdom as opposed to being foolish, just as light is preferable to darkness—and he develops the superiority of wisdom further in v. 14:

The wise [man] his [two] eyes [are] in his head but the fool [is] in the darkness walking. And I knew also—[even] I—that a fate one befalls all of them.

Ecclesiastes
2:14

[Certainly,] the wise [man] has his eyes where they belong [lit, in his head], while the fool walks in darkness. And yet I know that one fate befalls both [lit., all] of them.

The wise man can see where he is going, but the fool is stumbling about in darkness. Nevertheless, I know that the same fate befalls both men.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)

The wise [man] his [two] eyes [are] in his head but the fool [is] in the darkness walking. And I knew also—[even] I—that a fate one befalls all of them.

Revised Douay-Rheims

The eyes of a wise man are in his head: the fool walks in darkness: and I learned that they were to die both alike.

V. Alexander's Aramaic T.

The wise man reflects in the beginning what there will be at last, and prays and averts the evil decree from the world; while the fool walks in darkness; and I also know that if the wise man does not pray, and avert the evil decree from the world, when retribution shall come upon the world, the same destiny shall befall them all..

⁴⁵⁸ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:12–23.

⁴⁵⁹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:13 (slightly edited).

Peshitta (Syriac)	The wise mans eyes are in his head; but the fool walks in darkness; and I myself perceived also that one misfortune happens to them all.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walks in darkness: and I perceived, even I, that one event shall happen to them all.
Significant differences:	The targum leaves out <i>eyes in his head</i> ; but inserts a whole lot of additional text. The Latin interprets <i>one event befalls them</i> (with <i>they were to die</i>).

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the foolish man goes walking in the dark; but still I saw that the same event comes to them all.
Easy English	A wise man looks where he is going. A fool shuts his eyes when he walks. But at the end of their lives, they both die.
Easy-to-Read Version—2006	I saw that wisdom is better than foolishness in the same way that light is better than darkness. Wise people use their minds like eyes to see where they are going. But for fools, it is as if they are walking in the dark. V. 13 is included for context.
God's Word™	A wise person uses the eyes in his head, but a fool walks in the dark. But I have also come to realize that the same destiny waits for both of them.
The Message	But I did see that it's better to be smart than stupid, just as light is better than darkness. Even so, though the smart ones see where they're going and the stupid ones grope in the dark, they're all the same in the end. One fate for all—and that's it. V. 13 is included for context.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	The wise man walks in the light as he is guided by the eyes in his head. The fool, the one who practices folly, goes forward blindly, stumbling along the path. Yet they are both influenced by chance and fate.
The Living Bible	Now I began a study of the comparative virtues of wisdom and folly, and anyone else would come to the same conclusion I did [literally, "for what can the man do who comes after the king?"]— that wisdom is of more value than foolishness, just as light is better than darkness; for the wise man sees, while the fool is blind. And yet I noticed that there was one thing that happened to wise and foolish alike— just as the fool will die, so will I. V. 13 is included for context.
New Berkeley Version	The wise man has eyes in his head, and the fool walks in darkness; but I myself know that one fate overtakes them both.
New Life Version	The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I know that one thing will happen to both of them.
New Living Translation	I thought, "Wisdom is better than foolishness, just as light is better than darkness. For the wise can see where they are going, but fools walk in the dark." Yet I saw that the wise and the foolish share the same fate. Both will die. V. 13 is included for context.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	And I thought, "Surely it is better to be wise than to be foolish, like light is better than darkness, because wise people walk in the daylight and can see where they are going, but foolish people walk in the darkness and cannot see where they are going." But I also realized that both wise people and foolish people eventually die. V. 13 is included for context.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	And though the wise may have eyes in their heads, The fools will still travel in darkness. The 3 rd line is missing from the AEB.
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Beck's American Translation	A wise man has eyes in his head, but a fool walks in the dark. But I also realized that both come to the same end.
International Standard V	The wise use their eyes, but the fool walks in darkness. I also perceived that the same outcome affects them all.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	I saw, indeed, that wisdom differed from folly as light from darkness; the wise man had eyes in his head, while the fool went his way benighted; but the ending of them? In their ending both were alike. V. 13 is included for context.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible	The eyes of He discreet are to be in his head, yet the languorous proceeds in darkness. I am to have learned that one befalling retains to chance to them,...
Conservapedia Translation	The wise man looks about and keeps an open mind; but the fool wanders in darkness; and I also realized that the world presents the same realities to them both. I took this to mean that reality is what it is for all, so you can face it with an open mind or wander aimlessly through life in foolishness.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	For the eyes of the Instructed are in his head; —the Ignorant goes in Darkness; —but yet I perceived myself also, that one event happens to all of them.
God's Truth (Tyndale)	For a wise man bears his eyes about in his head, but the fool goes in the darkness. I perceived also that they both had one end.
Jubilee Bible 2000	The wise man has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness: And I myself also understood that one event happens to the one and to the other.
Lexham English Bible	{The wise man can see where he is walking}, but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I also realized that both of them suffer the same fate.
Peter Pett's translation	Then I saw that wisdom exceeds folly, as much as light exceeds darkness. The wise man's eyes are in his head, and the fool walks in darkness. And yet I saw that one thing (or 'event') happened to them all. V. 13 is included for context.
Unlocked Literal Bible	The wise man uses his eyes in his head to see where he is going, but the fool walks in darkness, although I know the same destiny is in store for everyone.
Wikipedia Bible Project	The wise one, his eyes are in his head, and the foolish one, in darkness walks. and I also knew that the one thing will happen to all of them.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

The Heritage Bible	The eyes of the wise are in his head, and the stupid walks in darkness, and I knew by seeing also that one happening lights upon them all.
New American Bible (2011)	Wise people have eyes in their heads, but fools walk in darkness. Yet I knew that the same lot befalls both.* Eccl 9:2–3. * [2:14] Yet I knew...befalls both: the author quotes a traditional saying upholding the advantages of wisdom, but then qualifies it. Nothing, not even wisdom itself, can give someone absolute control over their destiny and therefore guarantee any advantage.
New Jerusalem Bible	The wise have their eyes open, the fool walks in the dark. No doubt! But I know, too, that one fate awaits them both.
Revised English Bible–1989	I saw that wisdom is more profitable than folly, as light is more profitable than darkness: the wise person has eyes in his head, but the fool walks in the dark. Yet I realized also that one and the same fate overtakes them both. V. 13 is included for context.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	The wise man has eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness.
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The Complete Tanach	<p>Yet the same fate awaits them all. The wise man has eyes in its beginning, but the fool goes in the darkness, and I too know that one event happens to them all.</p> <p>The wise man has eyes in its beginning: In the beginning of the matter, he observes what will be at its end.</p> <p>and I too know: Also, I, who praise the wise man over the fool, know that they both will die.</p>
exeGesés companion Bible	<p>The eyes of the wise are in his head; and the fool walks in darkness; and I also perceived that what happens to one, happens to all.</p>
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	<p>A wise man has his eyes in his head, Whereas a fool walks in darkness. But I also realized that the same fate awaits them both.</p>
Orthodox Jewish Bible	<p>The chacham (wise man) hath eyes in his rosh; but the kesil (fool) walketh in choshech; but I myself perceived also that the same mikreh (fortune) happeneth to them all.</p>

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	<p>The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness; and yet I know that [in the end] one fate happens to them both.</p>
The Expanded Bible	<p>Wise people ·see where they are going [^lhave eyes in their head], but fools walk around in the dark.</p> <p>Yet I know that both wise and foolish ·people end the same way [^lhave the same fate; ^cdeath].</p>
Pastor John Griffith	<p>The wise man's eyes are in his head, - shows discernment and recognizes the pitfalls of life but the fool walks in darkness. - the fool has no discernment And yet I know that one fate befalls them both. - the implication is that he is not the first to come to this conclusion.</p>
Kretzmann's Commentary	<p>The wise man's eyes are in his head, he uses them with proper observation and understanding; but the fool walketh in darkness, deliberately closing his eyes and his understanding to the advantages of true spiritual knowledge; and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all, they are all subject to death and decay.</p>
NET Bible®	<p>The wise man can see where he is going,⁵⁹ but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I also realized that the same fate⁶⁰ happens to them both.⁶¹</p> <p>^{59tn} Heb “has his eyes in his head.” The term עַיִן ('ayin, “eye”) is used figuratively in reference to mental and spiritual faculties (BDB 744 s.v. עַיִן 3.a). The term “eye” is a metonymy of cause (eye) for effect (sight and perception).</p> <p>^{60sn} The common fate to which Qoheleth refers is death.</p> <p>^{61tn} The term כֻּלָּם (kullam, “all of them”) denotes “both of them.” This is an example of synecdoche of general (“all of them”) for the specific (“both of them,” that is, both the wise man and the fool).</p>
Syndein/Thieme	<p>I saw the wise man has eyes in his head . . . while the fool walks in darkness. But I came to realize that the same fate would overtake us both. {Note: RBT says Solomon knows his son will succeed him who does turn out to be a fool and lose everything in one generation. But their ultimate fate is the same . . . physical death.}</p>
The Voice	<p><i>As the old saying goes:</i> The wise have eyes in their heads,</p>

but fools stumble in the darkness.
Yet I knew deep down that the same fate comes to both of them.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

C. Thompson (updated) OT	The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness. Nevertheless I knew that one event will happen to them all.
Concordant Literal Version	The wise man uses his eyes in his head, While the stupid man walks in darkness; Yet I realized indeed that the same destiny befalls them all."
Context Group Version	The wise man's eyes are in his head, and the shameless person walks in darkness: and yet I perceived that one event happens to them all.
English Standard Version	The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them.
Modern English Version	A wise man has eyes in his head so he sees where he walks, but the fool continues in darkness. Yet I perceived that the same fate overtakes them all.
World English Bible	The wise man's eyes are in his head, and the fool walks in darkness—and yet I perceived that one event happens to them all.
Young's Updated LT	The wise! —his eyes are in his head, and the fool in darkness is walking, and I also knew that one event happens with them all.

The gist of this passage: There appears to have been a saying at that time, that wise men could see where they were going (literally, their eyes were in their head), and fools could not. But Solomon adds a corollary to that saying: they are both going to die, no matter what.

Solomon here continues to pursue the life maxim that, wisdom is greater than folly. After all, the wise man can see where he is going and the fool just does whatever. So let's think about that, Solomon says.

Ecclesiastes 2:14a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
châkâm (חָכָם) [pronounced <i>khah-KAWM</i>]	<i>capable of knowing [judging]; intelligent, wise; skillful, adept, proficient; subtle, crafty</i>	masculine singular adjective with the definite article	Strong's #2450 BDB #314
<p>This word tends to be applied in a very positive way, even when those being spoken of might not be highly regarded in God's eyes. The Pharaoh of Egypt called in wise men in Ex. 7:11, just as the pharaoh of Joseph's day called in wise men in his era (Gen. 41:8). However, Joseph is proclaimed wise by the pharaoh in Gen. 41:39. This word can be applied to craftsmen who are well-skilled in their craft (Ex. 35:10). This word is used over and over again in the book of Proverbs (Prov. 3:5–7, 35) in a very positive sense. However, in 2Sam. 13:3, it is clearly used of a man who is intelligent, whose advice is accurate, but the intention is evil.</p>			
'êynayim (עֵינַיִם) [pronounced <i>gay-nah-YIM</i>]	<i>eyes, two eyes, literal eye(s), spiritual eyes; face, appearance, form; surface</i>	feminine dual noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5869 (and #5871) BDB #744
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's# none BDB #88

Ecclesiastes 2:14a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
רֹשׁ (שָׂאֵר אוֹ שֶׂאֵר) [pronounced <i>rohsh</i>]	<i>head [of a man, city, state, nation, place, family, priest], top [of a mountain]; chief, prince, officer; front, choicest, best; first; height [of stars]; sum</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7218 BDB #910

Translation: [Certainly,] the wise [man] has his eyes where they belong [lit, *in his head*],... I believe that these two lines make up a well-known saying from that era. All men have eyes in their heads; but the wise man uses his to look out ahead to see what will happen (he uses his wisdom to look at his current life as well as perceive potential future events).

Quite obviously, any person has eyes in his head. But when we compare this with what follows, the wise man can see where he is going; his wisdom sheds light on his movements in life.

Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man can see where he is going, but the fool is stumbling about in darkness. Nevertheless, I know that the same fate befalls both men.

Ecclesiastes 2:14a: The wise man has eyes in his head (various commentators)

Dr. John Gill: *The wise man's eyes are in his head*,.... And so are the eyes of every man; but the sense is, he makes use of them, he looks about him, and walks circumspectly; he takes heed to his goings, he foresees the evil, and avoids it; or the danger he is exposed unto, and guards against it.⁴⁶⁰

Benson: *The wise man's eyes are in his head* — In their proper place. He has the use of his eyes and reason, and foresees, and so avoids, many dangers and mischiefs.⁴⁶¹

Keil and Delitzsch: *the wise man...has eyes in his head*, - eyes truly seeing, looking at and examining persons and things.⁴⁶²

The Cambridge Bible: *The figurative language is so much of the nature of an universal parable that we need hardly look to any special source for it, but we are at least reminded of those that "walk on still in darkness," who have eyes and yet "see not" in any true sense of seeing (Isa. 6:10). In Prov. 17:24 we have the opposite form of the same thought: "The eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth."*⁴⁶³

Matthew Poole: *Therefore they can see, which they could not do if they were out of his head. He has the use of his eyes and reason, and sees his way, and orders all his affairs with discretion, and foresees, and so avoids, many dangers and mischiefs.*⁴⁶⁴

Whedon: *The reference is to the eyes of the understanding, the inward organ of spiritual knowledge.*⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶⁰ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:14.

⁴⁶¹ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:13–14 (slightly edited).

⁴⁶² Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 2:13–15.

⁴⁶³ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882–1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:14.

⁴⁶⁴ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:14 (slightly edited).

⁴⁶⁵ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 2:14.

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge on the wise: Eccles. 8:1 10:2–3 Prov. 14:8 17:24 1John 2:11.⁴⁶⁶

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Ecclesiastes 2:14b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
kêçîyl (כִּלְיָי) [pronounced kehss-EEL]	<i>fool, impious fool, stupid fellow, dullard, simpleton, arrogant one</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3684 BDB #493
Clarke: <i>stupid, stiff-necked, senseless.</i> ⁴⁶⁷			
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's# none BDB #88
chôshek ^e (חֹשֶׁךְ) [pronounced KHOH-shek ^e]	<i>darkness, obscurity, extraordinary [extreme] darkness; metaphorically for misery, adversity, sadness, wickedness; destruction; ignorance</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #2822 BDB #365
hâlak ^e (הִלָּךְ) [pronounced haw-LAHK ^e]	<i>is walking, is going, is departing, is advancing, is traveling</i>	Qal active participle	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229

Translation: ...while the fool walks in darkness. The fool, on the other hand, just walks in darkness. He does not really know where he is going or what he will encounter.

Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man can see where he is going, but the fool is stumbling about in darkness. Nevertheless, I know that the same fate befalls both men.

Ecclesiastes 2:14b: The fool walks in darkness (various commentators)

Dr. John Gill: *but the fool walks in darkness; his eyes are to the ends of the earth; he walks incautiously, without any circumspection or guard; he knows not where he is, nor where he is going, nor where he shall set his foot next, nor at what he may stumble; wherefore a wise man is to be preferred to a fool, as wisdom is to folly.*⁴⁶⁸

Benson: *But the fool walks in darkness — Manages his affairs ignorantly, rashly, and foolishly, whereby he shows that his eyes are not in his head, or are not used aright.*⁴⁶⁹

Matthew Poole: *[The fool] walks in darkness; he manages his affairs ignorantly, rashly, and foolishly, whereby he shows that his eyes are not in his head.*⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁶ Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Eccles. 2:14.

⁴⁶⁷ Adam Clarke, Commentary on the Bible; from e-Sword, Prov. 8:5.

⁴⁶⁸ Dr. John Gill, John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:14.

⁴⁶⁹ Rev. Joseph Benson, Commentary of the Old and New Testaments; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:13–14 (slightly edited).

⁴⁷⁰ Matthew Poole, English Annotations on the Holy Bible; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:14 (slightly edited).

Ecclesiastes 2:14b: The fool walks in darkness (various commentators)

Trapp: *He has neither sight nor light, but is acted and agitated by the prince of darkness, who holds his black hand before the eyou [all] of such men's minds and blinds their understandings.*⁴⁷¹

Whedon: *Darkness — Better, blindness, as contrasted with the seeing eyes just named.*⁴⁷²

Eyes here refer to having judgment and being able to look ahead and consider the future.

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Obviously, there is a great contrast between these two statements and these two sets of people.

Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man can see where he is going, but the fool is stumbling about in darkness. Nevertheless, I know that the same fate befalls both men.

Ecclesiastes 2:14a-b: The walking of the wise man and the fool (commentators)

The Bible Knowledge Commentary: *A wise man has the foresight to avoid danger while a fool gets into trouble as though he stumbles around in the dark (cf. Prov. 4:18-19).*⁴⁷³

Ray C. Stedman: *In other words, the wise man can foresee some of the results of what he is doing and perhaps avoid some of them so that the full impact of living for pleasure does not hit him as fast and as completely as it does the fool. Many have discovered this to be true. The newspapers every day tell of young people who gave themselves to the wild pursuit of pleasure who are now in jail, or burned out with drugs after a relatively short time. Solomon says it is better to pursue pleasure according to the way of the wise.*⁴⁷⁴

The Pulpit Commentary: *The wise man has the eyes of his heart or understanding enlightened (Eph. 1:18); he looks into the nature of things, fixes his regard on what is most important, sees where to go; while the fool's eyes are in the ends of the earth (Prov. 17:24); he walks on still in darkness, stumbling as he goes, knowing not where his road shall take him.*⁴⁷⁵

The College Press Bible Study: *The metaphor is wisely chosen in verse thirteen. Wisdom is likened to light while folly is likened to darkness. The contrast is sharpened in Eph. 5:8 and 1Thess. 5:5, because light is the symbol of truth from God, and darkness is the symbol of sin. It should be noted that Solomon makes a similar distinction in Eccles. 2:26 when he identifies the wise man as the "good" man, and the foolish man as the "sinner."*⁴⁷⁶

Jermin (from Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary): *Sensual pleasures dim the light of reason, and weaken man's power to direct his way. When the animal in man surmounts the rational, the eyes which should be the light of the body, are degraded to the dust, and blinded. The superior light, which the wise man of this world holds aloft to illuminate his path in life, does not prevent him from taking his last step into the darkness of the grave. The light that comes from beyond the sun can alone pierce that darkness.*⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷¹ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 2:14 (slightly edited).

⁴⁷² *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 2:14.

⁴⁷³ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:14 (additional reference there).

⁴⁷⁴ From www.raystedman.org/ accessed July 27, 2018. Copyright © 2010 by Ray Stedman Ministries

⁴⁷⁵ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:14 (slightly edited).

⁴⁷⁶ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:12–17 (comment).

⁴⁷⁷ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles 2:14 (suggestive comments).

John 11:10 [Jesus is speaking] "But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."

John 12:35–36a So Jesus said to them, "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." (ESV)

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Ecclesiastes 2:14c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or וַ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
yâda ^c (יָדָעַ) [pronounced <i>yaw-DAHĠ</i>]	<i>to know, to perceive, to acquire knowledge, to become acquainted with, to know by experience, to have a knowledge of something; to see; to learn; to recognize [admit, acknowledge, confess]</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #3045 BDB #393
gam (גַּם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i>]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, as well; even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168
ʾânîy (אֲנִי) [pronounced <i>aw-NEE</i>]	<i>I, me; in answer to a question, it means I am, it is I</i>	1 st person singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #589 BDB #58
she– (שֶׁ) [pronounced <i>sheh</i>] or shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced <i>shehl</i>]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
mîq ^e reh (מִקְרֵה) [pronounced <i>mik^e-REH</i>]	<i>an accident, a chance event, fortune, an unforeseen incident, a random occurrence, a fortunate or unfortunate incident; fate</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4745 BDB #899

From the verb qârâh (קָרָה) [pronounced *kaw-RAWH*] which means *to encounter, to meet, to befall*.

Barnes: *The word does not mean chance (compare Eccles. 9:1–2), independent of the ordering of Divine Providence: the Gentile notion of "mere chance," or "blind fate," is never once contemplated by the writer of this book, and it would be inconsistent with his tenets of the unlimited power and activity of God.*⁴⁷⁸

ʾechâd (אֶחָד) [pronounced <i>eh-KHAWD</i>]	<i>one, first, certain, only; each, every; but it can also mean a composite unity; possibly particular; anyone; same</i>	numeral adjective	Strong's #259 BDB #25
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ʾEchâd can function like an indefinite article, and be rendered *a certain [person, place or thing]*. ʾEchâd can be used elliptically to mean *one time, once*.

⁴⁷⁸ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:14.

Ecclesiastes 2:14c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
qârâh (קָרָה) [pronounced kaw-RAWH]	<i>to encounter, to meet, to go to meet</i> [this can be taken in a hostile sense]; <i>to happen, to befall</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7136 BDB #899
'êth (אֵת) [pronounced ayth]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced koh/]; also kol (כֹּל) [pronounced kol]	<i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #3605 BDB #481

Translation: And yet I know that one fate befalls both [lit., *all*] of them. Solomon adds his own corollary to this well-known saying of his day: wise men and foolish men both die. Solomon believes that there is the same fate which comes to both men.

This drives home the idea that Solomon is viewing this strictly from human viewpoint; both men die. That is no real revelation. For the believer (and unbeliever), it is important what happens after death.

Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man can see where he is going, but the fool is stumbling about in darkness. Nevertheless, I know that the same fate befalls both men.

Ecclesiastes 2:14c: The fool and the wise man have the same end (commentary)

The Open Bible: *Death is still at the end of the wisest life.*⁴⁷⁹

Whedon: *The "event" here mentioned is evidently death, so often in the writer's mind.*⁴⁸⁰

Dunagan: *[And yet, they] both die! (Hebrews 9:27). Great human wisdom is only profitable for a little while.*⁴⁸¹

Dr. John Gill: *Solomon's experience proved, and every man's does, that the same things befall wise men and fools; they are liable to the same diseases of body, and disasters of life; to poverty and distress, to loss of estate, children, and friends, and to death itself.*⁴⁸²

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *The worldly "wise" man has good sense in managing his affairs, skill and taste in building and planting, and keeps within safe and respectable bounds in pleasure, while the "fool" is wanting in these respects ("darkness," equivalent to fatal error, blind infatuation), yet one event, death, happens to both (Job. 21:26).*⁴⁸³

Benson: *That, notwithstanding this excellence of wisdom above folly, at last they both come to one end. Both are subject to the same calamities, and to death itself, which takes away all difference between them.*⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁷⁹ The Open Bible; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 861 (footnote).

⁴⁸⁰ Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 2:14.

⁴⁸¹ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:14.

⁴⁸² Dr. John Gill, John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:14.

⁴⁸³ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:13–14.

⁴⁸⁴ Rev. Joseph Benson, Commentary of the Old and New Testaments; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:13–14.

Ecclesiastes 2:14c: The fool and the wise man have the same end (commentary)

Arno Gaebelein: *Death, according to the conception of the natural man,...plunges the wise man and the fool into oblivion.*⁴⁸⁵

The Pulpit Commentary: *[This one event is] not chance; death is the final event. The word is translated "hap" in Ruth 2:3, and "chance" in 1Sam. 6:9; but the connection here points to a definite termination; nor would it be consistent with Koheleth's religion to refer this termination to fate or accident. With all his experience, he could only conclude that in one important aspect the observed superiority of wisdom to folly was illusory and vain. He saw with his own eyes, and needed no instructor to teach, that both wise and fool must succumb to death, the universal leveler.*⁴⁸⁶

The Geneva Bible: *For both die and are forgotten as in (Eccles. 2:16) or they both alike have prosperity or adversity.*⁴⁸⁷

Matthew Poole: *One event happens to them all; both are subject to the same calamities, and to death itself, which utterly takes away all difference between them.*⁴⁸⁸

Dr. Peter Pett: *[Solomon] was not undiscerning. He recognised that there was wisdom and that there was folly. And that the first was totally superior to the second, just as light is superior to darkness. The wise man sees where he is going. He uses discernment. He walks in the light. The fool blunders on in darkness, with his eyes closed. But all come to the same end. All experience the same final event. All die (compare Eccles. 3:19). All end in darkness.*⁴⁸⁹

J. Vernon McGee: *"I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all." Regardless of how smart you are, you don't really get too far away from the fool, because you both are going to be carried out feet forward and laid to rest somewhere. You both will end up in the same way.*⁴⁹⁰

So sang the Epicurean poet: "Omnes una manet nox, Et calcanda semel via lethi."

"One dark black night awaits us all;
One path of death we all must tread."⁴⁹¹

Heb 9:27 **Every person is destined to die once, and after that comes judgment.** (Son of Man Bible) Solomon's observations do not include the judgment.

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Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man can see where he is going, but the fool is stumbling about in darkness. Nevertheless, I know that the same fate befalls both men.

Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man can see where he is going, but the fool is stumbling about in darkness. Nevertheless, I know that the same fate befalls both men.

Poem of Unknown Origin (Adam Clarke)

The wise man's eyes, etc. - Well expressed by Choheleth: -

⁴⁸⁵ Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1–26.

⁴⁸⁶ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:14 (slightly edited).

⁴⁸⁷ Geneva Bible Translation Notes; courtesy of e-sword; 1599; Eccles. 2:14.

⁴⁸⁸ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:14.

⁴⁸⁹ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:13–14.

⁴⁹⁰ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt (chapter 2) accessed September 3, 2018.

⁴⁹¹ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:14.

Poem of Unknown Origin (Adam Clarke)

“The wise are circumspect, maturely weigh
The consequence of what they undertake,
Good ends propose, and fittest means apply
To accomplish their designs.”

But the fool walketh in darkness -

“But fools, deprived
Of reason’s guidance, or in darkness grope,
Or, unreflecting like a frantic man,
Who on the brink of some steep precipice
Attempts to run a race with heedless steps,
Rush to their own perdition.”

One event happeneth to them all -

“Though wide the difference, what has human pride
To boast? Even I myself too plainly saw,
That one event to both alike befalls;
To various accidents of life exposed,
Without distinction: nor can wisdom screen
From dangers, disappointments, grief, and pain.”

Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:14. Did Clarke write this himself?

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Ron Snider’s translation of Ecclesiastes 2:12–14 So I turned to consider wisdom, madness and folly, because what the man who will come after the king will do is what has already been done. And I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness. The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I know that one fate befalls them both.

Ecclesiastes 2:12–14: One certain fate awaits everyone (Ron Snider)

1. As we will see, the thoroughly gloomy conclusion of verse 11 does not cause Qoheleth to abandon his search for something that provides real meaning and satisfaction in the long term.
2. Having concluded his research into the pleasures of the senses, as well as the pleasures of accomplishment, Qoheleth uses the phrase I myself turned, or I turned myself to denote a shift to a different subject.
3. The waw should be understood as advancing the temporal narrative, and translated as then.
4. However, this is not an entirely new line of thought since he had alluded to the subject of wisdom in the first chapter. Eccles. 1:17
5. He had also introduced the subjects of madness and folly in chapter one, to which he now also re-turns.
6. The Hebrew construction is quite common and the use of the Qal infinitive construct with a prefixed ל (l) is designed to convey the purpose for his action.
7. The verb רָאָה (ra’ah-to see) is the most common term for observing something with the eyes; however, the word moves from merely seeing something to the idea of observing something, in-specting something, and/or evaluating something.
8. A lesser man might have stated at this point that he had come to his fixed conclusions; however, Qoheleth allows for the fact that he may have overlooked something.
9. Therefore, he takes up the subjects of wisdom, madness, and folly for a more careful examination.
10. Crenshaw understands the two terms as a hendiadys (the expression of an idea by the use of two independent words) and translates it as senseless folly.
11. While that is acceptable, one should recognize that the two terms are different and each has its own particular nuance.
12. The first term תְּוִלְאוֹת (holeluth-madness) is used to denote the irrational mental aspect of insanity; this

Ecclesiastes 2:12–14: One certain fate awaits everyone (Ron Snider)

form denotes the state of madness or insanity.

13. The second term סִכְלֹות (sikhloth-folly) denotes that which comes from those that lack moral or spiritual sense; it covers behaviors that stem from fear, proceed from rash decisions, and/or demon-strate distorted values.
14. In this case, Qoheleth used the method of seeking to understand and interpret something by comparing and contrasting it with its opposite.
15. He introduces his reason for investigating the concepts of wisdom, madness, and folly more carefully with the causal use of the conjunction yKi (kiy-because).
16. While the text is uncertain and difficult ancient versions are not in complete agreement as to what the original actually was, there are only a couple of possible translations.
17. As with many (if not most textual issues) the possible translations do not affect any doctrine; further, these problematic passages should not be used as proof texts when attempting to document a particular principle.
18. The first translation indicates that the successor to Qoheleth will do nothing more than Qoheleth intends to do in the course of his study, indicating that his successor will not exceed the depth or breadth of his investigation.
19. The second translation is not much different and simply understands the final verb as a passive (they have done it=it has been done), which indicates that any successor will simply investigate things as others before him have done.
20. In either case, Qoheleth is indicating that he intends to deal with these matters in an exhaustive fashion and provide a final conclusion that will effectively end further need for research.
21. No one will be able to effectively challenge his judgment in this area since no one could exceed his resources; at the very best, people who follow him can only repeat what he himself has done.
22. Some interpreters see a specific reference to Rehoboam, whose behavior would eventually divide the kingdom, but it seems more likely that this is just a general reference to anyone that would attempt to deal with these issues after Solomon.
23. Although Qoheleth will assert that earthly wisdom is vanity since it provides no advantage in death, he will concede that wisdom does have advantages over folly in the short term.
24. The idea is that wisdom only has a relative, temporary advantage over folly, but that advantage is only good while one lives.
25. Although he does acknowledge that wisdom is superior to folly, he will later acknowledge that intelligent conduct may not always produce a desirable result. Eccles. 2:21, 9:11
26. Qoheleth compares the opposing ideas of wisdom and folly with the opposites of light and darkness.
27. Wisdom, the Divine viewpoint of life, is found in God's word and is often linked to the concept of light. Ps. 36:9, 43:3, 119:105
28. Folly, on the other hand, represents the extreme the path the foolish choose and it will eventually lead them into utter darkness. Prov. 5:23, 12:23, 13:16, 15:21
29. Any thinking person should recognize that light is superior to darkness since it illuminates the world and allows one to see clearly.
30. In that regard, wisdom is superior to folly in that it allows one to face the realities of the world in an intelligent fashion.
31. Qoheleth summarizes his approach about the superiority of wisdom by contrasting the wise person with the fool.
32. He states that the wise man's eyes are in his head, which is designed to communicate that he is perceptive, can see the world clearly, has discernment, and is thus able to make sound decisions and manage his life well.
33. On the other hand, the fool walks in darkness, which indicates that he orders his conduct without the benefit of actually seeing the world; this is obviously a formula for disaster.
34. The contrast is between the wise, who are able to successfully navigate this life, with the fool, who cannot effectively handle the issues that confront him in the here and now.
35. One should be aware that the fool is not one who is mentally deficient; he is not someone who cannot learn the truths of wisdom.

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36. Rather, he is someone that chooses to operate apart from the principles of wisdom, since he refuses to listen and learn the truth.
37. In some cases, the fool is one that does not even acknowledge the existence of God (Ps. 14:1), while other fools are aware of His existence but simply ignore His plan. Rom. 1:21-22
38. The fool is one that does not properly fear God and he demonstrates his arrogance in any number of ways. Eccles. 4:5, 10:3,14; Prov. 14:1, 29:9
39. The fool rejects the sound principles of the truth and ignores the good advice that is made available to him, which leads to disastrous results. Prov. 1:20-33
40. The final portion of verse 14 now makes it plain that Qoheleth is troubled by the fact that the reality of death makes all human distinctions irrelevant in the end.
41. The grammar is somewhat emphatic, as Qoheleth states that I know, even I myself, and his purpose seems to be that others have already made similar observations with which he agrees.
42. While wisdom and folly are relative in the near term, in the long-term future, death is the one absolute that will take all men.
43. Solomon employs a cognate construction, which the New American Standard has translated as the one fate that befalls all of them.
44. The Hebrew term מִקְרָה (miqreh), which is translated as fate is not to be understood as some impersonal, mysterious power that is beyond God's control.
45. It has a far more neutral connotation and denotes that which happens or occurs to an individual over which there is no control.
46. One cannot determine the manner and timing of death; however, one can be assured that even though death may be unpredictable, it is certain.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#); accessed September 2, 2018 (will open as a Word Document on your computer).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

V. 15 continues the theme of vv. 13–14.

And I said, I, in my heart, as fate of the fool, also me—he happens [to] me. And for why I was wise, me, then, an advantage? And I spoke in my heart, that also this a breath.

Ecclesiastes
2:15

And I said—[even] I—within my heart, as the fate of the fool, so also [to] me—it happens [to] me [as well]. So why then was I more wise? I said within my heart that this also [is] empty [or, *breath*].

I said to myself, the very end of the fool, will that not happen to me as well? So, how exactly am I smarter than the fool? I admitted to myself that wisdom itself is empty, like a breath.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	And I said, I, in my heart, as fate of the fool, also me—he happens [to] me. And for why I was wise, me, then, an advantage? And I spoke in my heart, that also this a breath.
Revised Douay-Rheims	And I said in my heart: If the death of the fool and mine shall be one, what does it avail me, that I have applied myself more to the study of wisdom? And speaking with my own mind, I perceived that this also was vanity.
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	And I said in my heart, a destiny like that of <u>Saul, the son of Kish, the king, who turned aside, and did not keep the commandment given to him about Amalek, and</u>

the kingdom was taken from him, will also befall me; and why then am I wiser than he? And I said in my heart, that also this is vanity, and there is nothing except the decree of the Lord.

Peshitta (Syriac)	Then I said in my heart, The misfortune of the fool will happen to me also; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, This also is vanity.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	And I said in my heart, As the event of the fool is, so shall it be to me, even to me: and to what purpose have I gained wisdom? I said moreover in my heart, This is also vanity, <u>because the fool speaks of his abundance</u> .
Significant differences:	The targum replaces the word <i>fool</i> with a whole lot of text. There are also some additional words in the Latin and Greek.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	Then said I in my heart: As it comes to the foolish man, so will it come to me; so why have I been wise overmuch? Then I said in my heart: This again is to no purpose.
Easy English	Then I thought to myself, 'Like the fool, I will die. So, if I am wise, there is no value in it.' I said to myself, 'This too means nothing.'
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	I also saw that fools and wise people both end the same way. I thought to myself, "The same thing that happens to a fool will also happen to me. So why have I tried so hard to become wise?" I said to myself, "Being wise is also useless." V. 14b is included for context.
Good News Bible (TEV)	I thought to myself, "What happens to fools is going to happen to me, too. So what have I gained from being so wise?" "Nothing," I answered, "not a thing."
<i>The Message</i>	When I realized that my fate's the same as the fool's, I had to ask myself, "So why bother being wise?" It's all smoke, nothing but smoke.
Names of God Bible	I thought to myself, "If the destiny that waits for the fool waits for me as well, then what is the advantage in being wise?" So I thought that even this is pointless.
NIRV	Then I said to myself, "What happens to a foolish person will catch up with me too. So what do I gain by being wise?" I said to myself, "That doesn't have any meaning either."

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	Then I said to myself, "I am a wise man, but one day I shall lie in the grave along side the fool. What advantage has my wisdom been to me?" Looking at it from that angle, I concluded that this too was futility.
Contemporary English V.	Finally, I said to myself, "Being wise got me nowhere! The same thing will happen to me that happens to fools. Nothing makes sense.
The Living Bible New Berkeley Version	So of what value is all my wisdom? Then I realized that even wisdom is futile. Then I said to myself, "What happens to the fool will also happen to me; why then have I acted so extremely wise?" And I said to myself, "This, too, is futile."
New Century Version	I thought to myself, "What happens to a fool will happen to me, too, so what is the reward for being wise?" I said to myself, "Being wise is also useless."
New Life Version	Then I said to myself, "What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?" So I said to myself, "This also is for nothing."

New Living Translation	So I said to myself, "Since I will end up the same as the fool, what's the value of all my wisdom? This is all so meaningless!"
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	So I said to myself, "I am very wise, but I will die at the end of my life like foolish people do. So how has it benefited me to be very wise? I do not understand why people consider that it is valuable to be wise.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	I also realized that both them and I Will eventually all meet together. So, in my heart I said this: 'Since the fate of fools will also take me; What value is there in my wisdom?' And I also said this in my heart: 'The things that I've said about being a fool Are also just [wasted breath];... I believe v. 14 was added for context.
Beck's American Translation	I was thinking, the same thing that happens to a fool happens to me; what then is the good of my being wiser? So I concluded this too is a vapor.
International Standard V	The Pointlessness of Life Then I told myself, "Whatever happens to the fool will happen also to me. Therefore what's the point in being so wise?" And I told myself that this also is pointless.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	Why then (I said to myself), if fool and I must come to the same end at last, was not I the fool, that toiled to achieve wisdom more than he? So my thoughts ran, and I found labour lost, here too.
Translation for Translators	So I said to myself, "I am very wise, but I will <i>die at the end of my life</i> like foolish people do. So ◀how has it benefited me to be very wise?/it certainly has not benefited me to be very wise.▶ [RHQ] I do not understand <i>why people consider that</i> it is valuable to be wise.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Alpha & Omega Bible	AND I SAID IN MY HEART, AS THE EVENT OF THE FOOL IS, SO SHALL IT BE TO ME, EVEN TO ME: AND TO WHAT PURPOSE HAVE I GAINED WISDOM? I SAID MOREOVER IN MY HEART, THIS IS ALSO VANITY, BECAUSE THE FOOL SPEAKS OF HIS ABUNDANCE.
Awful Scroll Bible	...because of that, I am to have said in <i>the sensibility of</i> my heart, "That befalling to the languorous retains to chance to me also - am I to have been more wise?" - Even am I to have been he who said in <i>the sensibility of</i> my heart, "It is to vapor!" -
Conservapedia Translation	I realized that it happens to the fool just as it happens to me; so what makes me the wiser? Then I realized that this also is vanity.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	As it happens to the Ignorant, so it will also happen to me !—Then why am I more instructed than the rest? So I mid in my mind that also is useless!
God's Truth (Tyndale)	Then thought I in my mind: If it happens unto the fool as it does unto me, what needs me then to labor any more for wisdom? So I confessed within my heart, that this also was but vanity.
Lexham English Bible	So I said {to myself}, "{If I also suffer the same fate as the fool}, {what advantage is my great wisdom}?" So I said {to myself}, "This also [is] vanity!"
NIV, ©2011	Then I said to myself, "The fate of the fool will overtake me also. What then do I gain by being wise?" I said to myself, "This too is meaningless."
Tree of Life Version	Then said I in my heart:

"I, even I, will have the same destiny as a fool.
So why have I become so wise?"

I said in my heart, "This too is meaningless."

Unlocked Literal Bible

Then I said in my heart, "What happens to the fool, will also happen to me. So what difference does it make if I am very wise?" I concluded in my heart, "This too is only vapor."

Wikipedia Bible Project

And I said to myself, as will happen to the fool, so it will happen to me. And for what have I become so wise? And I said to myself, that this too is a mirage.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)

But it dawned on me that the same fate overtakes them both. And I thought, "If the fate of the fool will be mine as well, what did my wisdom profit me?" I thought to myself that, too, is meaningless. V. 14b is included for context.

New American Bible (2002)

So I said to myself, if the fool's lot is to befall me also, why then should I be wise? Where is the profit for me? And I concluded in my heart that this too is vanity..

New American Bible (2011)

So I said in my heart, if the fool's lot is to befall me also, why should I be wise? Where is the profit? And in my heart I decided that this too is vanity.

New English Bible—1970

So I said to myself, 'I too shall suffer the fate of the fool. To what purpose have I been wise? What [prob. rdg, Heb Then] is the profit of it? Even this', I said to myself, 'is emptiness.

New Jerusalem Bible

'Since the fool's fate', I thought to myself, 'will be my fate too, what is the point of my having been wise?' I realised that this too is futile.

Revised English Bible—1989

So I thought, "I too shall suffer the fate of the fool. To what purpose have I been wise? Where is the profit? Even this", I said to myself, "is futile.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible

So I said to myself, "If the same thing happens to the fool as to me, then what did I gain by being wise?" and I thought to myself, "This too is pointless.

The Complete Tanach

And I said to myself, "As it happens to the fool, so will it happen to me too, so why then did I become wiser?" And I said to myself that this too is vanity.

And I said to myself, etc.: i.e., since they will both die, perhaps I will think in my heart from now on that as it happens to the wicked man, so will it happen to me. So why should I be more righteous?

And I said to myself: that if I think so, that is vanity, for the remembrances of the wise man and the fool are not equal. After their deaths, both of them will not be remembered together, for this one will be remembered for good, and this one will be remembered for evil.

exeGesés companion Bible

And I said in my heart,
As happens to the fool, happens even to me.
Why then am I more enwisened?

JPS (Tanakh—1985)

And I worded in my heart, that this also is vanity.
So I reflected: "The fate of the fool is also destined for me; to what advantage, then, have I been wise?" And I came to the conclusion that that too was futile, because the wise man, just like the fool, is not remembered forever; for, as the succeeding days roll by, both are forgotten. Alas, the wise man dies, just like the fool! V. 16 is included for context.

Orthodox Jewish Bible

Then said I in my lev, As the mikreh befalls the kesil, so also will the same mikreh befall me; and wherein have I then been of more chochmah? Then I said in my lev, This also is hevel.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible	I ·thought to myself [·said in my heart], “·What happens to a fool will happen to me [· The fate of the fool is my fate], too, so ·what is the reward for being [· why have I become so] wise?” I said to myself, “·Being wise [· This] is also useless [1:2].”
Pastor John Griffith	Then I said to myself, "As is the fate of the fool, it will also befall me. Why then have I been extremely wise?" - The question he raises here is where is the long term advantage to having wisdom? - The answer is there is none! So I said to myself, "This too is vanity." (HEBEL) futility – here with the idea of being senseless, makes no sense to man that both have the same end.
Kretzmann's Commentary	Then said I in my heart, in considering this apparent puzzle, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me, literally, "I also, it will happen to me"; and why was I then more wise? The possession of great knowledge in itself, without being placed into service, is of little value. Then I said in my heart that this also is vanity, namely, that so far as death in itself is concerned, the same fate awaits them both.
NET Bible®	So I thought to myself, “The fate of the fool will happen even to me! ⁶² Then what did I gain by becoming so excessively ⁶³ wise?” ⁶⁴ So I lamented to myself, ⁶⁵ “The benefits of wisdom ⁶⁶ are ultimately ⁶⁷ meaningless!” ^{64tn} Heb “And why was I wise (to) excess?” The rhetorical question is an example of negative affirmation, expecting a negative answer: “I gained nothing!” (E. W. Bullinger, Figures of Speech, 949). ^{65tn} Heb “So I said in my heart.” ^{66tn} Heb “and also this,” referring to the relative advantage of wisdom over folly. ^{67tn} The word “ultimately” does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.
Syndein/Thieme	Then I thought in my heart/'right lobe', 'the fate of the fool . . . will overtake me also!' What do I gain by being wise {in human viewpoint type knowledge}? This too is meaningless. {Note: Here Solomon is realizing he is trying to rely on his children for happiness and that is no pressure any parent should put on their children!}
The Voice	I said to myself, “Why do I try to be wise when my fate is the same as that of the fool? This pursuit is fleeting too.”

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Charles Thompson OT	Therefore I said in my heart, As the same event will happen to me as happeneth to the fool, why have I studied wisdom? Why communed abundantly with my heart? Because even this is vanity; (since out of an abundance the fool speaketh)
Concordant Literal Version	So I said in my heart, Since the destiny of the stupid man is also mine, and it shall befall me, To what advantage then have I been wise? Hence I spoke in my heart, This too is vanity.”
Context Group Version	Then I said in my heart, As it happens to the shameless person, so it will happen even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is emptiness.
<i>Emphasized Bible</i>	Then said, I, in my heart, As it happeneth to the dullard, even to me, will it happen, but wherefore, then, became, I, wise to excess? Therefore spake I, in my heart, Even this, is vanity.
English Standard Version	Then I said in my heart, "What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?" And I said in my heart that this also is vanity.

New American Standard B. Then I said to myself [Lit *in my heart*], “As is the fate of the fool, it will also befall me. Why then have I been extremely wise?” So I said to myself [Lit *I spoke in my heart*], “This too is vanity.”

Young’s Updated LT And I said in my heart, “As it happens with the fool, it happens also with me, and why am I then more wise?” And I spoke in my heart, that also this is vanity.

The gist of this passage: Solomon questions his own wisdom, given that he will die just as the fool will die. This strikes him as empty and meaningless.

Solomon is still comparing having wisdom as compared to the fool. So here is Solomon, the wise one, who can see where he is going, who can consider this and that factor; and there is also the fool. But, when all is said and done—when life comes to an end—what is really Solomon’s superiority?

Ecclesiastes 2:15a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong’s # BDB #251
’âmar (אמר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i>]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong’s #559 BDB #55
’ânîy (אני) [pronounced <i>aw-NEE</i>]	<i>I, me; in answer to a question, it means I am, it is I</i>	1 st person singular, personal pronoun	Strong’s #589 BDB #58
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong’s# none BDB #88
lêb (לב) [pronounced <i>lay^bv</i>]	<i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking; midst</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong’s #3820 BDB #524
kaph or k ^e (כ) [pronounced <i>k^e</i>]	<i>like, as, just as; according to, after; about, approximately</i>	preposition of comparison, resemblance or approximation	No Strong’s # BDB #453
mîq ^e reh (מקרה) [pronounced <i>mik^e-REH</i>]	<i>an accident, a chance event, fortune, an unforeseen incident, a random occurrence, a fortunate or unfortunate incident; fate</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong’s #4745 BDB #899
kêçîyl (כחיל) [pronounced <i>kehss-EEL</i>]	<i>fool, impious fool, stupid fellow, dullard, simpleton, arrogant one</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong’s #3684 BDB #493
gam (גם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i>]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, as well; even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong’s #1571 BDB #168
’ânîy (אני) [pronounced <i>aw-NEE</i>]	<i>I, me; in answer to a question, it means I am, it is I</i>	1 st person singular, personal pronoun	Strong’s #589 BDB #58

Ecclesiastes 2:15a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
The NET Bible: <i>The emphatic use of the 1st person common singular personal pronoun אָנִי ('ani, "me") with the emphatic particle of association גַּם (gam, "even, as well as"; HALOT 195–96 s.v. גַּם) appears to emphasize the 1st person common singular suffix on יִבְרָקֵי (yiqreni) "it will befall [or "happen to"] me" (Qal imperfect 3rd person masculine singular + 1st person common singular suffix from בְּרָקָה, qaraha, "to befall; to happen to"); see GKC 438 §135.e. Qoheleth laments not that the fate of the wise man is the same as that of the fool, but that even he himself – the wisest man of all – would fare no better in the end than the most foolish.</i> ⁴⁹²			
qârâh (בְּרָקָה) [pronounced kaw-RAWH]	to encounter, to meet, to go to meet [this can be taken in a hostile sense]; to happen, to befall	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #7136 BDB #899

Translation: And I said—[even] I—within my heart, as the fate of the fool, so also [to] me—it happens [to] me [as well]. Based upon all that has happened to Solomon in his life, thus far, he has to admit that, his end and the end of the fool is the same. The same fate befalls them both. They will both die.

Interestingly enough, Solomon could use the words *death, dying*; but he doesn't until he gets to v. 16. Perhaps in his state of carnality,⁴⁹³ it was hard for him to face or to admit to death.

Ecclesiastes 2:15 I said to myself, the very end of the fool, will that not happen to me as well? So, how exactly am I smarter than the fool? I admitted to myself that wisdom itself is empty, like a breath.

Ecclesiastes 2:15a: What benefit is Solomon's wisdom? (Various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *[Solomon] applies the general statement of Eccles. 2:14 to his own case. The end that overtakes the fool will ere long overtake him.*⁴⁹⁴

Benson: *What benefit have I by my wisdom? or, to what purpose did I take so much pains to get wisdom.*⁴⁹⁵

The Cambridge Bible: *The very wisdom of the seeker might lead him to see that he has not only been wiser than others, but wiser than it was wise to be. The last word is almost identical with the "profit" which occurs so frequently. He found that he had a surplus of wisdom, and that it was but surplusage.*⁴⁹⁶

Robertson (from Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary): *To the wise man of the world, there is humiliation in the thought of the disgraceful necessity of death. But Jesus has passed through the tomb and sanctified it, so that for the Christian, death becomes the gate of life. No one who has learned the knowledge of the holy will have mournfully to ask when his last hour draws near—"Why was I then more wise?" For such a man, the tree of knowledge becomes the tree of life.*

⁴⁹² From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 17, 2018.

⁴⁹³ My assumption is, Solomon thought these thoughts and perhaps even taught them while carnal; but he assembles this book when filled with the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁹⁴ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:15.

⁴⁹⁵ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:15–16.

⁴⁹⁶ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:15.

Ecclesiastes 2:15a: What benefit is Solomon's wisdom? (Various commentators)

Robertson continues: *A man is placed in a high situation, receives an expensive education at school or college, and a still more expensive one of time and experience. And then, just when we think all this ripe wisdom, garnered up from so many fields, shall find its fullest use, we hear that all is over, he has passed from among us, and the question, hideous in its suggestiveness, arises—"Why was he then more wise?" Asked from this world's stand-point—if there is no life beyond the grave, then the mighty work of God is all to end in nothingness. But if this is only a state of infancy, only the education for eternity, then to ask why such a mind is taken from us is just as absurd as to question why the tree of the forest has its first training in the nursery garden. This is but the nursery ground, from whence we are to be transplanted into the great forest of God's eternal universe. There is an absence of all distinction between the death of one man and another. The wise man dies as the fool with respect to circumstances.*⁴⁹⁷

Dr. John Gill: *The wisest of kings, and the wisest of men; that is, he looked over things in his mind, and considered what had befallen him, or what were his present circumstances, or what would be his case, especially at death; and said within himself, the same things happen to me, who have attained to the highest pitch of wisdom, as to the most errant fool; and therefore no true happiness can be in this sort of wisdom.*⁴⁹⁸

Dunagan: *I wonder how many successful people, how many really famous people have thought the same thing? If this life is really all there is, then in the end the fool and the wise man are equal!*⁴⁹⁹

Kidner: *It is little use commending to us the ultimate worth of wisdom, if in the end none of us will be around to exercise it, let alone to value it.*⁵⁰⁰

Trapp: *It is with men as with counters, though in the account one stand for a penny, another for a pound, yet in the bag there is no difference; so here in the event all our wisdom is soon refuted with one black Theta, which understanding us not, snaps us irrespectively [and] without distinction, and puts at once a period to our reading and to our being.*⁵⁰¹

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 2:15b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
mâh (מַה) [pronounced maw]	<i>what, how, why</i>	interrogative; exclamatory particle	Strong's #4100 BDB #552

⁴⁹⁷ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:12–16 (suggestive comments).

⁴⁹⁸ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:15.

⁴⁹⁹ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:15.

⁵⁰⁰ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:15.

⁵⁰¹ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 2:15 (slightly edited).

Ecclesiastes 2:15b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
châkam (חָכַם) [pronounced <i>khaw-KHAHM</i>]	<i>to be wise, to become wise</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #2449 BDB #314
'ânîy (אֲנִי) [pronounced <i>aw-NEE</i>]	<i>I, me; in answer to a question, it means I am, it is I</i>	1 st person singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #589 BDB #58
'âz (אָז) [pronounced <i>awz</i>]	<i>then, after that, at that time, in that case (when following an if or though), now, as things are; that being so, therefore, because of that</i>	a temporal/resultant adverb	Strong's #227 BDB #23
yôwthêr (רַתִּי) [pronounced <i>yoh-THAYR</i>]	1) <i>superiority, advantage, excess (noun masculine);</i> 2) <i>excess, better (adverb);</i> 3) <i>besides, moreover, more (conjunction)</i>	masculine singular noun; adverb; conjunction	Strong's #3148 BDB #452

The NET Bible: *The adjective רַתִּי (yoter) means “too much; excessive,” e.g., 7:16 “excessively righteous” (HALOT 404 s.v. רַתִּי 2; BDB 452 s.v. רַתִּי). It is derived from the root יָתַר (yeter, “what is left over”); see HALOT 452 s.v. יָתַר. It is related to the verbal root רָתַי (Niphal “to be left over”; Hiphil “to have left over”); see HALOT 451–52 s.v. רָתַי. The adjective is related to יִתְרוֹן (yitron, “advantage; profit”) which is a key-term in this section, creating a word-play: The wise man has a relative “advantage” (יִתְרוֹן) over the fool (2:13-14a); however, there is no ultimate advantage because both share the same fate, i.e., death (2:14b-15a).*

The NET Bible continues: *Thus, Qoheleth's acquisition of tremendous wisdom (1:16; 2:9) was “excessive” because it exceeded its relative advantage over folly: it could not deliver him from the same fate as the fool. He had striven to obtain wisdom, yet it held no ultimate advantage.*⁵⁰²

Translation: *So why then was I more wise?* He asks himself, *just how am I more wise than the fool? What benefit is it that I am wise and he was a fool? Perhaps his wisdom is illusory? Or the benefits of his wisdom is meaningless? Bear in mind that these are questions being asked by the man under the sun.*

Consider this: wisdom does not insure that a person always does the right thing; it does not even insure that a person is always right.

James Waddey: *Solomon reached this conclusion while alienated from God and while seeking answers through purely worldly wisdom. The Holy Spirit gives us a true record of what he said, but does not guarantee the correctness of his conclusion (which was totally in error).*⁵⁰³

Ecclesiastes 2:15 *I said to myself, the very end of the fool, will that not happen to me as well? So, how exactly am I smarter than the fool? I admitted to myself that wisdom itself is empty, like a breath.*

⁵⁰² From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 17, 2018.

⁵⁰³ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 2, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:15b: Solomon's wisdom (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *Then (and) said I in my heart (Eccles. 1:16), As it happens to the fool, so it happens even to me... Why was I then more wise?..[S]uch is the fate of wise and foolish; or temporally, at the hour of death regarded as past. He puts the question—To what end, with what design, has he been so excessively wise, or, as it may be, wise overmuch (Eccles. 7:16)? His wisdom has, as it were, recoiled upon himself—it taught him much, but not content; it made him keen-sighted in seeing the emptiness of human things, but it satisfied not his cravings.*⁵⁰⁴

Chuck Smith (speaking for Solomon): *With all of my wisdom I can't prolong my life. With all of the understanding and knowledge that I have, I can't prolong life. I'm going to die just like the fool out there who doesn't know anything. He's going to die. I'm going to die. And when we die, it's all over. So what good is it to have all of the wisdom that I have because we're coming towards the grave, both of us together. We're both going to die. My wisdom isn't going to keep me from death. How dies the wise man? As the fool. Then I said in my heart, as it happens to the fool so it happens even to me. So why am I any wiser?*⁵⁰⁵

Dunagan: *great wisdom has really only recoiled upon himself, it taught him much, he was able to look ahead-but only to find a dead end! Maybe the fool is really better off, for at least he or she doesn't think about such things.*⁵⁰⁶

Matthew Poole: *Why was I then more wise? what benefit have I by my wisdom? or, to what purpose did I desire and take so much pains for wisdom?*⁵⁰⁷

John W. Ritenbaugh: *The wise person knows where he is going. He has goals in his life and works hard to achieve them. His "eyes are in his head." The fool, conversely, seeks folly, mirth, pleasure, and so forth.*

Ritenbaugh continues: *Solomon discovers that the stupid idiot shares the same fate that he, a wise man, does: They are both going to die. He asks, "What good is it, then, to become wise?"*⁵⁰⁸

Now and again, I run across commentary which is so weird, I have no explanation for it. This is John Trapp, whom I quote from often: *And why was I then more wise?]* *This is a piece of peevishness, a childish folly we are all prone to – viz., to repent us of our best pains if not presently paid for it; so short spirited are we, that unless we may sow and reap all in a day, unless all things may go with us as well as we could wish, we repent us of our repentance with David, {Psalm 73:13} hit God in the teeth with our obedience, as those hypocrites in Isa. 58:2–3, and as that elder brother in the parable, that told his father he had never been worth a kid to him for all his good service. But, what! is God like to break or to die in our debts that we are so hasty with him? This was good Baruch's fault, and he is soundly chidden for it. {Jer. 45:1–5; Jer. 36:32} Good men oft find it more easy to bear evil than to wait till the promised good be enjoyed. It was so with those Christian Hebrews, {Heb. 10:34; Heb. 10:36} whom therefore the apostle there tells they had need of patience, υπομονη, or tarriance, to tarry God's time. It needs not repent the wise of this world, much less the children of light, of any good they have done or gotten, however it prove with them, since some degree of comfort follows every good action, as heat accompanies fire, as beams and influences issue from the sun. And this is so true, that very heathens, upon the discharge of a good conscience, have found comfort and peace answerable.*⁵⁰⁹

I read through a lot of commentaries and I don't include but perhaps a tenth or less of what I read. But sometimes, the commentary is so crazy, I list it just so you can see what I waded through.

⁵⁰⁴ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:15 (slightly edited).

⁵⁰⁵ Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1–26.

⁵⁰⁶ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:15.

⁵⁰⁷ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:15.

⁵⁰⁸ From [Bible Tools.org](http://BibleTools.org); accessed September 3, 2018.

⁵⁰⁹ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 2:15.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 2:15c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
dâbar (דָּבַר) [pronounced <i>daw^b-VAHR</i>]	<i>to speak, to talk [and back with action], to give an opinion, to expound, to make a formal speech, to speak out, to promise, to propose, to speak kindly of, to declare, to proclaim, to announce</i>	1 st person singular, Piel perfect	Strong's #1696 BDB #180
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's# none BDB #88
lêb (לֵב) [pronounced <i>lay^bv</i>]	<i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking; midst</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #3820 BDB #524
she- (-שׁ) [pronounced <i>sheh</i>] or shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced <i>shehl</i>]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
gam (גַּם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i>]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, as well; even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced <i>zeh</i>]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	masculine singular demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260
hebel (הֶבֶל) [pronounced <i>HEH^b-vel</i>]	<i>vapor, breath; mist, darkness; unsubstantial, emptiness, empty, vanity, meaningless, vacuous; vain, vainly; idol</i>	masculine singular noun; pausal form	Strong's #1892 BDB #210

Used figuratively for *something transitory and unsatisfactory*. Often used of things which are transitory, evanescent or frail.

Translation: I said within my heart that this also [is] empty [or, breath]. Solomon admits to himself that, with all his wisdom, he is not better off than the fool. His wisdom is empty; his own wisdom is just a breath—empty, translucent and transitory.

Ecclesiastes 2:15 I said to myself, the very end of the fool, will that not happen to me as well? So, how exactly am I smarter than the fool? I admitted to myself that wisdom itself is empty, like a breath.

Is the superiority of wisdom just empty? Ecclesiastes 2:15c (many commentators)

David Guzik: *As it happens to the fool, it also happens to me, and why was I then more wise? If death ends it all, then this life is robbed of true meaning. Even the good and great accomplishments of this world are unbelievably temporary, and therefore ultimately meaningless. The wise man dies just as the fool. Truly, the Preacher looked at this and said, "This also is vanity."*⁵¹⁰

The Pulpit Commentary: *[I]f the superiority of wisdom over folly conduces to no other end than this, that superiority is a vanity.*⁵¹¹

The Cambridge Bible: *So it was that the sentence of 'Vanity' was once more written on wisdom as well as folly. It is not without significance that the man feels the bitterness of the sentence, because, even in his wisdom, he, like the Stoics, had been egoistic. That he and the fool, the man of large discourse, and the man to whom culture was an unknown word, should die the same death, this made him curse his destiny.*⁵¹²

Dr. John Gill: *Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity; this worldly wisdom has nothing solid and substantial in it, as well as pleasure; and it is a vain thing to seek happiness in it, since this is the case, that the events are the same to men that have it, as to one that has it not.*⁵¹³

Dunagan: *Do you find yourself envying people who live superficial lives? And on top of it all, all his great wisdom can't stop him from dying. In fact, he might not even get to out live any of his contemporaries who were fools. We have all seen hard working, cautious and prudent individuals die at any early age, while "fools" seem to live to a ripe old age (Psalm 73).*⁵¹⁴

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Ecclesiastes 2:15 I said to myself, the very end of the fool, will that not happen to me as well? So, how exactly am I smarter than the fool? I admitted to myself that wisdom itself is empty, like a breath.

It should be clear that Solomon's emphasis upon *wisdom* is man's wisdom or wisdom of the man under the sun. There are no references to eternal results or to divine wisdom, to eternal results of the application of wisdom, or eternal rewards.

Clarke: *There is a peculiar beauty and emphasis in the repetition of me. Having pointed out the advantages that wisdom has over folly, he takes this opportunity of reminding us of the danger of trusting too much to it, by showing that it is equally subject to the common accidents of life; and, therefore, incapable of making us completely happy. Having given his sentiments on this point in general terms, he proceeds to those particular instances wherein human prudence chiefly exerts itself; and shows how egregiously it is mistaken in every one of them.*⁵¹⁵

Pastor John Griffith's translation of Ecclesiastes 2:12–15 **So I turned to consider wisdom, madness and folly; for what will the man do who will come after the king except what has already been done? And I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness. The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I know that one fate befalls them both. Then I said to myself, "As is the fate of the fool, it will also befall me. Why then have I been extremely wise?" So I said to myself, "This too is vanity."**

⁵¹⁰ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

⁵¹¹ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:15.

⁵¹² *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:15.

⁵¹³ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:15.

⁵¹⁴ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:15.

⁵¹⁵ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:15.

Observations on Ecclesiastes 2:12–15 (Pastor John Griffith)

1. Apart from divine viewpoint thinking, wisdom alone is unfulfilling. He fails to see God's purpose in anything – even His control of history.
2. Solomon has left out the true basis of evaluation in his analysis, the Word of God, which sheds light on every human endeavor.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

For [there is] no remembrance to the wise [man] with the fool to forever, in that long ago, days, the ones coming in, the entirety [is] forgotten. And how will die the wise [man] with the fool?

Ecclesiastes
2:16

For [there is] no remembrance for the wise [man] with the fool forever, in that long ago, the days [which are] coming, all [is] forgotten. And how does the wise [man] die compared to [lit., *with, by*] the fool?

For no one remembers the wise man any more than they remember the fool, which fact is true forever. In the coming days, everything is forgotten. So how do we really compare the death of the wise man with the fool?

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	For [there is] no remembrance to the wise [man] with the fool to forever, in that long ago, days, the ones coming in, the entirety [is] forgotten. And how will die the wise [man] with the fool?
Revised Douay-Rheims	For there shall be no remembrance of the wise no more than of the fool for ever, and the times to come shall cover all things together with oblivion: the learned dies in like manner as the unlearned.
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	For the remembrance of the wise man is not with the fool in <u>the world to come</u> , for <u>after the death of a man</u> , that which happened long ago in his lifetime, when the <u>days come which are to follow him after his death, everything will be disclosed</u> ; and why, then, say the children of men. that the end of the righteous is like that of the wicked?
Peshitta (Syriac)	<u>The fool speaks superficially</u> , but there is no remembrance of the wise man more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is, in the days to come shall be forgotten. And just as the wise man dies, so the fool.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	For there is no remembrance of the wise man with the fool for ever; forasmuch as now in the coming days all things are forgotten: and how shall the wise man die with the fool?
Significant differences:	The targum has <i>the world to come</i> rather than <i>forever</i> . There is additional text in the targum and in the Syriac. The second set of thoughts is difficult to understand; but most of the ancient translations agree to it. The final set of thoughts is similar, but it does vary somewhat from the Hebrew.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	Of the wise man, as of the foolish man, there is no memory for ever, seeing that those who now are will have gone from memory in the days to come. See how death comes to the wise as to the foolish!
Easy English	People do not remember wise men or fools. That is because people will forget everything at some future time. Even wise men, like fools, must die in the end!
Easy-to-Read Version—2001	The wise man and the foolish person will both die! And people will not remember either the wise man or the foolish person forever. In the future, people will forget everything they did. So both the wise man and the foolish person are really the same.
Easy-to-Read Version—2006	Whether people are wise or foolish, they will still die, and no one will remember either one of them forever. In the future, people will forget everything both of them did. So the two are really the same.
Good News Bible (TEV)	No one remembers the wise, and no one remembers fools. In days to come, we will all be forgotten. We must all die—wise and foolish alike. So life came to mean nothing to me, because everything in it had brought me nothing but trouble. It had all been useless; I had been chasing the wind. The GNB apparently moved the final sentence around to the end from an earlier verse.
<i>The Message</i>	The smart and the stupid both disappear out of sight. In a day or two they're both forgotten. Yes, both the smart and the stupid die, and that's it.
Names of God Bible	Without God Everything Is Pointless Neither the wise person nor the fool will be remembered for long, since both will be forgotten in the days to come. Both the wise person and the fool will die.
NIRV	Like a foolish person, a wise person won't be remembered very long. The days have already come when both of them have been forgotten. Like a person who is foolish, a wise person must die too!
New Simplified Bible	Neither the wise man nor the foolish man will be remembered for long. All that now is will be forgotten in the days to come. Death comes to both the wise and the foolish.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	Death brings both the wise man and the foolish man to common ground. Not only do both die, but before many days pass, the memories of both have been forgotten. There is no lasting memory of either the wise man or the fool!
Contemporary English V. The Living Bible	Wise or foolish, we all die and are soon forgotten." And yet I noticed that there was one thing that happened to wise and foolish alike—just as the fool will die, so will I. So of what value is all my wisdom? Then I realized that even wisdom is futile. For the wise and fool both die, and in the days to come both will be long forgotten. Vv. 14–15 are included for context.
New Berkeley Version	For the wise man there is no more lasting remembrance than for the fool, inasmuch as in the coming days everything is forgotten — and the wise man dies along with the fool.
New Century Version	The wise person and the fool will both die, and no one will remember either one for long. In the future, both will be forgotten.
New Life Version	For the wise man will not be remembered forever any more than the fool. All will be forgotten in the days to come. The wise man dies just like the fool!
New Living Translation	For the wise and the foolish both die. The wise will not be remembered any longer than the fool. In the days to come, both will be forgotten.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	Wise people and foolish people all die. And after we die, we will all eventually be forgotten."

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	For, both the wise the fools are forgotten, And what they do will not be remembered. So, how are the wise any better than fools?'
Beck's American Translation	People don't continue to remember a wise man or a fool; in the coming days both will be forgotten. The wise man must die just like the fool!
Common English Bible	There is no eternal memory of the wise any more than the foolish [Or <i>The wise and the foolish alike are never remembered</i>], because everyone is forgotten before long. How can the wise die just like the fool?
International Standard V	For neither the wise nor the fool will be long remembered, since in days to come everything will be forgotten. The wise man dies the same way as the fool, does he not?
New Advent (Knox) Bible	Endlessly forgotten, wise man and fool alike, since to-morrow's memory will be no longer than yesterday's; wise man and fool alike doomed to death.
Translation for Translators	Wise people and foolish people all die. And after we die, we will all eventually be forgotten [DOU]."

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Alpha & Omega Bible	FOR THERE IS NO REMEMBRANCE OF THE WISE MAN WITH THE FOOL FOR EVER; FORASMUCH AS NOW IN THE COMING DAYS ALL THINGS ARE FORGOTTEN: AND HOW SHALL THE WISE MAN DIE WITH THE FOOL?
Awful Scroll Bible	Is there to be a remembrance of they wise, against the languorous, even continually? - From the days long ago and they coming they have come to be forgotten; continues to die they wise with the languorous.
Conservapedia Translation	The fool and the wise man will both be forgotten eventually; realizing that all that is in our future will eventually be forgotten. And how does the wise man die? Just as the fool does.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	For there is no more remembrance of the Instructed than of the Ignorant in the grave for ever! In the times to come, all will be forgotten I For does not the Instructed die like the Ignorant ?'
God's Truth (Tyndale)	For the wise are ever as little in remembrance as the foolish, and all the days for to come shall be forgotten, Yes the wise man dies as well as the fool.
HCSB	Yet I also knew that one fate comes to them both. So I said to myself, "What happens to the fool will also happen to me. Why then have I been overly wise?" And I said to myself that this is also futile. For, just like the fool, there is no lasting remembrance of the wise man, since in the days to come both will be forgotten. How is it that the wise man dies just like the fool? Vv. 14b–15 are included for context.
Lexham English Bible	Certainly no one will remember the wise man or the fool in {future generations}. When [future] days come, both will have been forgotten already. How [is it that] the wise man dies the same as the fool?
NIV, ©2011	For the wise, like the fool, will not be long remembered; the days have already come when both have been forgotten. Like the fool, the wise too must die!
Peter Pett's translation	Then I said in my heart, "As it happens to a fool, so will it happen to me. And why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart that this also was vanity. For the wise man even as for the fool, there is no remembrance for ever, seeing that in the days to come all will have been already forgotten. How does the wise man die? Just as the fool. V. 15 is included for context.
Unlocked Literal Bible	For the wise man, like the fool, is not remembered for very long. In the days to come everything will have been long forgotten. The wise man dies just like the fool dies.

Urim-Thummim Version	Because there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for the ages; seeing what now is in the days to come will all be forgotten. And how dies the wise one? as the fool.
Wikipedia Bible Project	Because there is no memory of the wise man nor the fool, forever, in the coming of the latter days, everything is forgotten, and how the wise man dies along with the fool.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

The Heritage Bible	And I said in my heart, As it happens to the stupid, also it lights upon me, and how was I then more wise? And I spoke in my heart that this also is vanity, Because there is no remembrance of the wise equally with the stupid, forever; what came in days long ago is all forgotten. And how does the wise die? Equally with the stupid. V. 15 is included for context.
New American Bible (2011)	The wise person will have no more abiding remembrance than the fool; for in days to come both will have been forgotten. How is it that the wise person dies* like the fool! Eccl 1:11; Wis 2:4. * [2:16] The wise person dies: death, until now only alluded to (vv. 14–15), takes center stage and will constantly appear in the author’s reflections through the remainder of the book.
New English Bible–1970	The wise man is remembered no longer than the fool, for, as the passing days multiply [for ... multiply: prob. rdg, Heb because already], all will be forgotten. Alas, wise man and fool die the same death!
New Jerusalem Bible	For there is no lasting memory for the wise or the fool, and in the days to come both will be forgotten; the wise, no less than the fool, must die.
Revised English Bible–1989	The wise person is remembered no longer than the fool, because in the days to come both will have been forgotten. Alas, both wise and foolish are doomed to die!”

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	For the wise man, like the fool, will not be long remembered, inasmuch as in the times to come, everything will long ago have been forgotten. The wise man, no less than the fool, must die.”
The Complete Tanach	For there is no remembrance of the wise man even as of the fool forever, seeing that in the coming days, all is forgotten. And how shall the wise die with the fool?

for seeing that in the coming days all is forgotten: Because I see the wicked who already lived, and who were very successful, and in the days that came after them, all their heroism and their success were forgotten.

And how shall the wise die with the fool: I see the righteous prospering in their deaths and availing their children, for example (Lev. 26:42): “And I shall remember My covenant with Jacob, etc.” ; (Jer. 2:2): “I remember for you the love of your youth.

exeGesés companion Bible	For there is no memorial of the wise more than of the fool eternally; that in the days to come, all is forgotten. And how die the wise? As the fool!
Orthodox Jewish Bible	For no zichron (remembrance) of the chacham—no less the kesil—remains l’olam; seeing that in hayamim haba’im (the days to come) all shall be forgotten. How can the chacham die just like the kesil?

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible	No one will remember the wise or the fool for long.
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·In the future, [^LThe days will come only too soon when] both will be forgotten.
 How will the wise person die?
 Like the fool?

Pastor John Griffith Man wise or foolish dies and is forgotten For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise man as with the fool, inasmuch as in the coming days all will be forgotten.
 ** Solomon says to us don't build your happiness on a straw hope, that is that you'll long be remembered, you won't - neither will I.

Kretzmann's Commentary For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool forever, people forget the one as rapidly as the other; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten, that is ordinarily and generally the case, the few exceptions tending to confirm the rule. And how dieth the wise man? As the fool, they must both yield up the spirit in the same manner.

NET Bible® For the wise man, like⁶⁸ the fool, will not be remembered for very long, because in the days to come, both will already have been forgotten.
 Alas, the wise man dies – just like⁷³ the fool!

^{68tn} The preposition ׀ַ (‘im, “with”) may occasionally function in a comparative sense, meaning “together with; even as; like” (e.g., Eccl 1:11; 2:16; 7:11; Job 9:26; 1 Chr 14:10; 20:6; 25:8; see HALOT 839 s.v. ׀ַ 2). When used to describe a common lot, it connotes “together with” (Gen 18:23, 25; 1 Chr 24:5; Job 3:14, 15; 30:1; Pss 26:9; 28:3; 69:29; Isa 38:11), hence “like” (Pss 73:5; 106:6; Eccl 2:16; see BDB 767–68 s.v. ׀ַ 1.e).

The Voice Neither the wise nor the fool will be remembered for very long *once they are gone*. The wise dies, and the fool alike. All are forgotten in the future.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Charles Thompson OT ...because there is no remembrance forever of the wise man more than of the fool (seeing the days are now coming when all shall be forgotten and the wise must die as well as the fool)...

Concordant Literal Version For there is no remembrance of the wise man or the stupid man for the eon; In the days which are already coming everyone is forgotten; Alas, the wise man dies along with the stupid one!"

Context Group Version For of the wise man, even as of the shameless person, there is no remembrance forever; seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. And how the wise man dies even as the shameless person!

Emphasized Bible For there is no remembrance of a wise man, more than of a dullard, unto times age-abiding,—seeing that, already, in the days to come, all hath been forgotten, how then cometh it that the wise man dieth equally with the dullard?

English Standard Version For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool!

Green's Literal Translation For there *is* not a memory of the wise *more than* with the fool forever, in that already the days to come will be forgotten. And how does the wise die above the fool?

Young's Updated LT That there is no remembrance to the wise—with the fool—to the age, for that which is already, in the days that are coming is all forgotten, and how dies the wise? With the fool!

The gist of this passage: Whether a man is wise or a fool, at some point, he will be forgotten; and every man dies, wise or foolish.

Ecclesiastes 2:16a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כי) [pronounced <i>kee</i>]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
'êyn (אין) [pronounced <i>ān</i>]	<i>nothing, not, [is] not; not present, not ready; expresses non-existence, absence or non-possession; [there is] no [none, not one, no one, not]</i>	particle of negation; substantive of negation	Strong's #369 BDB #34
zik ^e rôwn (זכרון) [pronounced <i>zihk-ROHN</i>]	<i>a memorial, a reminder, a remembrance</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2146 BDB #272
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
châkâm (חכם) [pronounced <i>khah-KAWM</i>]	<i>capable of knowing [judging]; intelligent, wise; skillful, adept, proficient; subtle, crafty</i>	masculine singular adjective with the definite article	Strong's #2450 BDB #314

This word tends to be applied in a very positive way, even when those being spoken of might not be highly regarded in God's eyes. The Pharaoh of Egypt called in wise men in Ex. 7:11, just as the pharaoh of Joseph's day called in wise men in his era (Gen. 41:8). However, Joseph is proclaimed wise by the pharaoh in Gen. 41:39. This word can be applied to craftsmen who are well-skilled in their craft (Ex. 35:10). This word is used over and over again in the book of Proverbs (Prov. 3:5–7, 35) in a very positive sense. However, in 2Sam. 13:3, it is clearly used of a man who is intelligent, whose advice is accurate, but the intention is evil.

'îm (עם) [pronounced <i>geem</i>]	<i>with, at, by, near; like; from; against; toward; as long as; beside, except; in spite of</i>	preposition of nearness and vicinity	Strong's #5973 BDB #767
kêçîyl (ליס) [pronounced <i>kehss-EEL</i>]	<i>fool, impious fool, stupid fellow, dullard, simpleton, arrogant one</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3684 BDB #493
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
'ôwlâm (עולם) [pronounced <i>goh-LAWM</i>]	<i>long duration, forever, everlasting, eternal, perpetuity, antiquity, futurity; what is hidden, hidden time</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5769 BDB #761

'ôwlâm together with the lâmed preposition mean *forever, always*.

This is treated as a single word le'olâm (לעולם) [pronounced *leh-goh-LAWM*]; and it means *forever, always*.

The NET Bible: *עולם ('olam) has a wide range of meanings: (1) indefinite time: "long time; duration," (2) unlimited time: "eternal; eternity," (3) future time: "things to come," and (4) past time: "a long time back," that is, the dark age of prehistory. The context here suggests the nuance "a long time."*⁵¹⁶

⁵¹⁶ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 18, 2018.

Translation: For [there is] no remembrance for the wise [man] with the fool forever,... Solomon has already made the argument that there is nothing new under the sun; and if we think we have found something new, we have not; we just forgot that someone else discovered that already.

So it is with the wise man and the fool. For awhile, of course, both men will be remembered. But, at some point, these men will be forgotten forever. They both have the same fate, they both have the same end, and that to be forgotten at some point in time.

We know today that the words of many wise men (by human standards) have remained with us; and we have the writings of ancient Greek philosophers, for instance, which is clearly human wisdom. Their words have been with us for thousands of years. There was a period of time when kings would devise a morality system (and a set of laws) for their people. These sets of laws have been preserved for us, in some instances. The same is true for those who wrote of divine wisdom (the Bible for instance).

We have to bear in mind that much of what Solomon is saying is human viewpoint. This makes sense to him; no one can contradict what he is saying. So, in his mind, he must be right.

Ecclesiastes 2:16 For no one remembers the wise man any more than they remember the fool, which fact is true forever. In the coming days, everything is forgotten. So how do we really compare the death of the wise man with the fool?

Ecclesiastes 2:16a: What memory is there of the wise (or the fool)? (Comments)

Whedon: *Very many wise and fools have lain down in oblivion, and so it will ever be.*⁵¹⁷

Clarke: *The wise and the fool are equally subject to death; and, in most instances, they are equally forgotten. Time sweeps away all remembrances, except the very few out of millions which are preserved for a while in the page of history.*⁵¹⁸

The Cambridge Bible: *More accurately, For the wise man as for the fool there is no remembrance forever, the last word being emphatic, almost as if intentionally calling in question the teaching of Psalm 112:6 (For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever.—ESV)...The assertion seems at first too sweeping. There are sages, we say, who live yet in the memory of men whose names the world will not willingly let die. Practically, however, as regards the influence of the desire for posthumous fame as a motive, the number of such names is inappreciably small, even with the manifold resources of monuments and written records. The scribes and doctors, the artists and the poets of one age are forgotten in the next.*⁵¹⁹

Benson: *For there is no remembrance of the wise — Their memory, though it may flourish for a season, yet will, in a little time, be worn out; as we see in most of the wise men of former ages, whose very names, together with all their monuments, are utterly lost.*⁵²⁰

The Pulpit Commentary: *There are men whose names are history, and will endure as long as the world lasts; but speaking generally, oblivion is the portion of all; posterity soon forgets the wisdom of one and the folly of another. Where the belief in the future life was not a strong and animating motive, posthumous fame exercised a potent attraction for many minds. To be the founder of a long line of descendants, or to leave a record which should be fresh in the minds of future generations, these were objects of intense ambition, and valued as worthy of highest aspirations and best efforts.*

⁵¹⁷ Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 2:16.

⁵¹⁸ Adam Clarke, Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:16.

⁵¹⁹ The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:16 (edited).

⁵²⁰ Rev. Joseph Benson, Commentary of the Old and New Testaments; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:15–16.

Ecclesiastes 2:16a: What memory is there of the wise (or the fool)? (Comments)

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *But Koheleth shows the vanity of all such hopes; they are based on sounds which experience proves to be unsubstantial. Though Solomon's own fame gives the lie to the statement received without limitation...yet his reflections might well have taken this turn, and the writer is quite justified in putting the thought into his mouth, as the king could not know how subsequent ages would regard his wisdom and attainments.*⁵²¹

Dunagan: *"there is no lasting remembrance of the wise man"-Now some will disagree with this statement, [thinking] "In our society we remember 'great men' of the past". But this is the rare exception. Compared to how many wise men have lived, how many have been remembered? And future generations are not always able to distinguish between "who" was the fool and who was the wise man! At times history will remember the fool and forget the wise man.*⁵²²

Matthew Poole: *There is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; their name and memory, though it may flourish for a season among some men, yet it will not last for ever, but will in a little time be worn out; as we see in most of the wise men of former ages, whose very names, together with all their monuments, are utterly lost, as hath been oft observed and bewailed by learned writers in several ages.*⁵²³

Dr. John Gill: *[E]ven in this world the remembrance of a wise man, any more than of a fool, does not always last; a wise man may...be remembered after death for a while; the fame of him may continue for a little time, and his works and writings may be applauded; but by and by rises up another genius brighter than he, or at least is so thought, and outshines him; and then his fame is obscured, his writings are neglected and despised, and he and his works buried in oblivion; and this is the common course of things. This shows that Solomon is speaking of natural wisdom, and of man's being wise with respect to that...otherwise such who are truly good and wise, their memory is blessed; they are had in everlasting remembrance, and shall never be forgotten in this world, nor in that to come, when the memory of the wicked shall rot; whose names are only written in the dust Jer. 17:13, and not in the Lamb's book of life.*⁵²⁴

Solomon's thoughts do not appear to include the concept of that which is eternal in this life.

Trapp: *Unless he be also wise to salvation, for then he shall be had in everlasting remembrance.*⁵²⁵

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This statement made by Solomon also argues against this book being a forgery, written hundreds of years later. What do we know today about Solomon which was known 100 and 200 years after his death? That his words are important; that his writings should be studied. His psalm, the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs are all important additions to Jewish religious literature. They would have been known and studied at the time that this so-called later author wrote. Then how could this later author make such a statement? It would make no sense.

Now, Solomon, not realizing that his writings would be analyzed for thousands of years, could write that the wise man (referring to himself) would be soon forgotten, just like the fool. This is what Solomon truly believed when he wrote this.⁵²⁶ We know that when it comes to divine wisdom, that remains forever. When it comes to the men who act in accordance with divine viewpoint, that lasts forever.

⁵²¹ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:12.

⁵²² Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:16.

⁵²³ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:16.

⁵²⁴ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:16.

⁵²⁵ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 2:16.

⁵²⁶ This line of reasoning comes from <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-2.html> (James Burton Coffman) accessed September 2, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:16b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's# none BDB #88
she- (–ש) [pronounced sheh] or shel (שׁל) [pronounced sheh]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
kebâr (כְּבַר) [pronounced keh-b-AWR]	<i>an extent of time; formerly, already, long ago, a great while</i>	adverb	Strong's #3528 BDB #460
The NET Bible: <i>The preposition ב (bet) on כְּבַרְשֵׁב (kk var, the adverb כְּבַר [kk var, "already"] + relative pronoun ש [she] + preposition ב) is probably best classified as causal: "Because...already."⁵²⁷</i>			
'êth (אֵת) [pronounced ayth]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
yâmîym (יָמִים) [pronounced yaw-MEEM]	<i>days, a set of days; time of life, lifetime; a specific time period, a year</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #3117 BDB #398
bôw' (אוֹב) [pronounced boh]	<i>ones entering [coming, going, advancing] [in]; those entering [going, coming (in)]</i>	masculine plural, Qal active participle with the definite article	Strong's #935 BDB #97
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced koh]; also kol (כֹּל) [pronounced kol]	<i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
shâkach (שָׁכַח) [pronounced shaw-KAHKH]	<i>forgotten; forsaken; abandoned</i>	Niphal participle	Strong's #7911 BDB #1013

The NET Bible: *The verb שָׁכַח (nishkakh) is a future perfect – it describes an event that is portrayed as a past event from the perspective of the future: "they will have been forgotten." The emphasis of the past perfect is not simply that the future generations will begin to forget him, but that he will already have been forgotten long ago in the past by the time of those future generations. This past perfect situation is brought out by the emphatic use of the temporal adverb כְּבַר (kk var) "already" (HALOT 459 s.v. I כְּבַר; BDB 460 s.v. I כְּבַר); see, e.g., Eccl 1:10; 2:12, 16; 3:15; 4:2; 6:10; 9:6-7.⁵²⁸*

Translation: ...in that long ago, the days [which are] coming, all [is] forgotten. Solomon's argument is, at some point in time, in the far future, all will be forgotten.

Ecclesiastes 2:16 For no one remembers the wise man any more than they remember the fool, which fact is true forever. In the coming days, everything is forgotten. So how do we really compare the death of the wise man with the fool?

⁵²⁷ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 18, 2018.

⁵²⁸ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 18, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:16b: Long ago days forgotten (various commentators)

Barnes: *Some render, "as in time past, so in days to come, all will be forgotten;" others, "because in the days to come all will have been long before forgotten."*⁵²⁹

The Pulpit Commentary: *The clause has been variously translated. Septuagint, "Forasmuch as the coming days, even all the things, are forgotten;" Vulgate, "And future times shall cover all things equally with oblivion." Modern editors give, "Since in the days that are to come they are all forgotten;" "As in time past, so in days to come, all will be forgotten In the days which are coming [it will be said by-and-by], The whole of them are long ago forgotten." This is a specimen of the uncertainty of exact interpretation, where the intended meaning is well ascertained. "All" (לכה) may refer either to wise and foolish, or to the circumstances of their lives. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool. Better taken as one sentence, with an exclamation.*⁵³⁰

The College Press Bible Study: *The concept of "the coming days" is also important to the Preacher (Eccles. 2:16). In the days to come, how will a man be remembered? More to the point, however, is the question of will he be remembered? There is surely some profit in the awareness that one's reputation continues on in the minds of one's countrymen. Especially would this be true if one were a wise man. However, this is not to be under the sun! His original premise in Eccles. 1:11 underscored how quickly things are to be forgotten.*

The College Press Bible Study continues: *Later in his book he offers two illustrations of this same tragic truth. He speaks of a young man who rises from adverse circumstances to become king. The multitudes, tired of the former king, throng to his side and offer their allegiance. However, he declares that in time even the new king will not be remembered (Eccles. 4:13-16). He speaks further of the dead who no longer have a reward. Their reward would have been for them to have been remembered. However, they no longer have a share in all that is done "under the sun." No one remembers them.*⁵³¹

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *The footprints we leave on the sands of time are soon washed away by the advancing tide.*⁵³²

Dr. John Gill: *[W]hat now is in the esteem of men, and highly applauded by them; what is in the mouths of men, and in their minds and memories, before long, future time, after the death of a man, as the Targum, or in some time after, will be thought of no more, and be as if it never had been, or as if there never had been such men in the world. Many wise men have been in the world, whose names are now unknown.*⁵³³

In reference to what Gill writes, I remember my time as a teacher; and I know that there were things and methods of teaching which stayed with some students for a very long time (I have even known some students who have taught their own children using the same methods). But certainly, that will fade, and whatever brilliance I may have exhibited in the classroom as a teacher will be long gone—perhaps even before I am.

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⁵²⁹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:16.

⁵³⁰ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:16.

⁵³¹ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:12–17 (conclusions).

⁵³² *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:16 (suggestive comments).

⁵³³ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:16.

Ecclesiastes 2:16c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʾêyk (אֵיךְ) [pronounced <i>aycheh</i>]; ʾêykâh (אֵיכָה) [pronounced <i>ā-KAW</i>]	<i>how; in what manner; where</i>	interrogative adverb; also used as an exclamation	Strong's #349 BDB #32
BDB's complete set of meanings: 1) <i>how?</i> (interrogative adverb); 2) <i>how!</i> (in lamentation) (interjection); 3) <i>expression of satisfaction</i> (interjection). There are 3 alternate spellings for this word.			
The Pulpit Commentary: " <i>How</i> " (אֵיךְ) is sarcastic, as Isa. 14:4, or sorrowful, as 2Sam. 1:19. ⁵³⁴			
The NET Bible: <i>The particle אֵיךְ ('ekh, "Alas!") is an exclamation of lamentation and mourning (e.g., 2 Sam 1:19; Isa 14:4, 12; Jer 2:21; 9:18; Ezek 26:17; Mic 2:4); see HALOT 39 s.v. אֵיךְ 5; BDB 32 s.v. אֵיךְ 2; also E. W. Bullinger, Figures of Speech, 955.</i> ⁵³⁵			
mûwth (מוּת) [pronounced <i>mooth</i>]	<i>to die; to perish, to be destroyed; to be put to death; to die prematurely [by neglect of wise moral conduct]</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #4191 BDB #559
châkâm (חָכָם) [pronounced <i>khah-KAWM</i>]	<i>capable of knowing [judging]; intelligent, wise; skillful, adept, proficient; subtle, crafty</i>	masculine singular adjective with the definite article	Strong's #2450 BDB #314
ʿîm (עִם) [pronounced <i>geem</i>]	<i>with, at, by, near; like; from; against; toward; as long as; beside, except; in spite of</i>	preposition of nearness and vicinity	Strong's #5973 BDB #767
The NET Bible: <i>The preposition עִם ('im, "with") may occasionally function in a comparative sense, meaning "together with; even as; like" (e.g., Eccl 1:11; 2:16; 7:11; Job 9:26; 1 Chr 14:10; 20:6; 25:8); see HALOT 839 s.v. עִם 2. When used to describe a common lot, it connotes "together with" (Gen 18:23, 25; 1 Chr 24:5; Job 3:14, 15; 30:1; Ps 26:9; 28:3; 69:29; Isa 38:11), hence "like" (Pss 73:5; 106:6; Eccl 2:16); see BDB 767–68 s.v. עִם 1.e.</i> ⁵³⁶			
kêçîyl (כְּחֵייל) [pronounced <i>kehss-EEL</i>]	<i>fool, impious fool, stupid fellow, dullard, simpleton, arrogant one</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3684 BDB #493
Several commentators have suggested that this is more of an exclamation than an actual question. ⁵³⁷			

Translation: And how does the wise [man] die compared to [lit., with, by] the fool? Solomon's life observation is this: bearing all of that in mind, how do we really compare the death of the wise man to the fool? Both men, at some point after their deaths, will be forgotten. Generations later, men will not be saying, "Charley Brown—that smart guy—he was something else!" Because 2 or 3 generations in the future, they aren't going to know who Charley Brown was. Nor will they say, "And that Lucy Van Pelt—huh! What a fool she was!" They won't know her any more than they know him.

⁵³⁴ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:16.

⁵³⁵ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 18, 2018.

⁵³⁶ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 18, 2018.

⁵³⁷ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 2:16.

This is how Solomon understands reality to be. I should point out that Solomon had access to the Scriptures and the wisdom of the Scriptures; and yet, he seems to set that aside.

It is obviously, at least in this verse, that Solomon had no idea that we would be talking about him and his writings today.

In any case, God has control over all of this. Our time of death is in His hands. We have no idea when that will happen; and once we are gone, we have no control over our legacy.

Ecclesiastes 2:16 For no one remembers the wise man any more than they remember the fool, which fact is true forever. In the coming days, everything is forgotten. So how do we really compare the death of the wise man with the fool?

Ecclesiastes 2:16c: Death comes to the wise man and the fool (commentators)

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *The words, "And how dies the wise man?" in the original are an exclamation—"But O, how is it that the wise man dies as the fool!" This is not the conclusion of a cold and severe logic, but the expression of deep emotion. Beneath all the glory of this life, there is an unutterable sorrow. There are truths too deep for words. They are only to be uttered with a gasp and a sigh.*

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary continues: *Faith alone can cure the terrible melancholy with which this view of life afflicts the soul. The intellect, the throne of human wisdom, is part of the Divine image, and God will not suffer it to die in imperfect rudiments. Man has in him some resemblances of the Eternal God, who will not leave His image in the grave, nor suffer this spark of Him to see corruption.*⁵³⁸

The Cambridge Bible: *Better [translated]...as an exclamation, not a question, "How dies the wise man as the fool." The absence of any hope of an immortality beyond that of fame has been already implied. The present clause brings before us the manner and circumstances of death. We stand, as it were, by the two death-beds, of the wise and of the fool, and note the same signs of the end, the same glazed eye, the same death-dew on the brow, the same failing power of thought. The picture of...Eccles.12:1-6 is true of both.*⁵³⁹ Eccles. 12 describes the physical aging of the old man.

Dr. John Gill: *[T]hey are both liable to death; it is appointed for men, wise or unwise, learned or unlearned, to die, and both do die; wisdom cannot secure a man from dying; and then wise and fools are reduced to the same condition and circumstances; all a man's learning, knowledge, and wisdom, cease when he dies, and he is just as another man is; in that day all his learned thoughts perish, and he is upon a level with the fool. Solomon, the wisest of men, died as others; a full proof of his own observation, and which his father made before him, Psalm 49:10. But this is not true of one that is spiritually wise, or wise unto salvation; the death of a righteous man is different from the death of a wicked man; both die, yet not alike, not in like manner; the good man dies in Christ, he dies in faith, has hope in his death, and rises again to eternal life.*⁵⁴⁰

Ray C. Stedman: *Solomon says, no matter how carefully you pursue life and pleasure it will end in the darkness and dust of death; the fool and the wise man are both forgotten. How many of you knew wise men and women in your past whom no one remembers now? These words are terribly true.*⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁸ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:16 (suggestive comments) (slightly edited).

⁵³⁹ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:16 (edited).

⁵⁴⁰ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:16.

⁵⁴¹ From www.raystedman.org/ accessed July 27, 2018. Copyright © 2010 by Ray Stedman Ministries

Ecclesiastes 2:16c: Death comes to the wise man and the fool (commentators)

Paraphrasing the Pulpit Commentary: *[On the one hand, it appears] that the wise and foolish are placed in the same indiscriminating grave. [On the other hand,] there is the widest difference between the death-beds of the two, as the experience of any one who has watched them will testify, the one happy with the consciousness of duty done honestly, however imperfectly, and bright with the hope of immortality; the other darkened by vain regrets and shrinking despair, or listless in brutish insensibility.*⁵⁴²

Dr. Peter Pett: *So he questions how he can really consider himself as more wise than a fool when both come to the same end. Both die. Both are forgotten by men. 'The memory of them is forgotten' (Eccles. 9:5). Almost nothing of what they are lives on. Thus neither has accomplished more than the other. Neither has gained more than the other. They share the same fate. The wise man is finally as the fool.*

Pett continues: *Do we see here the first glimmer of a search after the idea of a possible future life, for if what he says here is true, and all ends at the end of this life, what is there to live for? Let us eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die. Compare Eccles. 3:21 which surely has this in mind as a possibility. It was the same dilemma that the prophets and the psalmists faced. If death was the end how do we explain suffering? (See Psalms 73). How do we encourage men to positive living and achievement? How do we discover final meaning?*⁵⁴³

J. Vernon McGee: *You may be innately intelligent. You may have a high I.Q. You may have been educated, even have several doctoral degrees, but none of this will help you when it is your time to die. Neither will any of that stop you from dying. When it is your time to go out the door, you will go, and there is nothing in this world that can keep you from it.*⁵⁴⁴

J. Vernon McGee: *Thomas A. Edison is an example. He worked in a laboratory and developed many things such as the electric light bulb and the Victrola. All of our recording instruments really go back to the work of Edison. He was a genius, but he died just like everyone else. What good did it do him after all?*

McGee continues: *His laboratory is preserved in Fort Myers, Florida. If you are ever down there, it is worth the time to visit the Edison home and laboratory. He worked in that laboratory day and night. He had insomnia of the worst kind, so he had a little bed in his lab where he would lie down for little naps. He worked day and night, trying out many, many things that never worked out at all. I don't get the impression that life was a thrill for him. I think that Thomas A. Edison found life very boring.*⁵⁴⁵

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 2:16 For no one remembers the wise man any more than they remember the fool, which fact is true forever. In the coming days, everything is forgotten. So how do we really compare the death of the wise man with the fool?

Perhaps Solomon has come to these questions, *am I really wise? I am no different than the fool in death; and no one is going to remember? What is my benefit? How am I superior in my wisdom?*

David Guzik: *No matter how wise one is or is not; how much they do or do not accomplish; or how much pleasure one has or does not have, the same event happens to them all: they all die. Given the Preacher's premise — that eternity and God do not matter — this is the only possible conclusion.*⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴² *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:16 (edited—the liberties taken were in the first 2 sentences).

⁵⁴³ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:15–18.

⁵⁴⁴ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt (chapter 2) accessed September 3, 2018.

⁵⁴⁵ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt (chapter 2) accessed September 3, 2018.

⁵⁴⁶ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

Kidner: *Everything may tell us that wisdom is not on a par with folly, not goodness with evil; but no matter: if death is the end of the road, the contention that there is nothing to choose between them will get the last word.*⁵⁴⁷

The College Press Bible Study Compares the Wise Man to the Foolish Man	
The Wise Man	The Foolish Man
Light	Darkness
Eyes are in his head	Walks in darkness
Same fate (death)	Same fate (death)
No lasting remembrance	No lasting remembrance
Will be forgotten	Will be forgotten
In the coming days he will die	In the coming days he will die

The apparent advantage becomes unimportant. One needs to bear in mind that Solomon is viewing these men from his perspective, as *a man under the sun*; a man without consideration of the eternal. (My comments)
The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:12–17 (comment).

The life of the wise man versus the foolish man is clearly one of the most important things which Solomon studies, and it appears that he vacillates from time to time as to his final conclusions.

Solomon Compares the Wise Man to the Fool (The College Press Bible Study)

The College Press Bible Study: *[Nevertheless] Solomon admits to the availability of a particular earthly wisdom that gives an advantage to men. In Eccles. 7:11-12; Eccles. 7:19, he states that wisdom is (1) good and an advantage to men on this earth, (2) a protector to those who possess it, and (3) gives strength to a wise man. In Eccles. 9:18, he writes that (4) wisdom is better than weapons of war, and in Eccles. 10:10, he speaks of wisdom (5) as bringing success. It is this kind of wisdom that excels foolishness as light excels darkness. Note the following comparisons and conclusions made in the remaining section of chapter two.*

The College Press Bible Study later continues: *The fact that both the wise man and the fool share equally in many ways is a recurring theme throughout the book. It is discussed in Eccles. 6:6, Eccles. 7:2 and Eccles. 9:2-3. One of the real tragedies of living is the fact that one must die. The tragedy is compounded because through man's natural eye, he cannot see beyond the grave. If indeed the premise is correct, that is that all activities qualified by the phrase "under the sun" do not have the redemptive nature of the higher values, then it is possible to interpret Solomon's despair. David wrote of this when he said, "even wise men die; the stupid and the senseless alike perish, and leave their wealth to others" (Psalm 49:10).*

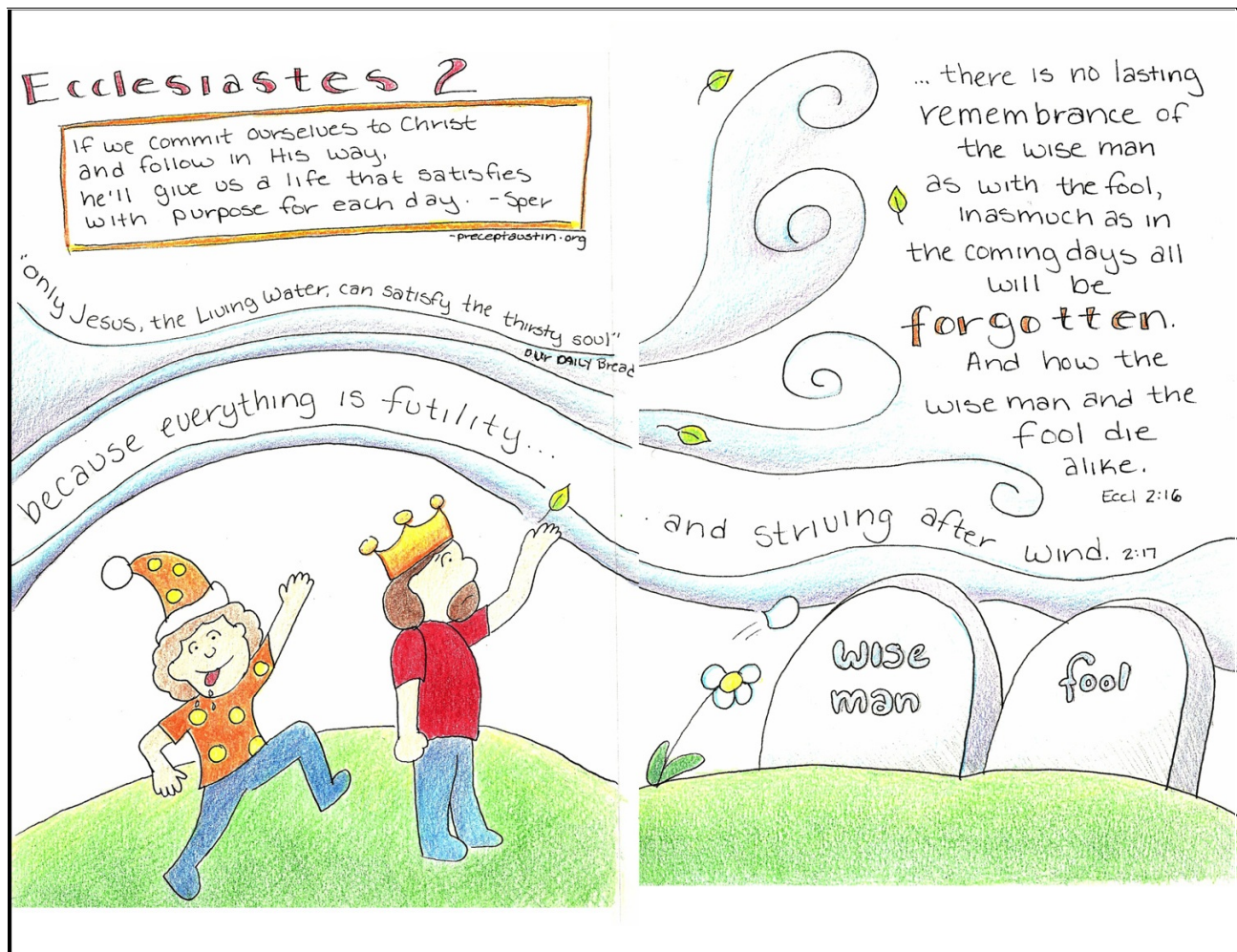
The College Press Bible Study continues: *It is in view of the fact that both the wise man and the fool die and go to the grave that Solomon despairs of being "extremely" wise. His extreme wisdom is the fruit of his life-long labor, and yet what does it profit him? He is certain that the wise man has no advantage over the fool in this respect (Eccles. 6:8; Eccles. 6:11). Of course one dare not assume these conclusions in the light of Christian hope. However, to the man who is restricted to only that which can be interpreted "under the sun," death terminates everything! This is why Solomon amplifies this conclusion with the observation in Eccles. 9:3-4 : "This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one fate for all men . . . they go to the dead. For whoever is joined with the living, there is hope; surely a live dog is better than a dead lion."*

The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:12–17 (conclusions).

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⁵⁴⁷ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.



Ecclesiastes 2:16 (a graphic); from [Doodle Through the Bible](#); accessed September 7, 2018.

We should bear in mind that, Solomon sees this from human viewpoint. So, the wisdom of men endowed with human wisdom would be lost to history. However, it ought to be clear that, 3000 years later, we are studying the wisdom of both David and Solomon (much of Proverbs was original with David, and Solomon took good notes). Solomon did not know that would be how things would go, because he simply viewed this as a man would, from his place under the sun.

Solomon did not consider divine wisdom; he was not considering divine good. Therefore, he came to the conclusion that, looking at a wise man and a fool hundreds of years later, there is no difference.

Ecclesiastes 2:16 For no one remembers the wise man any more than they remember the fool, which fact is true forever. In the coming days, everything is forgotten. So how do we really compare the death of the wise man with the fool?

Ron Snider's translation of Ecclesiastes 2:15–16 Then I said to myself, "As is the fate of the fool, it will also befall me. Why then have I been extremely wise?" So I said to myself, "This too is vanity." For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise man as with the fool, inasmuch as in the coming days all will be forgotten. And how the wise man and the fool alike die!

Ecclesiastes 2:15–16: Death—the great equalizer (Ron Snider)

1. As Qoheleth reasons his way through the relative advantages of wisdom over foolishness, he comes to a very depressing conclusion.
2. Again, he explains that as he reasoned these things out within his mind there was only one blatantly obvious and logical conclusion to which he kept coming.
3. He uses the prefixed preposition כִּי (k) to introduce a comparison between the fool and himself.
4. In this case, the comparison is exact; both will eventually experience the inevitable reality of physical death.
5. The Hebrew noun מִקְרָה (miqreh), which is translated as fate is not to be understood as some impersonal, mysterious power that is beyond God's control.
6. It has a far more neutral connotation and denotes that which happens or occurs to an individual over which there is no control; it can be translated as incident, lot, happening, or occurrence.
7. Qoheleth is emphatic as he bemoans the fact even I will encounter the same event; I will die just like the fool.
8. His logic is perceptive, and he brutally applies his thinking to himself, which then casts some question as to his wisdom enterprise.
9. The fundamental perception of the wise men and sages was that wisdom would extend the length of one's life; however, no one taught that wisdom would enable one to avoid death. Prov. 3:2, 16, 4:10, 9:11, 10:27
10. One might naturally assume that God would take note of the man that feared him and pursued the wisdom of Divine viewpoint by rewarding him with an exemption from death.
11. As Qoheleth concludes it is not the time or manner of death that is the issue; it is the fact that death completely levels the playing field for us all.
12. If wisdom does not postpone the moment of death, the inevitable question that arises is "Why bother with wisdom in the first place?"
13. This is exactly where Qoheleth's logic takes him, as he asks himself, Why did I myself pursue wisdom in excess?
14. However, one must see the flaws in the logic at this point; Qoheleth has wrongly concluded that since death is the common fate of wise men and fools that it makes no difference if one is wise or foolish.
15. This conclusion is an example of a number of logical fallacies in his argument.
 - 1) This is an example of a hasty generalization, Dicto Simpliciter, or jumping to conclusions.
 - 2) It is also a non-sequitur, it does not follow logically that since all men die, it does not matter how they live.
 - 3) It is also an example of Argumentum Ad Verecundium, which is appealing to an improper authority to prove a point. Even if all men die, is death the real authority on the issue of whether or not wisdom is better than folly?
16. This fallacious line of reasoning, which is also a bit of circular logic, only serves to convince and reinforce Qoheleth of his original contention—all is vanity.
17. His great wisdom is flawed at this point; nevertheless, he records his flawed thinking to challenge the reader—will you see through the errors?
18. This is a good example of the fact that the Bible is inspired by God, it contains what God wants it to contain; however, every statement is not necessarily Divine viewpoint. Isa. 14:13ff
19. In that regard, the Bible contains the words of Satan, angels, Jesus Christ, Judas, enemies of God, pagan poets, prophets, apostles, wise men, fools, and believers in and out of fellowship.
20. He continues in verse 16 to document his assertion that it does not matter if one is a wise man or a fool.
21. This time he uses the specific application of the general principle that he introduced in chapter one—humans have a short memory. Eccles. 1:11
22. His assertion that both wise men and fools are doomed to die is now coupled with the pertinent observation that they will both be forgotten.
23. One might naturally assume that the wise man would be remembered and the fool forgotten; however Qoheleth now asserts that neither of them will be remembered.
24. However, this viewpoint is quite at odds with other sections of the Bible that address the issue of one's reputation and one's memory. Ps. 9:6, 34:15; Prov. 10:7, 22:1
25. Again, does the fact that mankind tends to have a short memory actually have anything to do with whether

Ecclesiastes 2:15–16: Death—the great equalizer (Ron Snider)

- or not one should pursue wisdom or stupidity?
26. Therefore, one should ask, even if there is a very real sense in which death is the final, inevitable equalizer for the human race, does this justify Qoheleth's conclusions?
 27. The final part of verse 16 finally introduces the dreaded word מוֹת (muth-will die) that is the subject of the section that began in verse 12 and continues to the end of the chapter.
 28. It should be noted that there is a great similarity between the death of the wise man and the death of the fool.
 - 1) Death may come suddenly and unexpectedly.
 - 2) It may be accidental from the human perspective.
 - 3) It may be quiet and peaceful, or may be accompanied by intense pain and suffering.
 - 4) It may come during a time of warfare.
 - 5) It will probably cause a lot of grief to those that loved the deceased.
 29. These similarities should cause believers to recognize that one cannot draw any conclusion about whether or not a man was wise or foolish by virtue of his death.
 30. Similarly, believers should not make these sweeping pronouncements about whether or not a person will complete their course, get their crown, etc.
 31. Do not get involved in mental attitude (or verbal) judging with respect to matters that have clearly been reserved to God Himself. Jn. 5:22,27; ICor. 4:5; IICor. 5:10
 32. It should be apparent that at this point in Qoheleth's reasoning process, he has come to some unjustified conclusions that will lead him further into his despair.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#); accessed September 2, 2018 (will open as a Word Document on your computer).

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These conclusions help us to look forward to what we will study.

The Conclusions Solomon Will Draw from His Study (College Press Bible Study)

1. If one labors with wisdom, knowledge and skill only to accumulate a great legacy, he will discover this is futile and striving for the wind (Eccles. 2:19–21).
2. If collecting and gathering a great fortune is your primary goal in life, your days will be filled with pain and grief and your nights will be restless (Eccles. 2:22–23).
3. One should resolve to eat, drink and enjoy labor one day at a time as this is the gift of God (Eccles. 2:24).
4. There is joy that comes to the good man who understands that he should enjoy life day by day. However, to the sinner who collects and gathers for his own satisfaction, there will be no joy but a realization that all that he has gathered will be given to the good man (Eccles. 2:26).

The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:12–17 (conclusions).

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Solomon, considering all that he had done to this time, seems to be pushed to a place of strong dissatisfaction with life. Knowing Solomon, his great construction projects and his phenomenal writings, this is quite sad.

Ken Cayce: In verses 17-20, we see that part of the futility of trying to find fulfillment in material accomplishment is the fact that one must leave the fruit of his work to another who may well waste the accrued benefits.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁸ From bible.studys.org accessed September 6, 2018.

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *The pleasure-seeker begins life with high hopes. The intoxication of mirth exalts his imagination, and he lives, for a brief space, in the transports of joy. He looks forward to many years of merriment, free from every invasion of sorrow. But as time passes, and he learns the lessons of experience, and awakens to a sense of the solemn realities around him, life's fair promise is discovered to be a delusion. He has lived for pleasure, and trusted in the hopes it inspired; but these have failed.*⁵⁴⁹

And I hated the lives for [was] evil to me the work which was done under the sun, for the all [is] a breath and a grasping of wind.

Ecclesiastes
2:17

I hated this life [lit., *the lives*], for all the work which was done under the sun was grievous to me, for [it is] all breath and chasing after wind.

I decided that I hated this life—all the work which I had done under the sun was grievous to me, for it is all just a series of breaths and trying to catch the wind.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	And I hated the lives for [was] evil to me the work which was done under the sun, for the all [is] a breath and a grasping of wind.
Revised Douay-Rheims	And therefore I was <u>wear</u> y of my life, when I saw that all things under the sun are evil, and all vanity and vexation of spirit.
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	And I hated all <u>evil</u> life, because the evil work which is done <u>against the children of men</u> under the sun in this world displeased me, for it is all vanity, and breaking of spirit.
Peshitta (Syriac)	Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous to me; for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	So I hated life; because the work that was wrought under the sun was evil before me: for all is vanity and waywardness of spirit.

Significant differences: The Latin has *wear*y of rather than *hated*. There is additional text in the targum.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	So I was hating life, because everything under the sun was evil to me: all is to no purpose and desire for wind.
Easy English	So I was not happy with my life. And my work on the earth does not make me happy now. All of my work was worth nothing. It was like somebody who tries to catch the wind.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	Is There Real Happiness in Life? This made me hate life. It was depressing to think that everything in this life is useless, like trying to catch the wind.
Good News Bible (TEV)	I hate life. As far as I can see, what happens on earth is a bad business. It's smoke—and spitting into the wind.
<i>The Message</i>	I hate life. As far as I can see, what happens on earth is a bad business. It's smoke—and spitting into the wind.
Names of God Bible	So I came to hate life because everything done under the sun seemed wrong to me. Everything was pointless. It was like trying to catch the wind.
NIRV	Work Is Meaningless So I hated life. That's because the work done on this earth made me sad. None of it has any meaning. It's like chasing the wind.

⁵⁴⁹ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:17–23.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	All of my labor under the sun has thus been interpreted as clutching for wind, unrewarding, and only a vapor. I concluded that since this is true, I hated life.
Contemporary English V.	This made me hate life. Everything we do is painful; it's just as senseless as chasing the wind.
The Living Bible New Berkeley Version	So now I hate life because it is all so irrational; all is foolishness, chasing the wind. I hated life because the work which was done under the sun seemed bad to me, for all is fruitless ⁹ and chasing after wind. ⁹ Five expressions — worthless, useless, futile, fruitless and chasing after wind, all meaning the same thing, but the thought so repeated equals the assurance of an oath
New Life Version	So I hated life. For the work which had been done under the sun brought sorrow to me. Because everything is for nothing and is like trying to catch the wind.
New Living Translation	So I came to hate life because everything done here under the sun is so troubling. Everything is meaningless—like chasing the wind.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	So I hated being alive, because all the work that we do here on the earth distressed me. It all seemed to be useless, like trying to control the wind.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	Then, I became disgusted with life; For, all that I've done under the sun Will eventually end up as bad... It is all foolish and a waste [of good] breath.
Beck's American Translation	So I hated life. I felt bad about everything accomplished under the sun. Everything is a vapor, like trying to catch the wind.
Common English Bible	So I hated life, because the things that happen under the sun were troublesome to me. Definitely, everything is pointless—just wind chasing.
International Standard V	So I hated life, because whatever is done on earth causes me trouble—it's all pointless, like chasing after the wind.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	Thus I became weary of life itself; so worthless it seemed to me, all that man does beneath the sun, frustration all of it, and labour lost. And I, beneath that same sun, what fond labours I had spent!
Translation for Translators	So I hated being alive, because everything that we do here on the earth [MTY] distresses me. It all seems to be useless like chasing the wind.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Alpha & Omega Bible	SO I HATED LIFE; BECAUSE THE WORK THAT WAS WORKED UNDER THE SUN WAS EVIL BEFORE ME: FOR ALL IS VANITY AND WAYWARDNESS OF SPIRIT. (Solomon didn't have his focus on JESUS & the Kingdom. As evidenced by the fact that he fell away from JE)
Awful Scroll Bible	I am to have hated sustenance, for the work that has come to be prepared under the sun is miserable. It is to be vapor and longing after wind!
Conservapedia Translation	Therefore I came to hate life; because all that we do in our lives seemed futile to me: for it all seemed to be vain and troubling to my soul.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	Therefore I hated life! since all the work I had done under the sun was a grief to me! For it was utterly useless, and a vexation of spirit.
God's Truth (Tyndale)	Thus began I to be weary of my life, in so much that I could away with nothing that is done under the Sun, for all was vanity and vexation of mind:...
HCSB	Therefore, I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me. For everything is futile and a pursuit of the wind.
NIV, ©2011	Toil Is Meaningless

Tree of Life Version	So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. And so I hated life, because the work done under the sun was grievous to me. All is but vapor and chasing after the wind.
Unlocked Literal Bible	So I detested life because all the work done under the sun was evil to me. This was because everything is vapor and an attempt to shepherd the wind.
Urim-Thummim Version	Therefore I hated life; because the work that is accomplished under the sun is grievous to me: because all is vanity and a striving of mind.
Wikipedia Bible Project	And I hated life, because I did not like these happenings which happen under the sun: because everything is mirage, and herding the wind.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)	So I hated life seeing the wrong in everything that is done under the sun: all is meaningless and chasing wind.
The Heritage Bible	And I hated life, because the work done under the sun was evil to me, because all is vanity and a grasping of spirit.
New American Bible (2011)	Therefore I detested life, since for me the work that is done under the sun is bad; for all is vanity and a chase after wind.
New English Bible—1970	So I came to hate life, since everything that was done here under the sun was a trouble to me; for all is emptiness and chasing the wind.
New Jerusalem Bible	Life I have come to hate, for what is done under the sun disgusts me, since all is futility and chasing after the wind.
Revised English Bible—1989	So I came to hate life, since everything that was done here under the sun was a trouble to me; for all is futility and a chasing of the wind.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	So I came to hate life, because the activities done under the sun were loathesome to me, since everything is meaningless and feeding on wind.
The Complete Tanach	So I hated the living, for the deed that was done under the sun grieved me, for everything is vanity and frustration.
	So I hated the living: for he was prophesying about the generation of Rehoboam, who were wicked.
exeGesés companion Bible	And I hated life; because the work worked under the sun is evil to me; for all is vanity and gnawing of spirit.
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	And so I loathed life. For I was distressed by all that goes on under the sun, because everything is futile and pursuit of wind.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	Therefore I hated HaChayyim (Life); because the ma'aseh that is wrought under the shemesh is grievous unto me; for all is hevel and chasing after ruach.
<i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	And I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was evil on me, for all is futile and feeding on wind.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun caused me only great sorrow; because all is futility and chasing after the wind.
The Expanded Bible	Is There Real Happiness in Life? So I hated life. ·It made me sad to think that everything [^L For evil is the work that is done] ·here on earth [^L under the sun; 1:3] is useless [1:2], like chasing the wind.
Pastor John Griffith	His attitude after thorough reflection on his pursuits So I hated life, (word for hate sane' – strongest word for rejection, here describes an emotional attitude towards

things or people one is opposed to, detests or despises; Next he explains why he despised and detested life. **for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind.**

Kretzmann's Commentary

Therefore I hated life, he was filled with weariness and loathing toward all that this life has to offer; **because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me**, the contemplation of it all fills the observer with a sense of oppression; **for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.**

NET Bible®

So I loathed⁷⁴ life because what happens⁷⁶ on earth⁷⁷ seems awful to me; for all the benefits of wisdom⁷⁸ are futile – like chasing the wind.

⁷⁴tn Or "I hated."

⁷⁶tn Heb "the deed that is done." The root אָשָׂה ('asah, "to do") is repeated in הַשְׁעָמָה שְׁנַאֲשָׂה (hamma'aseh shenna'asah, "the deed that is done") for emphasis. Here, the term "deed" does not refer to human accomplishment, as in 2:1-11, but to the fact of death that destroys any relative advantage of wisdom over folly (2:14a-16). Qoheleth metaphorically describes death as a "deed" that is "done" to man.

⁷⁷tn Heb "under the sun."

⁷⁸tn Heb "all," referring here to the relative advantage of wisdom.

Syndein/Thieme

{Solomon is Bored with Life}

So I hated life! {Solomon is really saying here that he hates himself} **So I hated life because the work that is done under the sun is grievous to me. All of it is meaningless and chasing the wind.**

{Note: Principal: No matter what you have or do not have, you will not find happiness without first having the capacity for happiness in your soul. That capacity only comes via God and the study of His Word. David said 'my cup runnith over'. Solomon is saying 'How do I 'obtain' a cup like my father had??'}

The Voice

So I began to hate life itself because all that is done under the sun is so harsh and difficult. Life—everything about it—is fleeting; it's like trying to pursue the wind.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Ecclesiastes 2:17 (a graphic); from **Slide Share**; accessed September 7, 2018.

C. Thompson (updated) OT ...therefore I hated the whole of this life; because the work which was done under the sun was toilsome to me; because all are vanity and vexation of spirit:...

Concordant Literal Version

Then I hated life, For to me the work was evil that was done under the sun, For the whole is vanity and a grazing on wind."

Context Group Version

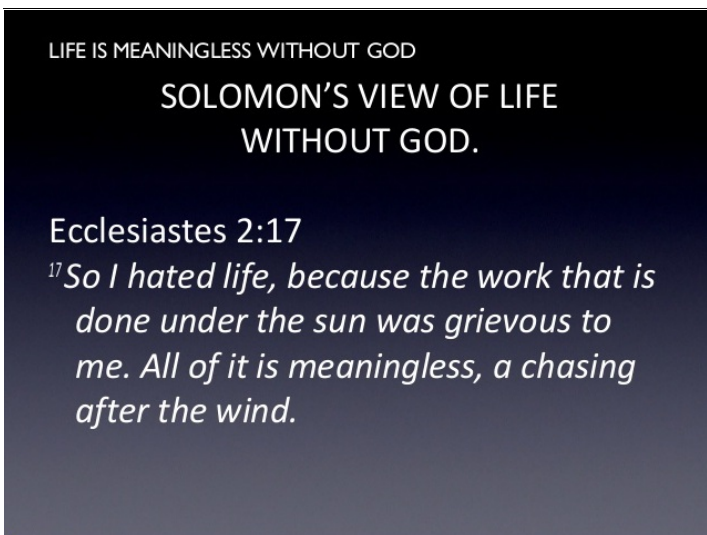
So I spurned life, because the work that is produced under the sun was grievous to me; for all is emptiness and a striving after wind.

English Standard Version

So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind.

Modern English Version

And I began to hate life for the labor that was done under the sun was contemptible to me, for all of this was vanity and chasing the wind.



New King James Version	Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind.
Young's Updated LT	And I have hated life, for sad to me is the work that has been done under the sun, for the whole is vanity and vexation of spirit.

The gist of this passage: Solomon therefore hated his life and was frustrated over all the work that he had done under the sun, believing it all to be empty.

Ecclesiastes 2:17a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
sânê' (שנא) [pronounced <i>saw-NAY</i>]	<i>to hate, loath; to be hateful, to be filled with animosity</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #8130 BDB #971
ISBE gives the meanings as: <i>A feeling of strong antagonism and dislike, generally malevolent and prompting to injury (the opposite of love); sometimes born of moral resentment.</i> ⁵⁵⁰			
'êth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
chayyîym (חַיִּים) [pronounced <i>khay-YEEM</i>]	<i>life, lives, living, being alive, having life, immortality, a long life, sustenance, sustaining life; refreshment; being vigorous; prosperity, welfare, happiness, living prosperously</i>	masculine plural substantive; masculine plural adjective with the definite article	Strong's #2416 BDB #313

The NET Bible: *The term חַיִּים (hakhayyim, "life") functions as a metonymy of association, that is, that which is associated with life, that is, the profitlessness and futility of human secular achievement.*⁵⁵¹

Translation: I hated this life [lit., *the lives*],... Solomon had worked much of his life and had built a great many buildings in Jerusalem and elsewhere. He had wine, women and song; yet he hated this life.

To me, of all the things that Solomon has written, this has to be the saddest verse.

Ecclesiastes 2:17 I decided that I hated this life—all the work which I had done under the sun was grievous to me, for it is all just a series of breaths and trying to catch the wind.

Therefore, I hated life (Ecclesiastes 2:17a) (Various commentators)

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *Disappointed in one experiment after another, he is weary of life.*⁵⁵²

⁵⁵⁰ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; from E-Sword; Topic: Hate; Hatred.

⁵⁵¹ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 19, 2018.

⁵⁵² Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:17.

Therefore, I hated life (Ecclesiastes 2:17a) (Various commentators)

Dr. Bob Utley: *This VERB (BDB 971, KB 1338, Qal PERFECT) means “hate,” but with the connotation of “disgusted” with life (cf. NJB) because of the futility that all he had worked for and built (cf. Eccles. 2:18; Eccles. 2:11) had no lasting value or gain.*⁵⁵³

Matthew Poole: *My life, though accompanied with so much honour, and pleasure, and wisdom, was a burden to me, and I was ready to wish, either that I had never been born, or that I might speedily die.*⁵⁵⁴

Kidner: *Therefore I hated life: If there is a lie at the centre of existence, and nonsense at the end of it, who has the heart to make anything of it?*⁵⁵⁵

David Guzik: *Solomon hated life because it was so meaningless (vanity and grasping for the wind).*⁵⁵⁶

Adam Clarke says that life is more literally lives: *The lives, both of the wise, the madman, and the fool. Also all the stages of life, the child, the man, and the sage. There was nothing in it worth pursuing, no period worth re-living and no hope that if this were possible I could again be more successful.*⁵⁵⁷

The Pulpit Commentary: *Be a man wise or foolish, his life leads only to one end and is soon forgotten; hence life itself is burdensome and hateful. The bitter complaint of Job (Job. 3:20, etc.; Job. 6:8, Job. 6:9) is here echoed, though the words do not point to suicide as the solution of the riddle. It is the ennui and unprofitableness of all life and action in view of the inevitable conclusion, which is here lamented.*⁵⁵⁸

Chuck Smith: *Now, hey, wait a minute. This is the guy that has everything. This is the guy who has every kind of pleasure, every kind of possession that you could possibly hope to have. Anything under the sun, he's got it. And what is he saying? I hated life.*⁵⁵⁹

The College Press Bible Study: *There is a difference that is discernable between one who practices common sense and keeps his eyes within his head, and one who seeks folly and thus walks in darkness. Solomon had written, “Wisdom is in the presence of the one who has understanding, but the eyes of the fool are on the ends of the earth” (Prov. 17:24). However, there is the recognition that even to the wise man death is an inevitable companion who never discerns between the wise man or the fool. It is in the light of this conclusion that Solomon states that he hates life.*⁵⁶⁰

The College Press Bible Study: *There is a relentless correlation between the results of participating in fleeting things and the nature of the things themselves. His conclusions are consistent with the means employed in reaching them. It is not surprising, therefore, to hear him say that he “hated life,” that he questioned his endless endeavors to become wise, that he looked upon all his work as a grievous, empty, futile task. His thoughts were simply corresponding with the kind of wisdom, madness and folly which he sought. There is a sense in which the very wisdom which he found became the greatest kind of folly.*⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵³ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:17.

⁵⁵⁴ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:17.

⁵⁵⁵ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

⁵⁵⁶ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

⁵⁵⁷ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

⁵⁵⁸ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:17.

⁵⁵⁹ Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1–26.

⁵⁶⁰ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:12–17 (comment).

⁵⁶¹ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:12–17 (conclusions).

Therefore, I hated life (Ecclesiastes 2:17a) (Various commentators)

The Cambridge Bible: *Therefore I hated life*] Better, *And I hated*. Of such a temper, the extremest form of pessimism, suicide would seem the natural and logical outcome. In practice, however, the sages who have thus moralized, from Koheleth to Schopenhauer, have found life worth living for, even when they were proving that it was hateful. Even the very utterance of the thought has been a relief, or, like Hamlet, they have been deterred by the vague terror of the “something after death” which their scepticism cannot quite shake off.

The Cambridge Bible continues: *The actual self-murderers are those who cannot weave their experiences into poems and confessions, and find the burden of life, including its sin and shame, more than they can bear. It may be questioned whether mere weariness of life, able to find vent for itself in verse or prose, has ever led to suicide. The man, as here, seems to come to the very verge of it, and then draws back.*⁵⁶²

Clarke: *Therefore I hated...the lives*, both of the wise, the mad man, and the fool. Also all the stages of life, the child, the man, and the sage. There was nothing in it worth pursuing, no period worth re-living and no hope that if this were possible I could again be more successful.⁵⁶³

James Burton Coffman: *Returning again to that example Jesus gave us in Luke 12, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Right here lies the secret of why despair, disillusionment, disappointment and frustration settled like a dark cloud over Solomon's heart. No wonder he hated life.*⁵⁶⁴

From Gill: *Alshech interprets it of the good things of this world, which were the cause of hurt unto him; and Aben Ezra understands, by life, living persons.*⁵⁶⁵

Matthew Henry: *[Solomon] hated life itself (Eccles. 2:17), because it is subject to so many toils and troubles, and a constant series of disappointments. God had given Solomon such largeness of heart, and such vast capacities of mind, that he experienced more than of her men of the unsatisfying nature of all the things of this life and their insufficiency to make him happy. Life itself, that is so precious to a man, and such a blessing to a good man, may become a burden to a man of business.*⁵⁶⁶

Jermin: *There is a contempt of the world which is not genuine religion. Pleasure may heartlessly spurn away those with whom she has played; they may become weary of the world, and yet be without the consolations of God. The disgust of life may lead to remorse instead of true repentance, and a stoical resignation to inflexible fate may closely imitate the calm anticipation of the joys of heaven.*⁵⁶⁷

Jermin continues: *To hate life is to destroy the foundations of all happiness, for without existence no happiness could be possible. The gift of salvation can turn existence into a blessing. Our creation is a pledge of guardianship. It is to us a sure sign and token that “God will not forsake the work of His own hands.”*

Jermin continues: *The original expresseth itself more fully, “I hated lives,” not only this kind of life, or that kind of life; nor only this time of life, or that time of life; not only the life of this man, or of that man; but the lives of all men, of all kinds, of all times. I hated mine own life, “because the work that is done under the sun is grievous unto me;” the life of others, because “All is vanity and vexation of spirit”*⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶² *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:17.

⁵⁶³ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:17.

⁵⁶⁴ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 2, 2018.

⁵⁶⁵ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:17.

⁵⁶⁶ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:17-26.

⁵⁶⁷ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:17-23 (suggestive comments).

⁵⁶⁸ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:17 (suggestive comments).

Therefore, I hated life (Ecclesiastes 2:17a) (Various commentators)

James Waddey: *How many infidels and hedonists have there been who have wished that they had never been born; and how many of the thousands of suicides every year are the result of a life lived without God, and which they have found to be grievous, empty, painful and profitless.*⁵⁶⁹

Kidner: *If, as we might put it, every card in our hand will be trumped, does it matter how we play? Why treat the king with more respect than a knave?*⁵⁷⁰

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge offers up related verses: Num. 11:15 1Kings 19:4 Job 3:20–22 7:15–16 14:13 Jer. 20:14–18 Jonah 4:3, 8 Philip. 1:23–25.⁵⁷¹

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In every generation, particularly since the 1960's, there have been music and movie stars who have died or have committed suicide, and from a human point of view, it makes no sense. They have everything, the money and all that money can buy, the fame, a recognition of their artistry; and yet, they are so miserable, they either kill themselves or they drink or drug themselves to death. They seem to have everything, and yet, their lives are so miserable.

If they only knew of Solomon. If they had only read about his view of life. They might be able to say, *Hmmm, I understand what he is saying; he is speaking for me and the frustrations I have in life.* Solomon was on top of the world in one way; the successful artist is on top of the world in another. But they both often come to the same conclusion, that life is empty and chasing after wind.

Ecclesiastes 2:17b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כי) [pronounced kee]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
ra' (עַר) [pronounced rahg']	<i>evil, bad, wicked; evil in appearance, deformed; misery, distress, injury; that which is displeasing [disagreeable, grievous, unhappy, unfortunate, sad]</i>	masculine singular adjective/noun	Strong's #7451 BDB #948
'al (לְעַ) [pronounced gahʼ]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over; on the ground of, because of, according to, on account of, on behalf of, with, by, besides, in addition to, to, toward, together with, in the matter of, concerning, as regards to</i>	preposition of relative proximity with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #5921 BDB #752

⁵⁶⁹ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 2, 2018.

⁵⁷⁰ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:17.

⁵⁷¹ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Eccles. 2:17.

Ecclesiastes 2:17b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
'êth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
ma'āseh (מַעֲשֵׂה) [pronounced <i>mah-ġa-SEH</i>]	<i>deed, act, action, work, production, that which is done; that which is produced [property, goods, crops]; that which anyone makes or does; a course of action; a business</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4639 BDB #795
she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced <i>sheh</i>] or shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced <i>shehl</i>]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
'āsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>ġaw-SAWH</i>]	<i>to be done [made, produced]; to be offered, to be observed, to be used; was made [constructed, fashioned], to be formed, to be prepared</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Niphal perfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
tachath (תַּחַת) [pronounced <i>TAH-khahth</i>]	<i>underneath, below, under, beneath; instead of, in lieu of; in the place [in which one stands]; in exchange for; on the basis of</i>	preposition of location or foundation	Strong's #8478 BDB #1065
shemesh (שֶׁמֶשׁ) [pronounced <i>SHEH-mesh</i>]	<i>sun; sunrise, sun-rising, east, sun-setting, west (of direction); openly, publically</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #8121 BDB #1039

Translation: ...for all the work which was done under the sun was grievous to me,... At one time, the work he had done under the sun was a source of pride to him. He saw the great buildings, the structures and all that he had done, and he was quite pleased with himself, his plans and bringing them to fruition. Now, all of it seem grievous to him. He is no longer so pleased with himself. He has expended so much effort, and for what, he asks himself.

Ecclesiastes 2:17 I decided that I hated this life—all the work which I had done under the sun was grievous to me, for it is all just a series of breaths and trying to catch the wind.

Ecclesiastes 2:17b: Labor under the sun was a great evil to Solomon (comments)

Matthew Henry: *[This labor is] a great evil; it is a vain thing to rise up early and sit up late in pursuit of this world's goods, which were never designed to be our chief good.*⁵⁷²

The Pulpit Commentary: *The toil and exertions of men pressed upon him like a burden too heavy for him to bear.*⁵⁷³

⁵⁷² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:17–26.

⁵⁷³ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:17.

Ecclesiastes 2:17b: Labor under the sun was a great evil to Solomon (comments)

Matthew Poole: *All human designs and works are so far from yielding me satisfaction, that the consideration of them increases my discontent.*⁵⁷⁴

Dunagan: *It was grievous in light of the frustrating and unfair things in life which Solomon couldn't change. All his money couldn't keep him from dying, and neither could he permanently hold on to any of this wealth or pleasures. I believe that many famous people have finally hit this same wall. As someone said, "Only to reach the pinnacle of success and realize that you are stranded there."*⁵⁷⁵

Whedon: *Because most men are in pursuit of wisdom or pleasure, the best deeming the former, the worst deeming the latter, the real good, and both are disappointed.*⁵⁷⁶

The Open Bible: *One of the most bitter thoughts for a person of great material accomplishments; Some fool will get this after I die.*⁵⁷⁷

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Ecclesiastes 2:17c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כי) [pronounced kee]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
kôl (לכ) [pronounced koh/]; also kol (לכ) [pronounced kol]	<i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
hebel (לְבָה) [pronounced HEH ^b -vef]	<i>vapor, breath; mist, darkness; unsubstantial, emptiness, empty, vanity, meaningless, vacuous; vain, vainly; idol</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1892 BDB #210
Used figuratively for <i>something transitory and unsatisfactory</i> . Often used of things which are transitory, evanescent or frail.			
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
r ^e טוּחַ (תּוֹעֵר) [pronounced reh-ṬOOTH]	<i>longing, striving; grasping after; chasing after; a vexation</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #7469 BDB #946
rûwach (רוּחַ) [pronounced ROO-ahkh]	<i>wind, breath, spirit, apparition</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #7307 BDB #924

Solomon is repeating these words from v. 11.

⁵⁷⁴ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:17.

⁵⁷⁵ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:17.

⁵⁷⁶ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 2:17.

⁵⁷⁷ *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 861 (footnote).

Translation: ...for [it is] all breath and chasing after wind. His whole life is just a series of breaths and chasing after wind. There is no substance to his existence. Solomon's theme song was, *I can't get no (satisfaction)*.

Ecclesiastes 2:17 I decided that I hated this life—all the work which I had done under the sun was grievous to me, for it is all just a series of breaths and trying to catch the wind.

Ecclesiastes 2:17c: Solomon's labor is empty and chasing wind (commentators)

Keil and Delitzsch: *[Solomon's] labour which has wind as its goal, wind as its fruit.*

The Pulpit Commentary: *[Solomon] repeats the expression, "under the sun," as if to show that he was regarding human labor only in its earthly aspect, undertaken and executed for temporal and selfish considerations alone.*

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *[Solomon] comes back to the same miserable refrain; it is all emptiness, striving after wind.*⁵⁷⁸

Dr. Peter Pett: *The Preacher confesses that as a result of his meditations life was becoming distasteful to him because of its pointlessness. All the effort he had put in discouraged him, nay, grieved him, because it had achieved nothing. It was profitless. Again he summed it up as useless and striving after the unattainable.*⁵⁷⁹

J. Vernon McGee: *It is interesting that modern man with all his tremendous inventions and scientific advances has not been able to extend human life very long. Oh, I know that the average life span has been extended by ten years or more. But put that ten years down by a thousand years, or put it down beside eternity, and what do you have? You don't even have a second on the clock of eternity, my friend. Man really hasn't done very much for himself here on this earth.*⁵⁸⁰ In my life, great strides have been made with the length of one's life, but even that is rare much farther than the 90's in the healthiest of people; and still nothing, when compared to the age of the earth.

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The Pulpit Commentary continues: *The apostle teaches a "better lesson, and the worker who adopts his rule is saved from this crushing disappointment: "Whatever you [all] do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord you [all] will receive the recompense of the inheritance: you [all] serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:23–24).*⁵⁸¹

Dr. Dan Hill: *Principle: The things of life, the details of life cannot bring happiness. If you chase happiness in things, you are going to become a slave to the details of life. Instead, be a master over the things, the details of life. Have your happiness in something that is eternal.*⁵⁸²

⁵⁷⁸ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:17 (translation updated).

⁵⁷⁹ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:17.

⁵⁸⁰ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt (chapter 2) accessed September 3, 2018.

⁵⁸¹ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:17 (translation updated).

⁵⁸² From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> accessed September 1, 2018 (pp. 13–16).

Everything Here on Earth is Vain (a graphic); from [Slide Player](#); accessed September 7, 2018.

It is easy to miss the brilliance of the book of Ecclesiastes. There are quotations and concepts which appeal very much to the unbeliever, who has himself thought the very same things.

This book looks at life from the standpoint of a man in reversionism in order to find truth and meaning in life. He is able to see in life just how much is not meaningful; and, for the man seriously searching, that can lead to the knowledge of God and His ways.

Only God would allow His wisest man to go astray, to pursue pleasure, production and personal wealth, only to conclude that he is on a vain and meaningless road.

Everything Here on Earth is Vain

- ☞ The poor live endlessly with hunger and thirst, along with minimal to no shelter.
- ☞ Many of the wealthy have “everything” yet are lonely and full of misery.
- ☞ Others live happy in this life but have nothing eternal to show for it.
- ☞ Solomon’s conclusion: all is vanity. Ecc. 1:1-2, 13-17

Chapter Outline

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Contentment and the believer in Jesus Christ: If you have been a Christian for 5 or 10 years, and you have not seen a sharp decrease in worry, frustration and anger, along with a clear increase of contentment with life, then you are doing it wrong. We are all saved the same way—through faith in Jesus Christ. But after salvation, God has graced you out, giving you more years to live. Therefore, the believer needs to use this time to grow in knowledge of God’s Word. For the believer, there is no other way to grow. You do not grow by giving fervent prayers; you do not grow by singing hymns, you do not grow by witnessing to 20 people a day. Spiritual growth is achieved by being filled with the Spirit and advancing in the faith (that is, the doctrine) of the saints. Where do you get this from? God has already worked that out. It is the responsibility of the well-qualified pastor-teacher to teach the word. The classroom is the local church. And if you are not spiritually advancing, then you are in the wrong church.

It is God’s *command* for the believer to be happy. Philip. 4:4 **Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.**

Psalms 37:4 **Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.**

1Peter 1:8–9 **Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**

Philippians 4:11 **Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.**

And why do we not need to chase after the details of life? Philippians 4:19 **And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.**

Hebrews 13:5 **Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for He has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”** (ESV; capitalized; emphasis mine)

On the other hand, Solomon, at this point in his life, felt differently. Ecclesiastes 2:17 I decided that I hated this life—all the work which I had done under the sun was grievous to me, for it is all just a series of breaths and trying to catch the wind.

Ecclesiastes 2:17 I decided that I hated this life—all the work which I had done under the sun was grievous to me, for it is all just a series of breaths and trying to catch the wind.

Ecclesiastes 2:17: Life's promises have failed Solomon (various commentators)

The College Press Bible Study: *[Solomon] confesses that his work, even the fruit of his labor, is grievous, futile, and striving after wind. Vanity has once again robbed even the wise man of any possible profit of his labor under the sun.*⁵⁸³

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *[Solomon's] life's promise have failed.*

Preacher's Commentary continues: *It promised that life would be bliss, but now he deplores the very fact of existence. (Eccles. 2:17.) The pleasures of the world, by their agreeable variety and adaptation to our lower nature, promise to fill up every moment of life, and drive away all care and repining; but they soon clog the senses, the power of enjoyment is blunted, and life itself regarded with disgust..*

Preacher's Commentary continues: *It promised that life would still be unfolding new scenes of pleasure, but now it has led him to blank despair. (Eccles. 2:20.) He had hoped much from his high capacity for pleasure, from his wealth, from his skill in those great public works which would promote his magnificence, and draw attention to his genius. But now his ingenuity is exhausted, his spirits spent, and all is flat and weary—the world has no more to offer. The night of despair has come, and the bright and gaudy colours of life have faded away into confusion.*⁵⁸⁴

God's promises have never failed; but whatever promises that we believe life offers, we cannot depend upon them.

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Ecclesiastes 2:17 I decided that I hated this life—all the work which I had done under the sun was grievous to me, for it is all just a series of breaths and trying to catch the wind.

Guzik approaches this as poetry (which makes sense, given his translation below).

Guzik's Translation of Ecclesiastes 2:12–17 (David Guzik)

Death makes equal the wise and the fool.
 Then I turned myself to consider wisdom and madness and folly;
 For what can the man do who succeeds the king? —
 Only what he has already done.
 Then I saw that wisdom excels folly
 As light excels darkness.
 The wise man's eyes are in his head,
 But the fool walks in darkness.
 Yet I myself perceived
 That the same event happens to them all.
 So I said in my heart,
 "As it happens to the fool,

⁵⁸³ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:12–17 (comment).

⁵⁸⁴ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:17–23.

Guzik's Translation of Ecclesiastes 2:12–17 (David Guzik)

It also happens to me,
 And why was I then more wise?"
 Then I said in my heart,
 "This also is vanity."
 For there is no more remembrance of the wise than of the fool forever,
 Since all that now is will be forgotten in the days to come.
 And how does a wise man die?
 As the fool!
 Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind.

David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

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The College Press Bible Study: *One should not conclude that Solomon's experiment was a failure. He did what he proposed to do as stated in verse twelve. He said that "his heart was pleased because of all his labor" (Eccles. 2:10). The experiment, however, did not yield the satisfaction that he sought. His dilemma is found in the fact that he did not discover "what good there is for the sons of men," and he now admits that the one who follows him will not discover the answer either!*⁵⁸⁵

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Whatever Solomon does, he will leave it behind to his heir

What comes next, beginning with v. 18 (various commentators)

Pastor John Griffith: *[Ecclesiastes] 2:18-21 Question of one's legacy His view point expressed in this section is that perhaps my perspective will change if I build a great estate to leave to my heirs - maybe that will give satisfaction.*⁵⁸⁶

Dr. Thomas Constable: *In Eccles. 2:18-26, the emphasis is on what happens to the fruits of labor that one accumulates over a lifetime of toil. These fruits include: money and all it can buy, fame, and happiness.*⁵⁸⁷

The College Press Bible Study summarizes what we are about to study: *The Preacher turned toward the past and surveyed the fruit of his life-long endeavor. He had amassed a fortune and collected riches beyond his highest expectations. However, as he contemplated the future and the one who would inherit all that he had gathered together, he grew bitter and cynical. He could designate the next king, but the people would not likely listen to the advice of an old and foolish king. He might dream of the kingdom remaining united but in his heart he realized it was but a dream. He would have little control over these matters.*

⁵⁸⁵ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:12–17 (comment).*

⁵⁸⁶ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_07.html accessed September 1, 2018.

⁵⁸⁷ Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable; ©2012; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:18–26.*

What comes next, beginning with v. 18 (various commentators)

The College Press Bible Study continues: *What if the one who follows him is a fool? He had acquired the greatness of his kingdom through wisdom, knowledge and skill. He now senses that it could slip into the hands of one who exercises little of these attributes and thus he will inherit wealth and power which he neither deserves nor can properly handle. His conclusion is that he thus “hated life.” There are no forthcoming answers which satisfy him. He carries his burden into his bedchamber and is thus robbed of sleep (Eccles. 2:23).*⁵⁸⁸

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

There is clearly a parallel between vv. 18–19 and 20–21. At this point, I don't know the purpose or organization. It is not a complete repetition of ideas, but some ideas are repeated. They both speak of leaving Solomon's wealth behind to someone who does not appreciate it; and how this is empty.

The Cambridge Bible tells us: *It is characteristic of the Debater that he broods over the same thought, and contemplates it as in a variety of aspects. It is not merely, as in Eccles. 2:19, that another possessed his heaped up riches who may use them quite otherwise than he would have them used, but that the man who by his wisdom has achieved wealth (for “equity” we should rather read here and in chap. Eccles. 4:4, Eccles. 5:11 “skill” or “success,” the moral character of the success not being here in question) has to leave it to one who has not worked at all, it may be to an alien in blood.*⁵⁸⁹

And I hated—[even] I—all of my toil which I have toiled under the sun, whom I leave him to the man who will be after me.

Ecclesiastes
2:18

And I hated—[even] I—all of the work which I have done under the sun, which [work] I leave to the man who is after me.

I came to the point where I hated all of the work which I had accomplished under the sun; because all of that work will be left behind to the man who comes after me.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	And I hated—[even] I—all of my toil which I have toiled under the sun, whom I leave him to the man who will be after me.
Revised Douay-Rheims	Again I hated all my application wherewith I had earnestly laboured under the sun, <u>being like to have an heir after me</u> ,...
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	And I hated all my labour which I laboured under the sun <u>in this world</u> , for I must leave it to <u>Rehoboam my son</u> , who comes after me, <u>and Jeroboam his servant will come and take away out of his hands ten tribes, and will possess half of the kingdom.</u>
Peshitta (Syriac)	Yea, I hated all my labor with which I had labored under the sun because I must leave it to the man who shall come after me.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	And I hated the whole of my labour which I took under the sun; because I must leave it to the man who will come after me.

Significant differences: Additional text in the targum. The final phrase in the Latin is confusing.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

⁵⁸⁸ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:18–23 (comment).

⁵⁸⁹ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:21.

Bible in Basic English	Hate had I for all my work which I had done, because the man who comes after me will have its fruits.
Easy English	I will die in the end. Then some other person will enjoy the things that I have made.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	I began to hate all the hard work I had done. I had worked hard, but I saw that the people that live after me will get the things that I worked for. I will not be able to take those things with me.
Good News Bible (TEV)	Nothing that I had worked for and earned meant a thing to me, because I knew that I would have to leave it to my successor, and he might be wise, or he might be foolish—who knows? Yet he will own everything I have worked for, everything my wisdom has earned for me in this world. It is all useless. V. 19 is included for context.
<i>The Message</i>	And I hated everything I'd accomplished and accumulated on this earth. I can't take it with me—no, I have to leave it to whoever comes after me.
Names of God Bible	I came to hate everything for which I had worked so hard under the sun, because I will have to leave it to the person who replaces me.
NIRV	So I began to lose hope because of all my hard work on this earth. A person might use wisdom, knowledge and skill to do their work. But then they have to leave everything they own to someone who hasn't worked for it. That doesn't have any meaning either. In fact, it isn't fair. V. 19 is included for context.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	I labored and achieved more than any man who had been before me. Yet, I hated my achievements because now I must leave them to some man who will follow me.
Contemporary English V.	Suddenly I realized that others would someday get everything I had worked for so hard, then I started hating it all.
The Living Bible	And I am disgusted about this—that I must leave the fruits of all my hard work to others.
New Berkeley Version	I hated all my toil at which I had labored under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man coming after me;...
New Century Version	I hated all the things I had worked for here on earth, because I must leave them to someone who will live after me.
New Living Translation	The Futility of Work I came to hate all my hard work here on earth, for I must leave to others everything I have earned.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	I also began to hate all the hard work that I had done here on the earth, because when I die, everything that I have acquired will belong to the one who inherits it after me.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	I became disgusted with all of the things That I had accomplished under the sun, For I'll leave it to the one who comes next...
Beck's American Translation	And I hated everything I had worked for under the sun. I have to leave it to the man who comes after me.
International Standard V	<i>The Pointlessness of Labor</i> Then I despised everything I had worked for on earth, that is, the things that I will leave to the person who will succeed me.
New Advent (Knox) Bible Translation for Translators	I hated the thought of them now; should heir of mine succeed to them? Working hard seemed useless I also began to hate all the hard work that I had done here on the earth, because when I die, everything that I have acquired will belong to the next king.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible	I am to have hated my labor that I toiled under the sun - yet assert I to set to leave it to they of mankind that follow me? -
Conservapedia Translation	Yes, I hated all the works of my life: because I can only pass them on to the man that shall survive me.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	I also hated all my works,—that I had striven for under the sun, for I must leave them to the man after me; and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all the things for which I have labored, and the result of my science under the sun—That also is vanity! V. 19 is included for context.
HCSB	The Emptiness of Work I hated all my work that I labored at under the sun because I must leave it to the man who comes after me.
Peter Pett's translation	And I hated all my effort with which I exerted myself under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will be after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control ('rule') over all that has been produced by my great efforts ('all my labour in which I have laboured'), and in which I have shown wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. V. 19 is included for context.
Tree of Life Version	I also hated all the fruit of my toil for which I had labored under the sun, because I must leave it to the one who comes after me.
Unlocked Literal Bible	I hated all my accomplishments for which I had worked under the sun because I must leave them behind to the man who comes after me.
Wikipedia Bible Project	And I hated all my labor that I labored under the sun: that I will bequeath to the man that will come after me.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)	¹⁸ I hated all I had labored for under the sun and which I must leave to my successor. ¹⁹ Who knows whether he will be foolish or wise? Yet he will be master of all ²⁰ I have achieved by my own efforts and wisdom: that too is meaningless. Vv. 18 & 20 are included for context.
The Heritage Bible	And I hated all my wearisome toil which I toiled under the sun; I would leave it to the man who shall be after me.
New American Bible (2011)	STUDY OF THE FRUITS OF TOIL <i>To Others the Profits.</i> And I detested all the fruits of my toil under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who is to come after me.
New English Bible—1970	So I came to hate all my labour and toil here under the sun, since I should have to leave its fruits to my successor. What sort of a man will he be who succeeds me, who inherits what others have acquired [What sort ... acquired: see note on v12].
New RSV	I hated all my toil in which I had toiled under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to those who come after me —and who knows whether they will be wise or foolish? Yet they will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. V. 19 is included for context.
Revised English Bible—1989	I came to hate all my labour and toil here under the sun, since I should have to leave its fruits to my successor. What will the king's successor do? Will he do what has been done before?

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	I hated all the things for which I had worked under the sun, because I saw that I would have to leave them to the man who will come after me.
exeGesés companion Bible	Yes, I hated all the toil I toiled under the sun; because I leave it to humanity after me.

JPS (Tanakh—1985)	So, too, I loathed all the wealth that I was gaining under the sun. For I shall leave it to the man who will succeed me—and who knows whether he will be wise or foolish?—and he will control all the wealth that I gained by toil and wisdom under the sun. That too is futile. V. 19 is included for context.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	Yea, I hated all my amal for which I had toiled under the shemesh; because I must leave it unto the adam that shall occupy my place after me.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	The Futility of Labor So I hated all the fruit (gain) of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will succeed me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too is vanity (futility, self-conceit). V. 19 is included for context.
Pastor John Griffith	Thus I hated (same as in 2:17) all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me.
Kretzmann's Commentary	Yea, I hated, regarded with disgust and aversion, all my labor which I had taken under the sun, with which he had exerted himself; because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me, his successor thus reaping the fruit for which he had labored, a fact which, for the moment, made his own work appear so useless.
NET Bible®	<i>Futility of Being a Workaholic</i> So I loathed all the fruit of ⁷⁹ my effort, ⁸⁰ for which I worked so hard on earth, ⁸² because I must leave it behind in the hands of my successor. ⁸⁶ ^{79tn} The phrase “the fruit of” does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity (see the following note on the phrase “hard labor”). ^{80tn} Heb “I hated all my toil for which I had toiled.” ^{82tn} Heb “under the sun.” ^{86tn} Heb “to a man who will come after me.”
Syndein/Thieme	{Nothing in Life is Permanent} Yes, I hated everything I had toiled for under the sun. Because I must leave them to one who comes after me! {Note: No one can take to heaven with his the works of this earth! But the bible explains that only the 'immaterial' things of the world cannot be destroyed - that is the bible doctrine resident in your soul. That is taken with you to heaven.}
The Voice	So I began to hate all the hard work I had done under the sun because I would <i>eventually</i> have to leave it all to the one who comes after me.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

English Standard Version	I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. V. 19 is included for context.
Modern English Version	And I despised all the toil in which I labored under the sun, which I will give up to the man who comes after me.
New American Standard B.	The Futility of Labor Thus I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me.
Webster's Bible Translation	Yes, I hated all my labor which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it to the man that shall be after me.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	And I have hated all my labour that I labour at under the sun, because I leave it to a man who is after me.

The gist of this passage: Solomon is concerned about all his labor and how it will be left to one of his sons.

Ecclesiastes 2:18a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
sânê' (שָׂנֵא) [pronounced <i>saw-NAY</i>]	<i>to hate, loath; to be hateful, to be filled with animosity</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #8130 BDB #971
ISBE gives the meanings as: <i>A feeling of strong antagonism and dislike, generally malevolent and prompting to injury (the opposite of love); sometimes born of moral resentment.</i> ⁵⁹⁰			
'ânîy (אֲנִי) [pronounced <i>aw-NEE</i>]	<i>I, me; in answer to a question, it means I am, it is I</i>	1 st person singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #589 BDB #58
'êth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	<i>every, each, all of, all; any of, any</i>	masculine singular construct not followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
'âmâl (עֲמָל) [pronounced <i>gaw-MAWL</i>]	<i>intense labor, exhausting toil, exhaustion, miserable work, work and toil so tiring, you just want to cry; misery, travail; production from labor</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #5999 BDB #765
<p>The NET Bible: <i>The term עֲמָל ('amali, "my toil") is repeated throughout 2:18-21. In each case, it functions as a metonymy of cause (i.e., toil) for effect (i.e., fruit of labor). See, e.g., Ps 105:44; BDB 765 s.v. לָמַע 3. The metonymy is indicated by several factors: (1) The 3rd person masculine singular suffix ("it") on וְנִחַיְתִי ('annikhennu, "I must leave it") in 2:18, and on וְנִתַּנְתִּי (yittk nennu, "I must give it") in 2:21 refer to his wealth, that is, the fruit of his labor. (2) In 2:21 the 3rd person masculine singular suffix on וְבִלְמַע אֲלֵי (shello 'amal-bo, "who did not work for it") refers to the inheritance that Qoheleth must turn over to his successor, namely, the fruit of his labor. (3) While he himself enjoyed the fruit of his labor, he despaired that he had to turn the fruit of his labor over to his successor: "So I loathed all the [fruit of] my labor" (2:18a) and "I began to despair about the [fruit of] my labor" (2:20a). Although most translations render עֲמָל as "my toil" in 2:18, the metonymy is recognized by several English translations: "So I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored" (NASB); "So I detested all the fruits of my labor" (NAB); "I hated all the things I had toiled for" (NIV); and "So I loathed all the wealth that I was gaining" (NJPS).</i>⁵⁹¹</p>			
she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced <i>sheh</i>] or shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced <i>shehl</i>]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
'ânîy (אֲנִי) [pronounced <i>aw-NEE</i>]	<i>I, me; in answer to a question, it means I am, it is I</i>	1 st person singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #589 BDB #58

⁵⁹⁰ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; from E-Sword; Topic: Hate; Hatred.

⁵⁹¹ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 19, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:18a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
'āmēl (עָמַל) [pronounced <i>gaw-MALE</i>]	<i>toiling, working, doing, working until complete misery and exhaustion set in, worn out, tired out, burnt out</i>	masculine singular verbal adjective (also used as a noun)	Strong's #6001 BDB #766
The NET Bible: <i>Qoheleth uses an internal cognate accusative construction (accusative noun and verb from the same root) for emphasis: עָמַלְיָ שָׂאֲלֵי עָמַלְיָ ('amali she'ani 'amel, "my toil for which I had toiled"). See IBHS 167 §10.2.1g.⁵⁹²</i>			
tachath (תַּחַת) [pronounced <i>TAH-khahth</i>]	<i>underneath, below, under, beneath; instead of, in lieu of; in the place [in which one stands]; in exchange for; on the basis of</i>	preposition of location or foundation	Strong's #8478 BDB #1065
shemesh (שֶׁמֶשׁ) [pronounced <i>SHEH-mesh</i>]	<i>sun; sunrise, sun-rising, east, sun-setting, west (of direction); openly, publically</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article; pausal form	Strong's #8121 BDB #1039

Translation: And I hated—[even] I—all of the work which I have done under the sun,... Solomon over and over again emphasizes that this is him speaking; he is the one who is going through these things. He is the one in this life and reacting to all that his happening to him. Nothing here is hypothetical.

The verb for hatred is quite strong; so he despised all of the work that he has done in this life.

Ecclesiastes 2:18 I came to the point where I hated all of the work which I had accomplished under the sun; because all of that work will be left behind to the man who comes after me.

Ecclesiastes 2:18a: Solomon hates the work he has done under the sun (comments)

The Pulpit Commentary: *[Solomon] is disgusted to reflect upon all the trouble he has taken in life, when he thinks of what will become of the productions of his genius and the treasures which he has amassed.*⁵⁹³

Benson: *All these riches and buildings, and other fruits of my labour, were aggravations of my misery.*⁵⁹⁴

Matthew Henry: *[Solomon had a] falling out with this business. He soon grew weary of it...He hated all his labour, because he did not meet with that satisfaction in which he expected. After he had had his fine houses, and gardens, and water-works, awhile, he began to nauseate them, and look upon them with contempt, as children, who are eager for a toy and fond of it at first, but, when they have played with it awhile, are weary of it, and throw it away, and must have another.*

Henry continues: *This expresses not a gracious hatred of these things, which is our duty, to love them less than God and religion (Luke 14:26), nor a sinful hatred of them, which is our folly, to be weary of the place God has assigned us and the work of it, but a natural hatred of them, arising from a surfeit upon them and a sense of disappointment in them.*⁵⁹⁵

Clarke: I hated all my labor - Because,

⁵⁹² From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 19, 2018.

⁵⁹³ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:18.

⁵⁹⁴ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:17–18.

⁵⁹⁵ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:17–26.

Ecclesiastes 2:18a: Solomon hates the work he has done under the sun (comments)

1. It has not answered the end for which it was instituted.
2. I can enjoy the fruits of it but a short time.
3. I must leave it to others, and know not whether a wise man, a knave, or a fool will possess it.⁵⁹⁶

Dr. John Gill may have taken this too far: *I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun,.... The great works he made, the houses he built; the vineyards, gardens, and orchards he planted, &c. what he got by his labour, his riches and wealth; and what he also got, not by the labour of his hands, but of his mind. Some understand this of the books he wrote; which were a weariness to his body, and fatigue to his mind; and which he might fear some persons would make an ill use of.*⁵⁹⁷

Whedon: *Hated all my labour* — He not only gets no satisfaction from his works, but he must leave all to a stranger, a thought which makes all look odious to him.⁵⁹⁸

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The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *It is only the result of our labours that we pass on to posterity. The toil is ours, and theirs the fruit. The effects of our labour and skill remain after we are gone. They endure for others, but not for us.*⁵⁹⁹

Ecclesiastes 2:18b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
she- (–ש) [pronounced sheh] or shel (שׁל) [pronounced shehl]	who, which, that	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
The NET Bible: <i>The relative pronoun שׁל (she) on שׁלִּאֲנִיחֶנּוּ (she'annikhennu, relative pronoun שׁל + Hiphil imperfect 1st person common singular from נוּחַ, nuakh, "to leave" + 3rd person masculine singular suffix) is causal: "Because I must leave it behind."</i> ⁶⁰⁰			
nûwach (נוּחַ) [pronounced NOO-akhk]	to deposit, to set down; to cause to rest [to set down]; to let remain, to leave; to depart from; to abandon; to permit	1 st person singular, Hiphil imperfect; with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5117 (and #3240) BDB #628

The NET Bible: *The 3rd person masculine singular suffix on אֲנִיחֶנּוּ ('annikhennu, "I must leave it") refers to Qoheleth's wealth, that is, the fruit of his labor (see the note on the phrase "hard labor" in 2:18). The suffix is rendered literally by nearly all translations; however, a few make its referent explicit: "I have to leave its fruits" (NEB), "I must leave them [= all the fruits of my labor]" (NAB).*

⁵⁹⁶ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:18.

⁵⁹⁷ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:18.

⁵⁹⁸ Whedon's *Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:18.

⁵⁹⁹ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:18 (suggestive comments).

⁶⁰⁰ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 19, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:18b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
The NET Bible: <i>The verb נוּחַ (nuakh, "to rest") denotes "to leave [something] behind" in the hands of someone (e.g., Ps 119:121; Eccl 2:18); see HALOT 680 s.v. נוּחַ B.2.c. The imperfect functions in a modal sense of obligation or necessity. At death, Qoheleth will be forced to pass on his entire estate and the fruit of his labors to his successor.</i> ⁶⁰¹			
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^o]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʾâdâm (אָדָם) [pronounced aw-DAWM]	<i>a man, a human being, mankind; transliterated Adam</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #120 & #121 BDB #9
The word <i>the Adam</i> can mean <i>man, mankind, humankind, men, human beings</i> .			
she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced sheh] or shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced shehl]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
ʾachar (אַחַר) [pronounced ah-KHAHR]	<i>after, following, behind; afterwards, after that; another</i>	preposition/adverb with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #310 BDB #29

Translation: ...which [work] I leave to the man who is after me. Solomon has worked hard of all his life; and he realizes that, he will die, and he will leave everything behind to the man who is after him—the next king, who is one of his sons. Whether or not Solomon knew which person that would be, we do not know at this time. His concern here suggests to me that Solomon was not happy considering the sons who would probably succeed him as king.

You will recall the David, for his first brood of children, was not a good father; and there were several of them who were entitled and willing to do anything in order to become king in his stead. Absalom, a son whom David loved, was willing to kill his own father to become king. David clearly did not spend time with his sons, in order to mold them. We have less information about Solomon, but since Solomon had about 50x as many wives and mistresses to deal with, we may assume that his training was even less substantial.

David's sons with Bathsheba were perhaps the only sons that he spent time with (which sons included Solomon).

Ecclesiastes 2:18 I came to the point where I hated all of the work which I had accomplished under the sun; because all of that work will be left behind to the man who comes after me.

Ecclesiastes 2:18b: Solomon hated leaving all his labor to his son (commentary)

Benson (of the man who he would leave it all to): *Who will undo all that I have done, and turn the effects of my wisdom into instruments of his folly. Some think he had such an opinion of Rehoboam.*⁶⁰²

⁶⁰¹ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 19, 2018.

⁶⁰² Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:17–18.

Ecclesiastes 2:18b: Solomon hated leaving all his labor to his son (commentary)

Dr. John Gill: *...because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me; because he could not enjoy the fruits of his labour himself, at least but a very short time: but must be obliged to leave all to another, his possessions, estates, riches, and treasure; which a man cannot carry with him when he dies, but must leave all behind him, to his heirs and successors.*⁶⁰³

Dunagan: *[N]ot only did life lose its meaning, but all the "things" in 2:1-10 had lost their appeal to Solomon. Solomon grows bitter and cynical. Everything he has worked so hard for-would end up in the hands of someone else...[Solomon] resented all the work that he had expended because there was no permanence to its fruits.*⁶⁰⁴

Matthew Henry: *That the gains of his business must all be left to others. Prospect of advantage is the spring of action and the spur of industry; therefore men labour, because they hope to get by it; if the hope fail, the labour flags; and therefore Solomon quarrelled with all the works, the great works, he had made, because they would not be of any lasting advantage to himself.*

Henry continues: *But I must leave all to the man that shall be after me, to the generation that comes up in the room of that which is passing away. As there were many before us, who built the houses that we live in, and into whose purchases and labours we have entered, so there shall be many after us, who shall live in the houses that we build, and enjoy the fruit of our purchases and labours. Never was land lost for want of an heir.*

Henry continues: *To a gracious soul this is no uneasiness at all; why should we grudge others their turn in the enjoyments of this world, and not rather be pleased that, when we are gone, those that come after us shall fare the better for our wisdom and industry? But to a worldly mind, that seeks for its own happiness in the creature, it is a great vexation.*⁶⁰⁵

Matthew Poole: *I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun; all these riches and buildings, and other fruits of my labour, were the matter of my repentance, and aggravations of my misery, because I must, and that everlastingly, part with them, and leave them all behind me.*⁶⁰⁶

Dr. Bob Utley: *Traditional wisdom teachers put great faith in one's prosperity, not so Qoheleth. Everyone leaves everything (cf. Psalm 39:6).*⁶⁰⁷

Whedon: *The man that shall be after me — Solomon speaks as if he knew well his son Rehoboam, who was perhaps impatient to get upon the throne, where he made such disastrous work.*⁶⁰⁸

J. A. Loader: *By toil and wisdom Solomon had made great gains, but his successor may well be a fool; and, in that case, wisdom has only served the interests of folly. Therefore wisdom is worthless.*⁶⁰⁹

James Burton Coffman: *Under the stupid government of his son Rehoboam, his fool of a son soon liquidated the once-powerful empire of his father; and when Shishak, king of Egypt, came up and captured Jerusalem, even the gold-plated treasures of the sacred Temple itself were carried away to Egypt.*

⁶⁰³ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:16.

⁶⁰⁴ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:18.

⁶⁰⁵ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:17–26.

⁶⁰⁶ John Woodmorappe; *Noah's Ark: A Feasibility Study*; Institute for Creation Research, ©1996; p. pp Eccles. 2:18.

⁶⁰⁷ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:18.

⁶⁰⁸ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:18.

⁶⁰⁹ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 2, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:18b: Solomon hated leaving all his labor to his son (commentary)

Then Coffman writes: *[It is my opinion] that if Solomon was a tenth as wise as the Bible says he was, he would certainly have had sense enough to know that any son raised like a hot-house flower in a godless harem would not have the judgment to govern any nation, much less a worldwide empire; nor would Solomon himself have had such sense, if God had not supernaturally endowed him. Of course, Solomon did indeed have misgivings about Rehoboam.*⁶¹⁰

As an aside, we really have no idea how many sons Solomon had and which one he believed would succeed him. I would suggest that none of his sons exhibited any wisdom or judgment.

Dr. Dan Hill brings up some important points: *Solomon, as an extension of possessions, decided that happiness could be found in having many children. Since he had 700 wives and 300 concubines, he had the potential for having many children. The Bible does not record how many children Solomon had but we do see his conclusion of attitude towards his frantic search for happiness in children.*⁶¹¹

Solomon had to have hundreds of children—perhaps even thousands? And yet, he begrudged the one who would come after him (succeed him as king). This suggests to me that Solomon raised up a rather sorry brood of children (children need to have a father active in their lives).

Given all that Solomon did and all of the wives and mistresses that he collected, it strikes me that Solomon did not have time for his children, much that way the King David did not have time for his first brood of children. And, as was discussed in that historical narrative, you cannot allow the mothers and the state to raise your children. The father must be hands-on; and Solomon apparently was not.

The Pulpit Commentary says⁶¹² that it is impossible that Solomon was thinking of Rehoboam when writing this. It is reasonable to assume that this is a generality. Whether Solomon is specifically thinking of anyone in particular is not revealed in Ecclesiastes.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Dr. Thomas Constable: *Solomon viewed all his labor during his lifetime ("under the sun," Eccles. 2:18) with despair, because there was no real permanence to its fruits. He could not take them with him.*⁶¹³

Ecclesiastes 2:18 I came to the point where I hated all of the work which I had accomplished under the sun; because all of that work will be left behind to the man who comes after me.

Rich and/or Famous Men About to Die (from various sources)

From the Cambridge Bible: *Frederick William IV. of Prussia turns to his friend Bunsen as they stand on the terrace at Potsdam, and says, as they look out on the garden,... "This too I must leave behind me".*⁶¹⁴

These next 4 are from Trapp's commentary:

Henry Beaufort, that rich and wretched cardinal, bishop of Winchester, and chancellor of England, in the reign of Henry VI, when he perceived that he must die, and that there was no remedy, murmured at death, that his riches could not relieve him till a further time. For he asked, 'Why should I die, being so rich? If the whole realm would save my life, I am able either by policy to get it, or by riches to buy it. Fie, quoth he, will not death be hired? will money do nothing?'

⁶¹⁰ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 2, 2018.

⁶¹¹ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> accessed September 1, 2018 (pp. 13–16).

⁶¹² *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:18.

⁶¹³ Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:18–21.

⁶¹⁴ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:18.

Rich and/or Famous Men About to Die (from various sources)

Latimer, in a sermon before King Edward VI, tells a story of a rich man, that when he lay upon his sick bed, there came one to him and told him that certainly, by all reason they can judge by, he was like to be a man for another world, a dead man. As soon as ever he hears but these words, saith Latimer; What! must I die? said he. Send for a physician; wounds, sides, heart, must I die? wounds, sides, heart, must I die? and thus he goes on, and there could be nothing got from him, but Wounds, sides, heart, must I die? Must I die and go from these? Here was all, here is the end of a man that made his portion to be in this world. If this man's heart had been ripped up after he was dead, there might have been found written in it, 'The god of this present world.'

Mr Jeremy Burroughs relates in print {b} of another rich man, that had sometime lived near unto him, who, when he heard his sickness was deadly, sent for his bags of money, and hugged them in his arms, saying, Oh! must I leave you? Oh! must I leave you? And of another, who, when he lay upon his sick bed, called for his bags, and laid a bag of gold to his heart, and then bade them take it away, It will not do, it will not do.

Mr Rogers in his "Treatise of Love," tells of one that, being near death, clapped a twenty shillings piece of gold into his own mouth, saying, Some wiser than some, I will take this with me howsoever.⁶¹⁵

Henry II, some few hours before he died, saw a list of their names who conspired with the King of France, and Earl Richard, his son and successor, against him; and finding therein his son John - whom he had made Earl of Cornwall, Somerset, Nottingham, Derby, and Lancaster, and given him a vast estate - to be the first, he fell into a grievous passion, both cursing his sons, and the day wherein himself was born and in that distemperature departed the world, which so often himself had distempered.⁶¹⁶

As that great Emperor of Egypt caused to be proclaimed at his funeral, that that shirt of his, there hanged up for the purpose, was all that he now had of all his labour and great achievements. Saladin the mighty monarch of the East is gone, and hath taken no more with him than what you see, said the bare priest that went before the bier.⁶¹⁷

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge on that which is gathered up, but passed along to someone else: Eccles. 2:26 5:13-14 1Kings 11:11-13 Psalm 17:14 39:6 49:10 Luke 12:20 16:27-28 Acts 20:29-30 1Cor. 3:10.⁶¹⁸

[Chapter Outline](#)

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Ecclesiastes 2:18 I came to the point where I hated all of the work which I had accomplished under the sun; because all of that work will be left behind to the man who comes after me.

Solomon's concern here is genuine. If you are working for an hourly wage, and, for whatever nonsense reason, you worked 10 hours but did not get paid for it, you are upset. It's wrong and you know it's wrong. But, if you have no recourse, then you are frustrated and angry. Solomon has no control after his death. He has worked his entire life, but for what? He takes nothing with him at his death and someone undeserving takes all that he had.⁶¹⁹ We are, of course, looking at this as a man under the sun.

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: Man is but a tenant under the great Lord of all. He has no lease of life; but is liable to be turned out at a moment's notice. He occupies his little holding

⁶¹⁵ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 2:18. Further references there.

⁶¹⁶ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 2:19.

⁶¹⁷ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 2:22.

⁶¹⁸ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Eccles. 2:18.

⁶¹⁹ Paraphrasing from [Useful Bible.com](http://UsefulBible.com) accessed September 8, 2018.

for a brief space, and then departs, leaving all he has gathered and wrought to those who come after. We cannot be truly said to possess that which can be severed from us, leaving us poor indeed. God is the only portion of the soul for ever.⁶²⁰

Many translations connected vv. 18 and 19, as they are clearly related.

And who knows the wise [man] he is or a fool? And he will be master in all of my labor which I have labored [in], and [in] which I was wise under the sun. Also this a breath.

Ecclesiastes
2:19

Who knows [if] he will be a wise [man] or a fool? Yet he will have power over all my labor which I have labored [doing], and [over all] which I was wise under the sun. This also [is just] a breath.

Who knows if the man to follow me will be wise or just a fool? Yet, regardless, he will have control over all of the work which I have done and over all that required my wisdom under the sun. This also is just a breath that will disappear.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	And who knows the wise [man] he is or a fool? And he will be master in all of my labor which I have labored [in], and [in] which I was wise under the sun. Also this a breath.
Revised Douay-Rheims	Whom I know not whether he will be a wise man or a fool, and he shall have rule over all my labours with which I have laboured and been <u>solicitous</u> : and is there any thing so vain?
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	And who knows whether wise or foolish <u>will be the king who is to be after me</u> , and reign over all my labour which I laboured <u>in this world, and over all which I accomplish</u> in my wisdom under the sun in this world? and I <u>was confounded in my heart, and again</u> said: This, too, is vanity.
Peshitta (Syriac)	And who knows whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have rule over all my labor wherein I have labored, and wherein I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? and whether he will have power over all my labour in which I laboured, and wherein I grew wise under the sun? this is also vanity.

Significant differences: Additional text in the targum. The Latin has *solicitous* rather than *wise*.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	And who is to say if that man will be wise or foolish? But he will have power over all my work which I have done and in which I have been wise under the sun. This again is to no purpose.
Easy English	That person may be a wise man or he may be a fool. But he will have all the things that I have worked for on the earth. This, too, is not good. The fact that I was wise means nothing.
Easy-to-Read Version—2006	I began to hate all the hard work I had done, because I saw that the people who live after me would get the things that I worked for. I will not be able to take them with me. Some other person will control everything I worked and studied for. And I don't

⁶²⁰ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:17–23 (suggestive comments).

know if that person will be wise or foolish. This is also senseless. V. 18 is included for context.

The Message

And I hated everything I'd accomplished and accumulated on this earth. I can't take it with me—no, I have to leave it to whoever comes after me. Whether they're worthy or worthless—and who's to tell?—they'll take over the earthly results of my intense thinking and hard work. Smoke. V. 18 is included for context.

Names of God Bible

Who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish? He will still have control over everything under the sun for which I worked so hard and used my wisdom. Even this is pointless.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study

The basic tragedy is that I have no knowledge of the one who shall follow me. He could be a wise man, or he could be a fool. I have collected everything through wisdom, and now who ever follows me will have complete control over my fortune. What fleeting satisfaction! What vanity!

Contemporary English V.

Who knows if those people will be sensible or stupid? Either way, they will own everything I have earned by hard work and wisdom. It doesn't make sense.

The Living Bible

And who can tell whether my son will be a wise man or a fool? And yet all I have will be given to him—how discouraging!

New Berkeley Version

...and who knows whether he will be a wise or a foolish man? Yet he will be master over all my possessions for which I labored and used my wisdom under the sun; this, too, is worthlessness.

New Century Version

Someone else will control everything for which I worked so hard here on earth, and I don't know if he will be wise or foolish. This is also useless.

New Life Version

And who knows if he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will rule over all that I have worked for by acting with wisdom under the sun. This also is for nothing.

New Living Translation

And who can tell whether my successors will be wise or foolish? Yet they will control everything I have gained by my skill and hard work under the sun. How meaningless!

Unlocked Dynamic Bible

And who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish? But even if he is foolish, he will acquire all the things that I worked very hard and wisely to get.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible

And who knows if he's wise or another poor fool...
Who knows if he'll care for the things I have made,
Or all the things I've discerned under the sun?
So, all of this is just folly!

Beck's American Translation

And who knows if he will be wise or foolish? He will take control of everything under the sun for which I worked and used my skill. This also is a vapor.

Common English Bible

And who knows whether that one will be wise or foolish? Either way, that person will have control over the results of all my hard work and wisdom here under the sun. That too is pointless.

International Standard V

And who knows whether he will be wise or foolish? Either way, he will take possession of everything that I have done on earth, especially where I have excelled. This also is pointless.

New Advent (Knox) Bible

An heir, would he be wise man or fool? None could tell; but his would be the possession of all I had toiled for so hard, schemed for so anxiously; could there be frustration worse than this?

Translation for Translators

And <who/no one> knows [RHQ] whether he will be wise or whether he will be foolish. But even if he is foolish, he will acquire all the things that I worked very hard and wisely to get.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible	am I to be knowing that he is to be wise or languorous? - But he retains exercise his power over my labor that I am to have toiled, surely that I am to have been skillful with under the sun. It is to be vapor!
Conservapedia Translation	And who knows if he shall be a wise man or a fool? Regardless, he will take over all of the estate that I have built, which came from wise choices I made in my life. This is also vanity.
Christian Standard Bible	And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will take over all my work that I labored at skillfully under the sun. This too is futile.
God's Truth (Tyndale)	...Yes I was weary of all my labor, which I had taken under the Sun, because I should be faine (obliged/ willing happy) to leave them unto another man, that comes after me for who knows, whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? And yet shall he be lord of all my labors, which I with such wisdom have taken under the Sun. Is this not a vain thing? V. 18 is included for context.
H. C. Leupold Lexham English Bible	So I began to despair of all the toil with which I toiled under the sun. And who knows <i>whether</i> he will be wise or foolish? Yet he will exercise control of all <i>the fruit</i> of my toil with which I toiled wisely under the sun. This also is vanity!
NIV, ©2011	And who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish? Yet they will have control over all the fruit of my toil into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless.
Wikipedia Bible Project	And who knows if he will be wise man or a fool? And he will control all my labor that I labored and studied under the sun. Also this is mirage.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

The Heritage Bible	And who knows? Shall he be wise or stupid? And he shall rule over all my wearisome toil in which I have toiled, and <i>who</i> under the sun <i>will know</i> I have been wise? This also <i>is</i> vanity.
New American Bible (2011)	And who knows whether that one will be wise or a fool? Yet that one will take control of all the fruits of my toil and wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity.
New English Bible—1970	Who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will be master of all the fruits of my labour and skill here under the sun. This too is emptiness.
New Jerusalem Bible	All I have toiled for under the sun and now bequeath to my successor I have come to hate; who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all the work into which I have put my efforts and wisdom under the sun. That is futile too. V. 18 is included for context.
Revised English Bible—1989	Who knows whether he will be wise or foolish? Yet he will have in his control all the fruits of my labour and skill here under the sun. This too is futility.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	Who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the things I worked for and which demonstrated how wise I am under the sun. This too is pointless.
The Complete Tanach	And who knows whether he will be wise or foolish. And he will rule over all my toil that I have toiled and that I have gained wisdom under the sun; this too is vanity.

This too is vanity: This too is one of the vanities that were created in the world, that the wise man toils, and the fool inherits him.

exeGesés companion Bible	And who knows whether he be wise or fool? - and yet dominates over all the toil I toiled wherein I enwisened myself under the sun. This is also vanity.
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Orthodox Jewish Bible And who hath da'as whether he shall be a chacham or a kesil? Nevertheless shall he have shlitah (control, authority) over all my amal for which I have toiled, and have poured out my chochmah under the shemesh. This also is hevel.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible I hated all the things I had ·worked [toiled] for ·here on earth [·under the sun; 1:3], because I must leave them to someone who will live after me. Someone else will control everything for which I ·worked so hard [toiled so wisely] ·here on earth [·under the sun; 1:3], and ·I don't know [·who knows...?] if he will be wise or foolish. This is also useless [1:2]. V. 18 is included for context.

Pastor John Griffith And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool?
- This is the where the futility lay - in not knowing whether his heir would be a wise man or a fool.
Yet he will have control (rule, mastery) over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too is vanity. (hebel)

Kretzmann's Commentary And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? since so much depends upon the attitude of men. Solomon himself, having disregarded his father's dying charge, was filled with misgivings concerning the manner in which Rehoboam, his son by an idolatrous Ammonitess, Naamah, would conduct himself, a foreboding which was only too fully justified. Yet shall he have rule over all my labor wherein I have labored, and wherein I have showed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity. There is a serious suggestion here for all Christian parents to discard all selfishness and sentimentality and to train their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

NET Bible® Who knows if he will be a wise man or a fool?
Yet he will be master over all the fruit of⁸⁸ my labor⁸⁹ for which I worked so wisely on earth!⁹¹
This also is futile!
^{88tn} The phrase "the fruit of" does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity (see the following note on the word "labor").
^{89tn} Heb "my labor."
^{91tn} Heb "under the sun."

The Voice And who knows whether my heir will be wise or foolish? Still he will inherit all the things for which I worked so hard here under the sun, the things for which I became wise. This, too, is fleeting *like trying to catch hold of a breath*.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

C. Thompson (updated) OT ...and who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Now if he has power over all my labour for which I have toiled and in which I have displayed wisdom under the sun; surely this is vanity.

Concordant Literal Version Who knows if he shall be a wise or a frivolous man? Yet he shall have authority over all the fruit of my toil that I toiled, And in which I was wise under the sun; This too is vanity."

Context Group Version And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a shameless person? Yet he will have rule over all my labor in which I have labored, and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is emptiness.

Emphasized Bible ...and who could know whether a, wise man, he would be or a foolish, and yet he would lord it over all my toil, wherein I had toiled and wherein I had acted wisely, under the sun,—even this, was vanity.

New American Standard B. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over [Lit *dominion*] all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too is vanity.

World English Bible

Who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have rule over all of my labor in which I have labored, and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity.

Young's Updated LT

And who knows whether he is wise or foolish? Yet he does rule over all my labour that I have laboured at, and that I have done wisely under the sun! This also is vanity.

The gist of this passage:

Solomon asks about the one who will inherit his life and power—will he be a wise man or a fool? Yet, no matter what, he will rule over it all. That seems empty or meaningless to Solomon.

Ecclesiastes 2:19a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
mîy (מִי) [pronounced <i>mee</i>]	<i>who, whom; whose, whomever; what; occasionally rendered how, in what way</i>	pronominal interrogative; the verb <i>to be</i> may be implied	Strong's #4310 BDB #566
Under some circumstances, the mîy pronominal interrogative can express a wish or a desire, as in Deut. 5:28 2Sam. 15:4 or 23:15. ⁶²¹ So, it could be translated, <i>o that!</i>			
yâda' (יָדָעַ) [pronounced <i>yaw-DAHḠ</i>]	<i>knowing, knowing by experience [or practice]; skilled; seeing; recognizing, admitting, acknowledging</i>	Qal active participle	Strong's #3045 BDB #393
châkâm (חָכָם) [pronounced <i>khah-KAWM</i>]	<i>capable of knowing [judging]; intelligent, wise; skillful, adept, proficient; subtle, crafty</i>	masculine singular adjective with the definite article	Strong's #2450 BDB #314
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i>]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
'ôw (אוּ) [pronounced <i>oh</i>]	<i>or, or rather, otherwise, also, and; if, perchance; except, or else; whether, not the least</i>	disjunctive conjunction	Strong's #176 BDB #14
sâkâl (סָכַל) [pronounced <i>saw-KAWL</i>]	<i>a fool; silly, foolish</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5530 BDB #698

This is a different word than Solomon has been using up until now.

Translation: *Who knows [if] he will be a wise [man] or a fool?* Solomon has many sons, and we do not know if, at this point, he knows who will follow him. Solomon no doubt remembers what happened as David grew old and out of favor; and what happened when he, Solomon, became king—even with his father's blessing. So, maybe Solomon is thinking about a particular son, and maybe not. But, in any case, Solomon is right to ask, *will this man be wise or will he be a fool?*

⁶²¹ *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*; Hendrickson Publishers; ©1996; p. 566.

Solomon uses a different word here for *fool*; and I think the idea is to grab our attention.

Ecclesiastes 2:19 Who knows if the man to follow me will be wise or just a fool? Yet, regardless, he will have control over all of the work which I have done and over all that required my wisdom under the sun. This also is just a breath that will disappear.

Ecclesiastes 2:19a: Solomon's concern of the man he would leave his things to

Solomon seemed to be very concerned about the man who would follow him.

Dunagan: "*who knows*"-There isn't any guarantee! And this person will have complete control over everything which I have worked so hard for! In addition, if you can't trust your kids, brother-in-law, or some other relative-somebody is still going to get everything you have. You may establish a "foundation" or a "trust" and still somebody can come along and completely waste the fruits of all your hard work. The son that Solomon had wasn't the brightest of men (1 Kings 11:43-12:15). Eventually everything that Solomon had amassed would be wasted, destroyed or lost through the unfaithfulness of the men who followed him as the kings of Israel.⁶²²

The Pulpit Commentary: [This is the] bitter feeling that he has to leave the fruits of his lifelong labor to another is aggravated by the thought that he knows not the character of this successor, whether he will be worthy or not. As the psalmist says, "He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them" (Psalm 39:6). Again in the parable, "The things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?" (Luke 12:20; comp. Ecclesiasticus 11:18, 19).⁶²³

Dr. Peter Pett: Another thing that perturbed him was that he would have to leave the results of all his great efforts to others. And who knew what they would do with them? What men build up, other men pull down. They have no permanence. So all his great efforts would finally have been in vain.⁶²⁴

Clarke: Alas! Solomon, the wisest of all men, made the worst use of his wisdom, had three hundred wives and seven hundred concubines, and yet left but one son behind him, to possess his estates and his throne, and that one was the silliest of fools!⁶²⁵

Dr. John Gill: The king that should be after him...should be his successor and heir; and so whether he would make a good or bad use of what was left; whether he would keep and improve it, or squander it away; suggesting, that could he be sure he would be a wise man that should come into his labours, it would be some satisfaction to him that he had laboured, and such a man should have the benefit of it; but as it was a precarious thing what he would be, he could take no pleasure in reviewing his labours he was about to leave.⁶²⁶

We don't know if Solomon had anyone in mind; but my guess is, he had hundreds of sons.

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Ecclesiastes 2:19b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or וי) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

⁶²² Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:19.

⁶²³ The Pulpit Commentary; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles 2:19.

⁶²⁴ Dr. Peter Pett; Commentary Series on the Bible; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:18-19.

⁶²⁵ Adam Clarke, Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:19.

⁶²⁶ Dr. John Gill, John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:19.

Ecclesiastes 2:19b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shâlat (שׁלַט) [pronounced shaw-LAHT]	<i>to domineer, to be a master of, to exercise power over, to dominate, to have mastery, to lord it over</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7980 BDB #1020

There are instances of vocabulary in Ecclesiastes which seems to come from later writings. This is found in Esther and Nehemiah. However, this might be explained, given that Solomon has been doing a lot of reading from the philosophies of foreign writers.

The NET Bible: *The vav on וּשְׁלַט (vakyishlat, conjunction + Qal imperfect 3rd person masculine singular from שׁלַט, shalat, "to be master") is adversative ("yet").*⁶²⁷

b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's# none BDB #88
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]	<i>every, each, all of, all; any of, any</i>	masculine singular construct not followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481

Literally, *in all*. Although I don't have this in the lexicons, it is rendered by the most literal translations as *among all, through all, throughout all, with all*.

'âmâl (עֲמַל) [pronounced ġaw-MAWL]	<i>intense labor, exhausting toil, exhaustion, miserable work, work and toil so tiring, you just want to cry; misery, travail; production from labor</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #5999 BDB #765
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The NET Bible: *As in 2:18, the term עֲמַל ('amali, "my labor") is a metonymy of cause (i.e., my labor) for effect (i.e., fruit of my labor). The metonymy is recognized by several translations: "he will control all the wealth that I gained" (NJPS); "he will have control over all the fruits of my labor" (NAB); "he will have mastery over all the fruits of my labor" (NEB); "he will have control over all the fruit of my labor" (NASB); "he will be master over all my possessions" (MLB).*⁶²⁸

she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced sheh] or shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced shehl]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
'âmal (עֲמַל) [pronounced ġaw-MAHL]	<i>to labor, to toil, to work [hard]</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5998 BDB #765

This verb is found primarily in the poetry of the Bible (Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes). It occurs one time in Jonah 4:1 (and just once in Psalm 127:1 and Prov. 16:26) but most of its occurrences are in Ecclesiastes.

⁶²⁷ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 19, 2018.

⁶²⁸ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 19, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:19b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>The NET Bible: <i>An internal cognate accusative construction (accusative and verb from same root) is used for emphasis: אֲמַלִּי שְׂמִי לְמַעַן (‘amali she’amalti, “my toil for which I had toiled”); see IBHS 167 §10.2.1g. The two verbs אֲמַלִּי שְׂמִי תִמְכַּחֲשִׁי (she’amalti vk shekhakhamti, “for which I had labored and for which I had acted wisely”) form a verbal hendiadys (two separate verbs used in association to communicate one idea): “for I had labored so wisely.” The second verb is used adverbially to modify the first verb, which functions in its full verbal sense.</i>⁶²⁹</p>			

Translation: Yet he will have power over all my labor which I have labored [doing],... Solomon has worked hard over at least two decades with his building projects (I suspect that he built much more than is found in Kings; and probably over a greater span of time). This required a great deal of work on Solomon's part. He did not just point to a vacant lot and say, "Go and build the Temple right there;" point to another and say, "And build my palace right there. I'm done. Now, I will go and sit under a shade tree." Solomon was very much involved with all of this building; and he was out there every day guiding the workers. However, at some point, all of his work will be under the control of someone else—and Solomon does not even know if that man is intelligent or if he is a fool.

Ecclesiastes 2:19 Who knows if the man to follow me will be wise or just a fool? Yet, regardless, he will have control over all of the work which I have done and over all that required my wisdom under the sun. This also is just a breath that will disappear.

Ecclesiastes 2:19b: Leaving all his labor behind at death (various commentators)

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *Man has but a brief sovereignty over his earthly labours. A fool, from motives of mischief, or from some vain notion of improvement, may spoil the work of the wisest man.*⁶³⁰

Arno Gaebelein: *[Solomon] has labored to leave it all to the one who comes after him, and he may be a fool and not a wise man. Or he may have labored wisely and it is left all to one who never did anything, a sluggard.*⁶³¹

Chuck Smith: *Everything that I've built. Everything that I've amassed. Everything that I've done, I'm going to die and going to have to leave it to some nut. And I don't know if the guy's going to be wise or foolish. He may just go out and look at the history. Rehoboam's son left the throne and all to Rehoboam. What did he do? He no sooner gets on the throne than he angers the tribes of the north and they have a revolution and he loses the kingdom and starts downhill. The whole glory that Solomon had built up, his son, dumb, foolish actions, blew it. And so Solomon's worries were not really unfounded. His son was a fool.*⁶³²

Kidner: *The more he has toiled at his life's work....the more galling will be the thought of its fruits falling into other hands--and as likely as not, the wrong hands.*⁶³³

J. Vernon McGee: *I have to go off and leave all of this someday. Have you ever stopped to think about that? What good is it going to do you? Oh, how many folk have worked all their lives to accumulate a little of this world's goods, then they leave it to some godless relative. Some folk intend to leave it to a Christian organization so that their money can propagate the Gospel after they are gone, but have you ever stopped to think how many Christian organizations have become apostate and have departed from teaching the Word of God?*

⁶²⁹ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 19, 2018.

⁶³⁰ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:19 (suggestive comments).

⁶³¹ Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1–26.

⁶³² Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1–26.

⁶³³ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:19.

Ecclesiastes 2:19b: Leaving all his labor behind at death (various commentators)

McGee continues: *For example, Mr. John Harvard, who founded Harvard University, was a fundamental believer, and he left his money to propagate the fundamental Christian faith. Today you wouldn't find fundamental faith within ten yards of Harvard. They have departed from the faith. The money which Mr. Harvard left has come to be used for the very opposite of what he intended.*

McGee continues: *People today leave money to so-called Christian organizations, but they have no assurance that the organizations will remain true to the faith.*

McGee concludes: *We know that Solomon faced this same kind of problem, and 1 Kings 12 tells us what happened. He left the kingdom to his son, and it was his son's foolish arrogance that divided the kingdom. What a tragedy that was.*⁶³⁴

Things which were passed on to us, we often take for granted; things that we pass along to others is often taken for granted as well.⁶³⁵

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Ecclesiastes 2:19 Who knows if the man to follow me will be wise or just a fool? Yet, regardless, he will have control over all of the work which I have done and over all that required my wisdom under the sun. This also is just a breath that will disappear.

Ecclesiastes 2:19b: Solomon's concern about his successor (various comments)

The Cambridge Bible: *[Solomon is obsessed with] the thought that whatever may be the character of the heir, he will have power to scatter in random waste what has been brought together, as with a purpose and a policy. Lands, libraries, galleries are all liable to be scattered and broken up.*⁶³⁶

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *[Solomon] is tormented by some ever-recurring thought. (Eccles. 2:18; Eccles. 2:21.) The Royal Preacher had dwelt upon the idea before, that his wealth and all the products of his labour and skill must be left to some unworthy successor. This is with him a standing grief. Here the same thought rises again.*

The Preacher's Commentary continues: *What he had gathered with care, and produced by great labour of contrivance, would be laid waste by some foolish man. Amidst all the pleasures of his life, this terrible thought would come to the surface. Men of pleasure find that painful and anxious thoughts are ever arising to disturb their enjoyment. The reflection is forced upon them that time is fast passing away that their glory will soon descend into the grave, that all their earthly joy will fade in the last sickness and before the tomb, and that in the distant future even their very children will forget them in their own merry laugh and joy. Some deep thought is ever coming uppermost before which pleasure grows pale.*⁶³⁷

Gill: *[A]ll [that Solomon has labored upon] will come into his hands; and he will have the power of disposing of all at his pleasure; not only of enjoying it, but of changing and altering things; and perhaps greatly for the worse, if he does not entirely destroy what has been wrought with so much care and industry, toil and labour, wisdom and prudence.*⁶³⁸

⁶³⁴ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt (chapter 2) accessed September 3, 2018.

⁶³⁵ Paraphrasing the thoughts of Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:19, 21.

⁶³⁶ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:19.

⁶³⁷ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:17-23.

⁶³⁸ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:19.

Ecclesiastes 2:19b: Solomon's concern about his successor (various comments)

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *[Solomon's hope was] the perpetuation of his name and riches, laboriously gathered...selfishness is mostly at the root of worldly parents' alleged providence for their children. But now...[Solomon is experiencing] sad misgivings as to what Rehoboam, his son by an idolatrous Ammonitess, Naamah, should prove to be; a foreboding too fully realized (1Kings 12:1–18; 1Kings 14:21–31).*⁶³⁹

David was more reassured of his son and what he had left for him to do. 1Chron. 28:9–10 "And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever. Be careful now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong and do it." (ESV)

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No doubt, many an executive has looked at the great business that he has built up, and then looked at his lazy, good-for-nothing son, and regretted all of the time and work put into this business, fearing for how it will be mismanaged and run into the ground in the next generation.

Ecclesiastes 2:19 *Who knows if the man to follow me will be wise or just a fool? Yet, regardless, he will have control over all of the work which I have done and over all that required my wisdom under the sun. This also is just a breath that will disappear.*

On children (Dr. Dan Hill)

Will the children be wise men or fools, hence, the idea of happiness through children is vanity.

Children are never a source of happiness and children are not a problem solvers. Children can bring happiness into an already happy home. But they will bring misery into an already miserable home.

Eccl. 6:3, *If a man beget a hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he.*

Solomon's heir to the throne was Rehoboam and Rehoboam turned out to be a fool. Read 1Kings 12: The foolishness of Rehoboam.

Solomon, no doubt, had hundreds of children. Rehoboam is only one of them; and he must have been actually over the rest of them, despite his many shortcomings. The primary problem is, Solomon was not hands on with any of his children. He had too many wives, too many children; and he was king over Israel. If he had 1, 2 or even 4 or 5 children from his right woman, Solomon would have been more likely to spend time with her and with them. Every child needs the guidance of a father. Whereas, there are some women who understand and can step in and take the place of a missing father; most are simply unable to do that. As a result, so many single women simply raise up substandard children.

By substandard children, I mean they are more like to violate the law, get arrested, use drugs, engage in premarital sex, engage in unnatural sexual relations, marry early and subsequently divorce. Whatever negative that you can think of, the child raised by a single mother is more likely to do that negative thing than a child born to a mother and father who both raise him.

From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> accessed September 1, 2018 (pp. 13–16).

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⁶³⁹ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:19.

Ecclesiastes 2:19c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
she- (-ש) [pronounced <i>sheh</i>] or shel (שׁל) [pronounced <i>shehl</i>]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
châkam (חָכַם) [pronounced <i>khaw-KHAHM</i>]	<i>to be wise, to become wise</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #2449 BDB #314
tachath (תַּחַת) [pronounced <i>TAH-khahth</i>]	<i>underneath, below, under, beneath; instead of, in lieu of; in the place [in which one stands]; in exchange for; on the basis of</i>	preposition of location or foundation	Strong's #8478 BDB #1065
shemesh (שֶׁמֶשׁ) [pronounced <i>SHEH-mesh</i>]	<i>sun; sunrise, sun-rising, east, sun-setting, west (of direction); openly, publically</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article; pausal form	Strong's #8121 BDB #1039

This expression is found 5 times in this chapter.

Translation: ...and [over all] which I was wise under the sun. Solomon's building projects involved great wisdom; Solomon was a very smart man and he oversaw these projects, with a great vision of what the end result should be.

Matthew Poole: *[Will this] fool...undo all that I have done, and turn the effects of my wisdom into instruments of his folly, and occasions of ruin. Some think he had such an opinion of Rehoboam.*⁶⁴⁰

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary speaks of that which Solomon appears to be unaware of: *He who has gathered spiritual treasure is rich in the wealth of immortality, and will be for ever master of all his possessions. In the future kingdom only the wise shall rule. The works of faithful souls shall follow them beyond the world. They shall not be left behind to run the chance of being wasted or spoiled by others.*⁶⁴¹

As an aside, this is a great skill to somehow envision what something can be, and then go through everything necessary in order to make it that thing.

Application: This is exactly the skill set that our current president has (I write this in 2018). President Trump has viewed decrepit buildings or empty lots and has seen what could be there; and he has transformed these things. He has taken large tracts of land and has made them into resorts with a golf course. All of this requires a very specific set of skills. One might argue that Solomon is even more visionary than builder Trump.

Dr. Peter Pett: *What his wisdom had produced would eventually come to nothing. It would be dismissed by the next generation. It could not bear thinking about.*⁶⁴²

⁶⁴⁰ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:19.

⁶⁴¹ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:19 (suggestive comments).

⁶⁴² Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:18–19.

This is something which I have thought about. I spend hours writing commentary on the Bible; but I wonder what will happen to it 30 years from now, at which time I should surely be gone, or no longer able to invest the time and study. I have that concern because I have seen some excellent works just disappear from the internet—I can think of two translations which I found on the internet, one which was good and the other which was very good. They can no longer be found on the internet. One is in print (the Ancient Roots Translinear) and the other is only available, from time to time, using the *Wayback* website (the Heritage Bible, an exceptional translation).

Whedon thinking about today: *Even in States where laws of inheritance are reliable, men still contemplate with anxiety the fate of their properties in the hands of their heirs.*⁶⁴³

Ecclesiastes 2:19d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
gam (גם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i>]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, as well; even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168
zeh (זה) [pronounced <i>zeh</i>]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	masculine singular demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260
hebel (לְבָה) [pronounced <i>HEH^b-vef</i>]	<i>vapor, breath; mist, darkness; unsubstantial, emptiness, empty, vanity, meaningless, vacuous; vain, vainly; idol</i>	masculine singular noun; pausal form	Strong's #1892 BDB #210

Used figuratively for *something transitory and unsatisfactory*. Often used of things which are transitory, evanescent or frail.

This phrase is also found 5 times in this chapter.

Translation: *This also [is just] a breath.* Solomon, realizing that he would die—that is certain—and that he has little control over who will follow him and who will take control over what he has done. Solomon does not even know if that man will be wise or a fool. This is one more reason why life seems empty, without meaning.

Ecclesiastes 2:19 *Who knows if the man to follow me will be wise or just a fool? Yet, regardless, he will have control over all of the work which I have done and over all that required my wisdom under the sun. This also is just a breath that will disappear.*

Ecclesiastes 2:19d: This is also vanity (various commentators)

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *It is one of the vanities of wealth that a man knows not to what use it will be put by his successor.*⁶⁴⁴

⁶⁴³ Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 2:19.

⁶⁴⁴ The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:19 (suggestive comments).

Ecclesiastes 2:19d: This is also vanity (various commentators)

Dr. John Gill: *[T]he thought of all [this]...was afflicting and distressing: and therefore he adds, **This is also vanity**; and shows there is no happiness in all that a man does, has, or enjoys; and this circumstance, before related, adds to his vexation and unhappiness.*⁶⁴⁵

You can almost hear Solomon exclaim, "It's not fair! It's not right!"⁶⁴⁶

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Ecclesiastes 2:19 Who knows if the man to follow me will be wise or just a fool? Yet, regardless, he will have control over all of the work which I have done and over all that required my wisdom under the sun. This also is just a breath that will disappear.

This suggests to me that the final form of Ecclesiastes was written when Solomon was getting old and his mortality had become a reality to him (he will devote a chapter to his body growing old). He never mentions any of his sons by name; he never suggests who will follow him; but it is clear that this disturbs Solomon greatly. We also know, because of the record left in Kings (1Kings 12 14:21–31) that Solomon's son, Rehoboam, who follows him, is quite the loser. Despite all of the great gains Israel made under David and Solomon, these began to be lost under Rehoboam. 1Kings 14:21–27 *Now Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city that the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonite. And Judah did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins that they committed, more than all that their fathers had done. For they also built for themselves high places and pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, and there were also male cult prostitutes in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations that the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem. He took away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house. He took away everything. He also took away all the shields of gold that Solomon had made, and King Rehoboam made in their place shields of bronze, and committed them to the hands of the officers of the guard, who kept the door of the king's house.*

*Clarke: Alas! Solomon, the wisest of all men, made the worst use of his wisdom, had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, and yet left but one son behind him, to possess his estates and his throne, and that one was the silliest of fools!*⁶⁴⁷

Ron Snider's translation of Ecclesiastes 2:17–19 *So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind. Thus I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too is vanity.*

Ecclesiastes 2:17–19: Existential despair (Ron Snider)

1. As the preceding verses have indicated, Qoheleth had pretty much done it all, seen it all, considered it all, and had come to one unavoidable, irrefutable conclusion—all men die!
2. When one considers all the activities in which Solomon engaged, there is a very real sense in this chapter that no part of his accomplishments ultimately fulfilled him.
3. When that lack of fulfillment is coupled with the realization that it makes no difference whether one is wise or foolish, since all men die equally, it leads to a palpable sense of frustration.
4. Although the sense of frustration has been below the surface in the previous verses, it comes boiling out

⁶⁴⁵ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:19.

⁶⁴⁶ Taken from Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:19.

⁶⁴⁷ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

Ecclesiastes 2:17–19: Existential despair (Ron Snider)

in verse 17 with a vengeance.

5. The extremely strong emotion of hatred is somewhat of a strange attitude for one that was recognized to be very wise, since he would have known that the benefit of wisdom was long life. Prov. 3:2,16, 4:22, 8:35
6. While his statement about hating life was quite personal, he does not limit it to his own existence by saying that I hated my life.
7. Instead, it is a general statement about hating all life as he has observed it; it has the force of telling the reader that everyone's life is worth hating.
8. Again, one must recognize that Solomon is not saying that he has this sense of emotional despair at the time of writing; he is accurately recording the unpleasant conclusion to which he had come earlier in his life.
9. Another fact that should be observed in this section is the number of times that Qoheleth uses the first person verb and/or the first person pronoun I.
10. Of the 88 times he uses the first person in this book (which decreases dramatically toward the end of Ecclesiastes), almost half of the usages (42) are found within the first two chapters.
11. Qoheleth is so consumed with his own questions, logic, conclusions, concerns, etc. that he makes no mention of God (other than the derogatory 1:13) until the light begins to break in. Eccles. 2:24
12. Qoheleth is painfully and obviously self-absorbed during this section of his life; this is one sure path to misery and despair, confirming what Jesus Christ said about the nature of life. Lk. 9:23-25
13. Like any believer that goes through a time of concern, doubt, misery, or even despair, Qoheleth will not come back from the edge of insanity quickly; he will gradually make advances throughout this book.
14. He introduces his explanation of why he was disgusted with life as he indicates that all the work he saw being done was nothing more than a burden to him (lit. evil upon me).
15. While everyone might not come to the same conclusion, it is fair to say that at this point Qoheleth is saying that all this life just seems wrong to him.
16. As he expresses his repugnance for all that he sees in this world, one might expect that his logical conclusion would simply be to end it all.
17. However, Qoheleth (even at his worst moment) recognizes that God is the author of life and that only he has the right to take life. Gen. 9:5-6; Eccles. 2:24-25
18. Even with his frustration and distaste for life as he has seen it, Qoheleth recognizes that man is re-sponsible to God, who will judge all men according to His standards. Eccles. 3:17
19. In fact, it is only real faith in God that will enable the believer to withstand such crises of faith, which every believer will suffer at some point in his Christian life. Gen. 22:1ff; 39:1ff; Job; Matt. 11:2-6, 26:69-75; Heb. 10:32-39
20. Any believer that thinks he is above such testing, or looks down on other believers when they suffer such tests of confidence, will find that his feet will eventually be put to the fire. IPet. 4:17-18
21. God will test each believer by allowing a circumstance or series of circumstances to demonstrate the level of thinking, doctrinal understanding, and willingness to apply under the pressures of the angelic conflict.
22. Qoheleth reasserts his two conclusions that the all, everything is futile, and life is nothing more than striving after the wind.
23. As we saw in chapter one, whether one is chasing the wind, striving after the wind, or herding the wind makes no real difference; every possible translation suggests that he is engaging in a fruitless endeavor.
24. This concludes his examination into the real value of wisdom; as he has asserted, wisdom might be better in the short term, but in the long term its value is overturned by death.
25. Qoheleth now shifts from the relative value of wisdom to the value of his labor in life and the fruits of that labor.
26. He uses the same strong verb שָׂנֵא (sane'-hated), to express the strong emotional response to that which one finds utterly unappealing, that which one detests, despises, or to which one is opposed.
27. In this case, the object of his disgust is actually not the labor itself, which he has acknowledged as providing some short term satisfaction. Eccles. 2:10
28. As we have observed, even the short term enjoyment that comes from hard labor and the momentary satisfaction one takes in a job that is well done does not provide true lasting satisfaction. Eccles. 2:11

Ecclesiastes 2:17–19: Existential despair (Ron Snider)

29. In this case, Qoheleth turns from the work itself to that which his labor had produced, which was no doubt well thought out, extensive, very high quality in material and workmanship, and impressive.
30. As he considers his achievements, he is again confronted with his own mortality; as with wisdom, death casts its shadow over the subject of labor, achievement, and accumulation of wealth.
31. This leads to the next obvious consideration, which is the fact that all he has worked so hard to accomplish will be left in the power and control of another following his death.
32. While this statement is true in general, it should be first applied to Solomon's son Rehoboam, who had likely given his father some reason for this lack of confidence in his heir.
33. Assuming that Solomon is within the last ten years of his life when he writes Ecclesiastes, Rehoboam would have already been in his thirties. 1Kings 14:21
34. Like Rehoboam, it is quite possible that the heir to whom you leave the fruit of your wise labor may not be as wise as you. 1Kings 12:1ff
35. Although not expressly stated, it does seem that it is troubling to Qoheleth that death is going to be separate him from that on which he expended so much of his time and energy; further, he recognizes that he is powerless to do anything about it.
36. The rhetorical question at the beginning of verse 19 is designed to express the fact that no one can effectively provide an answer to the question.
37. However, given the cynical and depressing view that he is setting forth, it seems evident that Qoheleth is implying a very real possibility that the heir will be a fool.
38. Even if the heir turns out to be a wise man and effectively administers what is left to him, it provides no satisfaction for Qoheleth, just as it will provide none for any of us.
39. The complaint is that his projects will be given to someone, who might have no interest or inclination to look after them; further, his hard-earned money and fame will be inherited by someone whose character is unknown or suspect.
40. Even if the successor turns out to be wise, it does not change the fact that Qoheleth was the one whom made all the investments of time, energy, and hard work.
41. His wise administration of the various building projects, and his accumulation of wealth and the de-tails of life will simply be handed over to some unknown quantity.
42. As with almost everything he has considered to this point, this is merely another area of frustration, meaninglessness, and despair for Qoheleth.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#); accessed September 2, 2018 (will open as a Word Document on your computer).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

And I turned about—[even] I—to make despair my heart upon all the toil which I have toiled under the sun.

Ecclesiastes
2:20

I—[even] I—turned around to make my heart despair over all the work which I have done under the sun.

Instead of appreciating my many accomplishments, I despaired over all of the work that I have done under the sun.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)

And I turned about—[even] I—to make despair my heart upon all the toil which I have toiled under the sun.

Revised Douay-Rheims

Wherefore I left off and my heart renounced labouring any more under the sun.

V. Alexander's Aramaic T. Peshitta (Syriac)	And I turned about to despair respecting all my labour which laboured to acquire, <u>and was wise to accomplish</u> under the sun <u>in this world</u> . Therefore I <u>changed</u> my view concerning all the toil in which I had labored under the sun.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	...so I <u>went about to dismiss</u> from my heart all my labour wherein I had laboured under the sun.
Significant differences:	The Latin has <i>left off</i> ; the Syriac has <i>changed</i> ; and the Greek has <i>went about to dismiss</i> ; rather than <i>turned about</i> ; and <i>renounced</i> rather than <i>despair</i> . The targum has additional text.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	So my mind was turned to grief for all the trouble I had taken and all my wisdom under the sun.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006 <i>God's Word</i> TM	So I became sad about all the work I had done. Then I fell into despair over everything for which I had worked so hard under the sun.
<i>The Message</i>	That's when I called it quits, gave up on anything that could be hoped for on this earth. What's the point of working your fingers to the bone if you hand over what you worked for to someone who never lifted a finger for it? Smoke, that's what it is. A bad business from start to finish. So what do you get from a life of hard labor? Pain and grief from dawn to dusk. Never a decent night's rest. Nothing but smoke. This appears to be vv. 20–23.
NIRV	So I began to lose hope because of all my hard work on this earth.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	Therefore, I turned my heart aside to despair as I thought of all the works I had accomplished, and the great fortune I had accumulated upon the earth. Why do I despair?
Contemporary English V. The Living Bible	I thought about all my hard work, and I felt depressed. So I turned in despair from hard work as the answer to my search for satisfaction. For though I spend my life searching for wisdom, knowledge, and skill, I must leave all of it to someone who hasn't done a day's work in his life; he inherits all my efforts, free of charge. This is not only foolish but unfair. V. 21 is included for context.
New Berkeley Version	So I came to the point where my heart despaired about all the work that I had done under the sun; for here is a man who toiled in wisdom, in knowledge and in skill, yet to a man who did not work for it must he leave his possession; this, too, is useless and a great misfortune. ^h V. 21 is included for context. ^h This is the essence of our LORD's parable of the rich fool, Luke 12:20, 21. God said, What you have gotten ready, whose is it to be?
New Century Version	So I became sad about all the hard work I had done here on earth.
New Life Version	So I was filled with sorrow for all I had worked for under the sun.
New Living Translation	So I gave up in despair, questioning the value of all my hard work in this world.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	I thought about all the hard work that I had done in this world. It seemed useless, and I became depressed.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	Thus, I turned to dismiss from my heart All the results of my efforts, And all that I'd made under the sun.
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International Standard V
New Advent (Knox) Bible
Translation for Translators

So I came to be in despair about everything I had accomplished on earth. I would hold my hand; no more should yonder sun see labours of mine. I thought about all the hard work that I had done in this world. *It seemed useless*, and I became depressed/discouraged.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Alpha & Omega Bible
Awful Scroll Bible
Christian Standard Bible
Conservapedia
Ferrar-Fenton Bible
God's Truth (Tyndale)
NIV, ©2011
Peter Pett's translation
Urim-Thummim Version
Wikipedia Bible Project

SO I WENT ABOUT TO DISMISS FROM MY HEART ALL MY LABOR WHEREIN I HAD LABORED UNDER THE SUN.
I am to have turned toward *the sensibility* of my heart, to be he who despairs over the labor that I am to have toiled under the sun.
So I began to give myself over [Lit *And I turned to cause my heart*] to despair concerning all my work that I had labored at under the sun.
This led me to despair, as I thought of all the work it took for me to get to this point in life.
So I abandoned my mind to despair over all the objects I had attempted under the sun.
So I turned me to refrain from all such travail, as I took under the Sun:...
So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun.
So I changed my way of thinking (turned about) to make my heart despair about all the efforts in which I had exerted myself under the sun. For here is a man whose efforts are with wisdom, and with knowledge, and with skill, and yet he will give it for a bequest to a man who has not exerted himself with regard to it. This also is vanity, and a great evil. V. 21 is included for context.
Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labor that I took under the sun.
And I went in circles, to frustrate my heart, over all my labor that I labored under the sun.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)
New American Bible (2002)
New American Bible (2011)
New English Bible—1970
New Jerusalem Bible
Revised English Bible—1989

Who knows whether he will be foolish or wise? Yet he will be master of all I have achieved by my own efforts and wisdom: that too is meaningless. V. 19 is included for context.
So my feelings turned to despair of all the fruits of my labor under the sun.
So my heart turned to despair over all the fruits of my toil under the sun.
Then I turned and gave myself up to despair, reflecting upon all my labour and toil here under the sun, for anyone who toils with wisdom, knowledge, and skill must leave it all to a man who has spent no labour on it. This too is emptiness and utterly wrong. V. 21 is included for context.
I have come to despair of all the efforts I have expended under the sun.
Then I turned and gave myself up to despair, as I reflected on all my labour and toil here under the sun.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible
The Complete Tanach
exeGesés companion Bible
JPS (Tanakh—1985)

Thus I came to despair over all the things I had worked for under the sun. And I turned about to cause my heart to despair concerning all the toil that I toiled under the sun.
And I turned about to cause my heart to despair: not to toil and labor.
I turned my heart around to quit all the toil I toiled under the sun.
And so I came to view with despair all the gains I had made under the sun.

Orthodox Jewish Bible Therefore I turned aside to give up my lev to despair over all the wearisome amal with which I toiled under the shemesh.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible So I ·became sad [despaired; ^Lcaused my heart to despair] about all the ·hard work [toil] I had done ·here on earth [^Lunder the sun; 1:3].

Pastor John Griffith Therefore I completely despaired,
- The thought of turning all of his possessions over to someone else - put him into depression; word is ya'sh - (piel very intense)
Even though he didn't live to see the results he must have had some clues as to the outcome.
of all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun.

Kretzmann's Commentary **Verses 20-26**
The Vanity of Labor in Itself
Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labor which I took under the sun, he was inclined to regard his life as a failure, if viewed from this standpoint alone.

NET Bible® So I began to despair⁹² about all the fruit of⁹³ my labor⁹⁴ for which I worked so hard⁹⁵ on earth.⁹⁶
^{92tn} Heb "I turned aside to allow my heart despair."
^{93tn} The phrase "the fruit of" does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity (see the following note on the word "labor").
^{94tn} Heb "all my toil."
^{95tn} Here the author uses an internal cognate accusative construction (accusative noun and verb from the same root) for emphasis: שָׁמַעְתִּי לְמַעַלְלִי (he'amal she'amalti, "the toil for which I had toiled"); see IBHS 167 §10.2.1g.
^{96tn} Heb "under the sun."

The Voice So I turned these thoughts over in my mind and despaired over how hard I worked under the sun.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

C. Thompson (updated) OT Then I turned about that my heart might state distinctly in every labour of mine in which I had toiled under the sun; that here is a man whose labour has been with wisdom and with knowledge, and with ability; and there is a man to whom, though he did not labour fur him, he will give his portion. Surely this is vanity and a great vexation; That such is the case with another man by all his labours and the vexation of his heart with which he toiles under the sun, that all his days are days of sorrow and his employment grief, and even at night his heart has no rest. Surely this is vanity. Vv. 21–23 are included for context.

Concordant Literal Version So I turned around again with despair in my heart Over all the toil that I had toiled under the sun.

Emphasized Bible Then resolved I, to give my heart over to despair,—concerning all the toil, wherein I had toiled, under the sun.

New American Standard B. Therefore I completely despaired [Lit *turned aside my heart to despair*] of all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun.

New King James Version Therefore I turned my heart and despaired of all the labor in which I had toiled under the sun.

Webster's Bible Translation Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labor which I took under the sun.

Young's Updated LT And I turned around to cause my heart to despair concerning all the labour that I laboured at under the sun.

The gist of this passage: Solomon was originally happy or satisfied about his work; but he turned his thinking to despair and regret all of the work that he had done.

Ecclesiastes 2:20			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
çâbab (בָּבַב) [pronounced saw ^b - VAH ^b V]	<i>to turn oneself, to turn back, to turn around; to approach; to be brought to; to bestow upon; to go [march, walk] around; to go over [a place], to go around; to circle about; to surround, to encompass; to recline; to be turned, to be changed; to be the cause of</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5437 BDB #685
Barnes: <i>I went about - i. e., I turned from one course of action to another.</i> ⁶⁴⁸			
'ânîy (אֲנִי) [pronounced aw-NEE]	<i>I, me; in answer to a question, it means I am, it is I</i>	1 st person singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #589 BDB #58
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
yâ'ash (אֶשׂ) [pronounced yaw-AHSH]	<i>to cause to despair, to make one cast down in spirit</i>	Piel infinitive construct	Strong's #2976 BDB #384
Dr. Bob Utley: <i>means "despair," "be hopeless," "desperate." Qoheleth uses strong language to describe the depth of his emotions about the utter futility of human effort!</i> ⁶⁴⁹			
Keil and Delitzsch: <i>[Or,] to give oneself up, i.e., to give up hope in regard to anything; and וְנָשָׂא, given up, having no prospect, in despair.</i> ⁶⁵⁰			
'êth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
lêb (לֵב) [pronounced lay ^b V]	<i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking; midst</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #3820 BDB #524
The NET Bible: <i>The term לֵב (libbi, "my heart") is a synecdoche of part (i.e., heart) for the whole (i.e., whole person); see E. W. Bullinger, Figures of Speech, 648.</i> ⁶⁵¹			
'al (עַל) [pronounced çah]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of relative proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752

⁶⁴⁸ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:21.

⁶⁴⁹ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:20.

⁶⁵⁰ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 2:20.

⁶⁵¹ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 19, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:20

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]	<i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all; can also be rendered any of</i>	masculine singular construct followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
Literally, this means <i>upon all of, over all of, against all of</i> .			
ʿâmâl (עָמַל) [pronounced ġaw-MAWL]	<i>intense labor, exhausting toil, exhaustion, miserable work, work and toil so tiring, you just want to cry; misery, travail; production from labor</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #5999 BDB #765
The NET Bible: <i>As in 2:18-19, the term עָמַל! (ʿamali, “my labor”) is a metonymy of cause (i.e., my labor) for effect (i.e., the fruit of my labor). The metonymy is recognized by several translations: “all the fruits of my labor” (NAB); “all the fruit of my labor” (NASB); “all the gains I had made” (NJPS).⁶⁵²</i>			
I have that this is a masculine singular noun with the definite article.			
she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced sheh] or shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced shehl]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
ʿamal (עָמַל) [pronounced ġaw-MAHL]	<i>to labor, to toil, to work [hard]</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5998 BDB #765
tachath (תַּחַת) [pronounced TAH-khahth]	<i>underneath, below, under, beneath; instead of, in lieu of; in the place [in which one stands]; in exchange for; on the basis of</i>	preposition of location or foundation	Strong's #8478 BDB #1065
shemesh (שֶׁמֶשׁ) [pronounced SHEH-mesh]	<i>sun; sunrise, sun-rising, east, sun-setting, west (of direction); openly, publically</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article; pausal form	Strong's #8121 BDB #1039

This expression, *under the sun*, is found 5 times in this chapter.

Translation: I—[even] I—turned around to make my heart despair over all the work which I have done under the sun. Solomon turning around means, at one point in his life, he was proud of the work that he had done; but now, he is turned around to the point where he despairs over the work that he had done. He had come back to reevaluate his works and all his planning and efforts; and he began to despair over this work.

Ecclesiastes 2:20 *Instead of appreciating my many accomplishments, I despaired over all of the work that I have done under the sun.*

⁶⁵² From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 19, 2018.

Solomon turned about (Ecclesiastes 2:20) (various commentators)

Dr. John Gill: *[Solomon] "turned about"...as the word signifies dropped his severe studies of wisdom, and his eager pursuits of pleasure; and desisted from those toilsome works, in which he had employed himself; and went from one thing to another.*⁶⁵³

The Cambridge Bible: *[T]he phrase "I went about," [is] literally, "I turned," we have, as it were, the attitude of one who looks behind him on the road on which so far he has travelled. The retrospect was so dreary that it made the prospect drearier still.*⁶⁵⁴

Keil and Delitzsch: *Hitzig remarks that הנפ and בוש signify, "to turn round in order to see," and בבס, on the contrary, "to turn round in order to do." But הנפ can also mean, "to turn round in order to do," e.g., Lev. 26:9; and בבס, "to turn in order to examine more narrowly," (Eccles. 7:25). The distinction lies in this, that הנפ signifies a clear turning round; בבס, a turning away from one thing to another, a turning in the direction of something new that presents itself (Eccles. 4:1, Eccles. 4:7; Eccles. 9:11).*⁶⁵⁵

Trapp: *[Solomon takes] another course for the attaining of true happiness. The Hebrew word...signifies, I set a compass, I turned round, or I turned short again upon myself, by a reflex action of my mind, as Ephraim did, {Jer. 31:19–20} as the prodigal did when he "came to himself," who before had been beside himself in the point of salvation.*⁶⁵⁶

Solomon reconsiders all that he has done.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

The repetition of *under the sun* continues to remind us that we are in a human viewpoint world.

Ecclesiastes 2:20 [Instead of appreciating my many accomplishments, I despaired over all of the work that I have done under the sun.](#)

Ecclesiastes 2:20: Solomon's Utter Despair (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *I turned from my late course of action to give myself up to despair. I lost all hope in labor; it had no longer any charm or future for me.*⁶⁵⁷

Dunagan: *You can see why people without God commit suicide. I get depressed by just reading this section! Even wealthy people who seemingly have everything to live for (from a human perspective) end up extremely depressed, addicted to alcohol or drugs and finally taking their own lives. "So I turned in despair from hard work as the answer to my search for satisfaction" (Tay).*⁶⁵⁸

Dr. John Gill: *Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair,... Of ever finding happiness in anything here below...[Solomon] settled and stuck at nothing, on purpose to relax his mind...to divest it of all anxious thought and care, and call it off from its vain and fruitless undertakings; and be no more concerned about or thoughtful.*⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵³ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:20.

⁶⁵⁴ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:20.

⁶⁵⁵ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 2:20.

⁶⁵⁶ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 2:20.

⁶⁵⁷ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:20.

⁶⁵⁸ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:20.

⁶⁵⁹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:20.

Ecclesiastes 2:20: Solomon's Utter Despair (various commentators)

Matthew Poole: *I gave myself up to despondency, and despair of ever reaping that satisfaction which I promised to myself.*⁶⁶⁰

Whedon: *From anxiety Koheleth turns to "despair." To feel toward the close of life that one's enterprises and accumulations have been in vain, is a dark and gloomy feeling. Koheleth repeats the sentiments of the previous verses with a deeper sorrow.*⁶⁶¹

Instead of looking back over all his work with pride, Solomon despairs instead.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 2:20 Instead of appreciating my many accomplishments, I despaired over all of the work that I have done under the sun.

My heart despaired over the work I have done (Ecclesiastes 2:20) (commentators)

Eaton: *The only conclusion is that it is all useless. An abyss of despair results. He 'allowed [his] heart to despair' (as the Hebrew verb may be translated). This is one of the most moving points of the Old Testament, the antithesis of the New Testament's 'not in vain in the Lord' (1Cor. 15:58).*⁶⁶²

Matthew Henry: *He caused his heart to despair of all his labour (Eccles. 2:20); he took pains to possess himself with a deep sense of the vanity of worldly business, that it would not bring in the advantage and satisfaction he had formerly flattered himself with the hopes of.*⁶⁶³

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *Some will not seek the highest resource until all that is earthly has failed. They must be driven to feed upon the husks of despair before they will think upon the bread which is in their Father's house.*⁶⁶⁴

Clarke: *I went about to cause my heart to despair - What makes all worse, there is no remedy. It is impossible in the present state of things to prevent these evils.*⁶⁶⁵

[Chapter Outline](#)

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J. Vernon McGee: Notice again that this is "under the sun." It is the view of the man apart from God. This is not the man in Christ seated in the heavenly places of Ephesians 2:6. This view under the sun always leads to pessimism.⁶⁶⁶

Ecclesiastes 2:20 Instead of appreciating my many accomplishments, I despaired over all of the work that I have done under the sun.

One of the fascinating things about life is, two people can have virtually the same circumstances in life, and one of them can be upset, unhappy, feeling that he was short-changed in life; and the other person can feel happy,

⁶⁶⁰ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:20.

⁶⁶¹ Whedon's *Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 2:20.

⁶⁶² David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

⁶⁶³ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:17–26.

⁶⁶⁴ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:20 (suggestive comments).

⁶⁶⁵ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:20.

⁶⁶⁶ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt (chapter 2) accessed September 3, 2018.

blessed and totally graced out by God. Solomon has had happiness in his soul, as is testified to by the book of Proverbs. But it is clear in this book of Ecclesiastes that he is confused, second-guessing his life and his life's accomplishments. Solomon is a man, who has exactly the same set of circumstances, and during on era of his life he is happy and he recognizes his blessing; but later in life, he comes back again to view his circumstances, and, all of a sudden, he is no longer happy.

By the time that Solomon wrote the book of Ecclesiastes, he was even more accomplished, more successful, more productive and far richer than the man who wrote Proverbs. But now, he despaired of his work and his life's accomplishments.

Solomon should have been able to *quietly leave all to an all wise disposing Providence; and not seek for happiness in anything under the sun, but in those things that are above it; not in this world, but in the world to come.*⁶⁶⁷

This verse is a tale of two men.

For there [is] a man that his work is in wisdom and in knowledge and in skill and to a man who did not work in him. He will give him his portion. Also this [is] a breath and evil great.

Ecclesiastes
2:21

For there [is] a man whose work is with wisdom and with knowledge and with skill, but for a man who did not work in it. The man who did all of the work [lit., *he*] will give him [the one who didn't] his allotment. This also is a breath and a greatly wrong.

One man has produced a great deal using wisdom, knowledge and skill; but this will go to a man who did not work at all. The man who did all of the work will give the one who didn't his allotment. This is empty and a really very wrong.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	For there [is] a man that is work his in wisdom and in knowledge and in skill and to a man who did not work in him. He will give him his portion. Also this [is] a breath and evil great.
Revised Douay-Rheims	For when a man labours in wisdom, and knowledge, and carefulness, he leaves what he has gotten to an idle man: so this also is vanity, and a great evil.
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	Because there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, reason, and justice, and he dies without issue; and to a man who did not labour for it, he is to give it, that it may be his portion; also this is vanity, and a great evil..
Peshitta (Syriac)	There is a man who labors with wisdom and knowledge and success; and yet he leaves his portion to a man who has not labored for it. This also is vanity and a great misfortune.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	For there is such a man that his labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in fortitude; yet this man shall give his portion to one who has not laboured therein. This is also vanity and great evil.
Significant differences:	<i>Wisdom</i> should have the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix affixed to it; or the word <i>whose</i> (not found, apparently, in the Syriac ⁶⁶⁸). The targum has <i>justice</i> and

⁶⁶⁷ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:20.

⁶⁶⁸ I makes these assessments strictly based upon the English translation. Sometimes the English translation will smooth out what is found in the ancient language, so the English may not accurately reflect the ancient language that it translates.

the Greek has *fortitude*, but the Hebrew word is *skill*. There is additional text in the targum.

The Latin appears to leave out some text, which includes the word *portion*. The Latin conveys the same thoughts, but using fewer words.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	Because there is a man whose work has been done with wisdom, with knowledge, and with an expert hand; but one who has done nothing for it will have it for his heritage. This again is to no purpose and a great evil.
Easy English	A man may know how to do his job well. He may do his work well and after that, he dies. Then all that he had will become another man's things. And that man will not have worked for it. This too means nothing and it is very sad.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	People can work hard using all their wisdom and knowledge and skill. But they will die and other people will get the things they worked for. They did not do the work, but they will get everything. That makes me very sad. It is also not fair and is senseless.
Good News Bible (TEV)	So I came to regret that I had worked so hard. You work for something with all your wisdom, knowledge, and skill, and then you have to leave it all to someone who hasn't had to work for it. It is useless, and it isn't right! V. 20 is included for context.
Names of God Bible	Here is someone who had worked hard with wisdom, knowledge, and skill. Yet, he must turn over his estate to someone else, who didn't work for it. Even this is pointless and a terrible tragedy.
NIRV	A person might use wisdom, knowledge and skill to do their work. But then they have to leave everything they own to someone who hasn't worked for it. That doesn't have any meaning either. In fact, it isn't fair.
New Simplified Bible	Because there is a man whose work has been done with wisdom, with knowledge, and with an expert hand. But one who has done nothing for it will have it for his heritage. This also is vanity and a great evil.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	I labored with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and now I must give this legacy to one who had not labored in this manner. This is not only futility it is a great evil.
Contemporary English V.	When we use our wisdom, knowledge, and skill to get what we own, why do we have to leave it to someone who didn't work for it? This is senseless and wrong.
New Century Version	People can work hard using all their wisdom, knowledge, and skill, but they will die, and other people will get the things for which they worked. They did not do the work, but they will get everything. This is also unfair and useless.
New Life Version	For here is a man who has worked with wisdom, much learning, and an able hand. Yet he must give this to one who has not worked for it. This also is for nothing, and very wrong.
New Living Translation	Some people work wisely with knowledge and skill, then must leave the fruit of their efforts to someone who hasn't worked for it. This, too, is meaningless, a great tragedy.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	Some people work wisely and skillfully, using the things that they have learned. But when they die, they leave everything, and someone who has not worked for those things acquires them. That fact also seemed to be senseless and caused me to be discouraged.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	There's a man who worked hard to gain wisdom,
------------------------	---

As well as knowledge and courage.
 But there's also a man who made no such effort,
 And he will receive the same fate.
 So, this is a great wicked folly.

Beck's American Translation	Here is a man who has worked hard with intelligence, knowledge, and skill only to turn it over to one who didn't work for it and so it belongs to him. This also is a vapor and very bad.
Common English Bible	I then gave myself up to despair, as I thought about all my laborious hard work under the sun, because sometimes those who have worked hard with wisdom, knowledge, and skill must leave the results of their hard work as a possession to those who haven't worked hard for it. This too is pointless—it's a terrible wrong. V. 20 is included for context.
International Standard V	For sometimes people who strive to obtain wisdom, knowledge, and equity leave everything as an inheritance to a person who never worked for it. This, too, is pointless and greatly troublesome.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	What, should one man go on toiling, his the craft, his the skill, his the anxious care, leaving all to another, and an idler? That were frustration surely, and great mischief done.
Translation for Translators	Some people work wisely and skillfully, using the things that they have learned. But <i>when they die</i> , they leave everything, and someone who has not worked hard acquires those things. And that also <i>seemed</i> to be senseless and caused me to be discouraged.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Alpha & Omega Bible	FOR THERE IS SUCH A MAN THAT HIS LABOR IS IN WISDOM, AND IN KNOWLEDGE, AND IN FORTITUDE; YET THIS MAN SHALL GIVE HIS PORTION TO ONE WHO HAS NOT LABORED THEREIN. THIS IS ALSO VANITY AND GREAT EVIL.
Awful Scroll Bible	Persist then there he of mankind, who labors in wisdom, knowledge, and suitability, yet he of mankind - is he to have labored for it? - maintains he to rendered his portion to. It is to be vapor and much miserableness!
Conservapedia Translation	For a man can build much through wisdom, knowledge and fairness; yet his inheritance can pass to a man who does not live by these values. This too is vanity and a great evil.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	For a man may work with science, and knowledge, and skill,—but must, leave the result to a man who has not earned it! That, also, is vanily, and a great grief !
God's Truth (Tyndale)	...For so much as a man should weary himself with wisdom, with understanding and opportunity, and yet be fain to leave his labors unto another, that never sweat for them. This is also a vain thing and a great misery.
HCSB	When there is a man whose work was done with wisdom, knowledge, and skill, and he must give his portion to a man who has not worked for it, this too is futile and a great wrong.
Jubilee Bible 2000	That the man who worked with wisdom and with knowledge and with uprightness would have to leave his portion to a man that has not laboured therein. This also is vanity and a great evil.
Lexham English Bible	For although a person may toil with great wisdom and skill, he must leave his reward to someone who has not toiled for it. This also is vanity and a great calamity.
Unlocked Literal Bible	For there might be someone who works with wisdom, with knowledge, and skill, but he will leave everything he has to a man who has not made any of it. This also is vapor and a great tragedy.
Urim-Thummim Version	Because there is a man whose labor is in Wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that has not labored therein will he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great badness.

Wikipedia Bible Project Because there is a man who works with wisdom, with knowledge, and with skill. And the man that did not work at it, will get him his share--- this also is a mirage, and a great evil.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988) For here was a man who toiled in all wisdom, knowledge and skill and he must leave all to someone who has not worked for it. This is meaningless and a great misfortune.

The Heritage Bible And I turned around to cause my heart to despair of all wearisome toil which I wearily toiled under the sun, Because there is a man whose wearisome toil is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in upright prosperity, and he shall give it as his allotment to a man who has not wearily toiled in it. This also is vanity and a great evil. V. 20 is included for context.

New American Bible (2002) For here is a man who has labored with wisdom and knowledge and skill, and to another, who has not labored over it, he must leave his property. This also is vanity and a great misfortune.

New RSV So I turned and gave my heart up to despair concerning all the toil of my labours under the sun, because sometimes one who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave all to be enjoyed by another who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. V. 20 is included for context.

Revised English Bible—1989 For though someone toils with wisdom, knowledge, and skill he must leave it all to one who has spent no labour on it. This too is futility and a great wrong.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible Here is a man whose work is done with wisdom, knowledge and skill; yet he has to leave it to someone who has put no work into it. This is not only pointless, but a great evil.

The Complete Tanach For there is a man whose toil is with wisdom and with knowledge and with honesty and to a man who did not toil for it he will give it as his portion; this too is vanity and a great evil.

For there is a man: Its apparent interpretation is according to its simple meaning, but the Midrash Aggadah in Tanhuma (Buber, vol. 1, p. 24) interprets it as an expression referring to the Holy One, blessed be He, concerning Whom it is said (Ezek. 1:26): “and on the likeness of the throne was a likeness like the appearance of a man.”

whose toil is with wisdom: as it is said (Prov. 3:19f): “The Lord founded the earth with wisdom... With His knowledge the depths were split,” and to the creatures who did not toil in it, He gave a share in it.

this too is vanity and a great evil: And they became a generation of vanity and the evil of man became great on the earth in the Generation of the Flood.

exeGesés companion Bible For there is a human whose toil is in wisdom and in knowledge and in prosperity; yet he gives his allotment to a human who never toiled therein. This also is vanity and a great evil.

JPS (Tanakh—1985) For sometimes a person whose fortune was made with wisdom, knowledge, and skill must hand it on to be the portion of somebody who did not toil for it. That too is futile, and a grave evil.

Orthodox Jewish Bible For there is an adam whose amal is with chochmah, and da'as, and kishron (skill); yet to an adam that hath not worked for it he must leave it for his chelek. This also is hevel and a ra'ah rabbah.

The Scriptures 1998

For a man might labour with wisdom, knowledge, and skill; yet he leaves his heritage to a man who has not laboured for it. That too is futile and a great evil.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible

People can work hard using all their wisdom, knowledge, and skill [success], but they will die, and other people will get the things for which they worked [leave their reward to others]. They did not do the work, but they will get everything. This is also unfair [a great evil] and useless [1:2].

Pastor John Griffith

When there is a man who has labored with wisdom, knowledge and skill, then he gives his legacy to one who has not labored with them. This too is vanity and a great evil.

Kretzmann's Commentary

- great evil = ra'ah...evil, misery, distress (1:13, 2:17 grievous task) same use here to describe something that brings misery, distress great pressure on an individual
For there is a man whose labor is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity, who possesses wisdom, applies it to the circumstances of every-day life, and uses the proper ability in so doing; yet to a man that hath not labored therein shall he leave it for his portion, another will reap what he sowed. This also is vanity and a great evil, for it seems to place wisdom and its proper application at a disadvantage.

NET Bible®

For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge, and skill; however, he must hand over⁹⁷ the fruit of his labor⁹⁸ as an inheritance⁹⁹ to someone else who did not work for it.

This also is futile, and an awful injustice!¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Heb “he must give.” The 3rd person masculine singular suffix on וְנָתַן (yittknennu, Qal imperfect 3rd person masculine singular from נָתַן, natan, “to give” + 3rd person masculine singular suffix) refers back to וְאִמָּלוֹ ('amalo, “his labor”) which is treated in this line as a metonymy of cause for effect, that is, “he must give it” = “he must give his labor” = “he must give the fruit of his labor.”

As in 2:18-19, Qoheleth laments the injustice that a person who works diligently in wisdom must one day hand over the fruit of his labor (i.e., his fortune and the care of his achievements) to his successor. There is no guarantee that one's heir will be wise and be a good steward of this wealth, or be foolish and squander it – in which case, the former man's entire life's work would be in vain.

⁹⁸ Heb “it”; the referent (“the fruit of his labor”) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁹⁹ Or “he must turn over an inheritance”; or “he must turn it over, namely, an inheritance.” There are two approaches to the syntax of וְקִלְחָ (khelqo, “his inheritance”): (1) The 3rd person masculine singular suffix is a subjective genitive: “his inheritance” = the inheritance which he must give to his heir. The referent of the 3rd person masculine singular suffix is Qoheleth in 2:21a who worked hard to amass the fortune. The noun קִלְחָ (kheleq, “inheritance”) functions as an adverbial accusative of state (GKC 372 §118.a) or a predicate accusative (R. J. Williams, Hebrew Syntax, 12-13, §57): “He must give it [i.e., his fortune] as an inheritance.” (2) The 3rd person masculine singular suffix is an objective genitive: “his inheritance” = the inheritance which the heir will receive from Qoheleth. The referent of the 3rd person masculine singular suffix is the heir in 2:21b. The noun קִלְחָ (“inheritance”) functions as the accusative direct object in apposition (R. J. Williams, Hebrew Syntax, 15-16, §71) to the 3rd person masculine singular suffix on וְנָתַן (yittknennu, “he must give it”; Qal imperfect 3rd person masculine singular from נָתַן, natan, + 3rd person masculine singular suffix): “He must give it, namely, his inheritance, to one who did not work for it.”

¹⁰⁰ The noun רָעָה (ra'ah, “evil”) probably means “misfortune” (HALOT 1263 s.v. רָעָה 4) or “injustice; wrong” (HALOT 1262 s.v. רָעָה 2.b). The phrase רָעָה רַבָּה (ra'ah rabbah) connotes “grave injustice” or “great misfortune” (e.g., Eccl 2:17; 5:12, 15;

6:1; 10:5). It is expressed well as: “This too is...a great misfortune” (NAB, NIV, MLB) and “utterly wrong!” (NEB).

The Voice

Although someone with wisdom, knowledge, and skill works hard, *when he departs this life*, he will leave all he has accomplished to another who has done nothing to deserve work’s reward. This, too, is fleeting, and *it causes* great misery.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Concordant Literal Version	For there is a man whose toil is in wisdom and in knowledge and in success, Yet to another man who has not toiled for it, he must give it as his portion; This too is vanity and a great evil.
English Standard Version	So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun, because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. V. 20 is included for context.
Green’s Literal Translation	When there is a man whose labor is with wisdom, and with knowledge, and with advantage; yet he shall give it to a man who has not labored with it, for his share; this also is vanity and a great evil.
New American Standard B.	When there is a man who has labored with wisdom, knowledge and skill, then he gives his legacy [Lit <i>share</i>] to one who has not labored with them. This too is vanity and a great evil.
A Voice in the Wilderness	For there is a man whose labor is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and with success; yet he shall leave it as inheritance to a man who has not labored in it. This also is vanity and a great evil.
World English Bible	For there is a man whose labor is with wisdom, with knowledge, and with skillfulness; yet he shall leave it for his portion to a man who has not labored for it. This also is vanity and a great evil.
Young’s Updated LT	For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity, and to a man who has not laboured therein he gives it—his portion! Even this is vanity and a great evil.

The gist of this passage: One man may give his all to build up his life and fortune; but he will bequeath it to one who has not worked for it—this is senseless and a great evil!

Ecclesiastes 2:21a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i>]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory conjunction; preposition	Strong’s #3588 BDB #471
yêsh (יֵשׁ) [pronounced <i>yaysh</i>]	<i>being, substance, existence; used as a substitute for to be (without reference to number or tense); there [is, are]; to be present, to be ready, to exist</i>	substantive	Strong’s #3426 BDB #441

Dr. Bob Utley: “*there is*” This Hebrew phrase (BDB 441) introduces a hypothetical, but often occurring, human experience or example (cf. Eccles. 2:21; Eccles. 4:8; Eccles. 5:13; Eccles. 6:1; Eccles. 6:11; Eccles. 7:15[twice]; Eccles. 8:14[thrice]; Eccles. 10:5). It is used many times in Wisdom Literature (e.g., Prov. 11:24; Prov. 12:8; Prov. 13:7; Prov. 14:12; Prov. 16:25; Prov. 18:24; Prov. 20:15).⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁹ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:21.

Ecclesiastes 2:21a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾādām (אָדָם) [pronounced aw-DAWM]	<i>a man, a human being, mankind; transliterated Adam</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #120 & #121 BDB #9
The word <i>the Adam</i> can mean <i>man, mankind, humankind, men, human beings</i> .			
she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced sheh] or shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced sheh]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
ʿāmâl (עָמַל) [pronounced ʿaw-MAWL]	<i>intense labor, exhausting toil, exhaustion, miserable work, work and toil so tiring, you just want to cry; misery, travail; production from labor</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5999 BDB #765
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's# none BDB #88
châk ^e mâh (חָכְמָה) [pronounced khawk ^e -MAW]	<i>wisdom [in all realms of life], doctrine in the soul; skill [in war]</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #2451 BDB #315

Translation: For there [is] a man whose work is with wisdom... Solomon is speaking of himself, much like Saint Paul wrote, "I knew a man in Christ" (1Cor. 12:2).

We may call this the *tale of two men*. Solomon is the first man, the man who planned out and did all of the work spoken of in this chapter. Rehoboam is the second man, Solomon's son, who did not work for any of this, did not participate in any of it, but he will be the recipient of all Solomon's labors (I am making the assumption here; this could be by any son of Solomon's who would follow him). He is entitled and self-centered.

Solomon is the man who has produced so much; he is the one who has applied his great wisdom to what was built. Solomon knew, from the outset, the first thing that had to be built was the Temple. This reveals his wisdom. There was a time when Solomon was spiritually advanced and he understood his place in the plan of God. In the book of Ecclesiastes, he appears to have lost all sense of that.

Solomon also needed a palace and his Egyptian wife needed her own residence (which is, in part, how the peace was maintained with Egypt).

Ecclesiastes 2:21b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's# none BDB #88

Ecclesiastes 2:21b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
da'ath (דַּעַת) [pronounced DAH-gahth]	knowledge, knowing; intelligence, understanding, wisdom	feminine singular noun	Strong's #1847 BDB #395

James Rickard: DAATH, דַּעַת...means, "knowledge, perception, skill, discernment, understanding." This is GNOSIS doctrine turned into EPIGNOSIS doctrine in the right lobe of your soul.⁶⁷⁰

Translation: ...and with knowledge... Solomon knew who to contact, how to set everything up, and how to coordinate the building. He knew what needed to be done. This was his expert knowledge. He was a brilliant and accomplished man.

Ecclesiastes 2:21c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within	a preposition of proximity	Strong's# none BDB #88
(וְיָדָעַת) [pronounced kihsh-RHOHN], which	success, skill, profit, advantage; equity, good, right	masculine singular noun:	Strong's #3788 BDB #507

Dr. Peter Pett: 'Skill.' The word is found at Ugarit, and in Akkadian sources. It can therefore no longer be described as 'late Hebrew'. (The findings at Ugarit have made much 'late Hebrew' into early Hebrew. Had the Preacher but known this it would have given him a good illustration).⁶⁷¹

Translation: ...and with skill,... All of the building that took place involved a very complex set of skills, and they had to be developed, recognized, and properly used. Improperly used, skills are worthless.

The College Press Bible Study: The "legacy" is of major consequences to the one who has acquired it because he applied wisdom, knowledge, and skill in the task of gathering and collecting. The term "skill" may also be translated "efficiency" which suggests hours of toiling and perfecting of trades. He is not like the one who came upon his fortune through happenstance or chance. Solomon has designed and labored toward such an end. He has placed his whole heart in his work. His fortune represents an entire lifetime of tireless effort and toil.⁶⁷²

Ecclesiastes 2:21 One man has produced a great deal using wisdom, knowledge and skill; but this will go to a man who did not work at all. The man who did all of the work will give the one who didn't his allotment. This is empty and a really very wrong.

⁶⁷⁰ From <http://gracedoctrine.org/proverbs-chapter-8-2/> accessed November 18, 2015.

⁶⁷¹ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:20–21.

⁶⁷² *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:18–23 (comments).

Ecclesiastes 2:21a-c: Solomon's work to build such a great empire (comments)

Dunagan: *This verse describes the intense effort and devotion that Solomon had put into his projects. He had worked hard! This was his life-work, his crowning achievements, things which few men had ever accomplished in life! Solomon had spent an entire lifetime working diligently, perfecting his skills, burning the mid-night oil, improving himself, [and] accumulating a fortune.*⁶⁷³

Dr. John Gill: *For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity,.... Who does all he does, in natural, civil, and religious things, in the state, in his family, and the world, and whatsoever business he is engaged, in the wisest and best manner, with the utmost honesty and integrity, according to all the rules of wisdom and knowledge, and of justice and equity; meaning himself.*⁶⁷⁴

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Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

One of the keys to a successful operation, is placing the right men in the right jobs.

Ecclesiastes 2:21d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
'âdâm (אָדָם) [pronounced aw-DAWM]	<i>a man, a human being, mankind; transliterated Adam</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #120 & #121 BDB #9
<i>The word the Adam can mean man, mankind, humankind, men, human beings.</i>			
she- (-שׁ) [pronounced sheh] or shel (שׁל) [pronounced sheh]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
lô' (לֹא or לוֹא) [pronounced low]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
'âmal (עָמַל) [pronounced gaw-MAHL]	<i>to labor, to toil, to work [hard]</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5998 BDB #765
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's# none BDB #88

Translation: ...but for a man who did not work in it. Solomon will do all of the work for this. After Solomon passes from this life, the man who is the beneficiary of all this work did not work whatsoever.

⁶⁷³ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:21.

⁶⁷⁴ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:21.

It is not clear from Ecclesiastes if Solomon is thinking of a particular son (Rehoboam), or if many of his sons are worthless. However, we may recall that King David did not have the greatest set of sons either. In the book of Samuel, we discussed why that was the case. In short, it is this. David's wives were, in essence, welfare mothers, who were supported by the state, but who had very little contact with the father (who is David) of their children. You cannot raise up a child with a mother and lots of money alone. It requires a father. These boys did not really interact with their father enough to be properly raised, and many of them ended up being terrible, rebellious sons.

When I was in California, I had built up a small business; and I made a reasonable amount of money per hour doing this work. I sold it for a pittance to someone who did not really appreciate having a business. I don't know how long she kept it going—I suspect less than a year. I think back on that business today, and how it could have easily been expanded; but the one who came after me did not have the same vision. I believe that this mother, rather than work, returned to a life of welfare.

Ecclesiastes 2:21 One man has produced a great deal using wisdom, knowledge and skill; but this will go to a man who did not work at all. The man who did all of the work will give the one who didn't his allotment. This is empty and a really very wrong.

Ecclesiastes 2:21d: Solomon leaves to a man who had not worked in these things

Benson: *For there is a man whose labour, &c. — Who uses great industry, and prudence, and justice too, in the management of his affairs; yet to a man that has not laboured in it — shall he leave it for his portion — A portion which he will probably consume upon his lusts.*⁶⁷⁵

Dr. Thomas Constable: *Solomon would have no control over what he had accumulated or accomplished after he died, either (Eccles. 2:19). The idea so common today that a good job is more desirable than a bad job because it yields benefits the worker can enjoy is a very short-sighted, selfish view.*⁶⁷⁶

Dr. John Gill: *yet to a man that has not laboured therein will he leave it for his portion; to his son, heir, and successor; who never took any pains, or joined with him, in acquiring the least part of it; and yet all comes into his hands, as his possession and inheritance.*⁶⁷⁷

Matthew Poole: *That has not laboured therein, so as I have done; who has spent his days in sloth and folly.*⁶⁷⁸

James Burton Coffman: *The great paradox mentioned here is that great reward should go to the wise and the industrious; but, lo, and behold, some lazy and foolish heir inherits every bit of it! No wonder that Solomon's verdict on all this was that, "This also is vanity and a great evil." It seems never to have occurred to Solomon that he should have made himself rich toward God with all that wealth. Instead of that, he spent his last days fretting over whether or not a fool would get everything that his wisdom and labor had produced. And sure enough, the fool got it, and promptly lost it. This is a true description of what has happened to many another vast estate.*⁶⁷⁹

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⁶⁷⁵ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:20–21 (slightly edited).

⁶⁷⁶ Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:21.

⁶⁷⁷ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:21 (slightly edited).

⁶⁷⁸ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:21 (slightly edited).

⁶⁷⁹ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 2, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:21e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
nâthan (נָתַן) [pronounced naw-THAHN]	to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set; to make	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5414 BDB #678
chêleq (חֵלֶק) [pronounced KHAY-lek]	portion, tract, territory, share, allotment; smoothness	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #2506 (and #2511) BDB #324

Translation: The man who did all of the work [lit., he] will give him [the one who didn't] his allotment. Solomon, who oversaw all of the work, will give it over to the man who did not of the work.

Clarke: *For there is a man - Does he not allude to himself? As if he had said, "I have labored to cultivate my mind in wisdom and in science, in knowledge of men and things, and have endeavored to establish equity and dispense justice. And now I find I will leave all the fruits of my labor to a man that has not labored therein, and consequently cannot prize what I have wrought." Does he not refer to his son Rehoboam?* ⁶⁸⁰

One of the things that Solomon does not appear to be taking into consideration is, 99% of those who did this work will not be able to receive it. Some would be able to attend Temple services; but most of the workers would get nothing or very little from this great set of building projects.

Men today build up great companies, risking their fortunes, working 16 hour days, and the ultimate recipient might be an ingrate son who never worked in his life.

Application: Allow me to use the current president as a counter example. All of his sons and daughters actually work. They have overseen great projects; they have worked, been schooled, and supervised. The Trump enterprise will go to his sons and daughters, all of whom have the work ethic.

Application: We will actually see how well-trained his sons and daughters are, because every liberal political force on this planet will be looking to destroy all vestiges of the Trump organization. The left does not look to simply defeat their enemies politically; they seek to crush and destroy them (particularly when they are not a part of the system). The anger towards Trump is particularly strong, simply because he stopped what would have been a progressive takeover of the government; a takeover which would have continued for many decades, if not indefinitely.

Application: A serious mistake that many parents make today is, they do not require any work or responsibility from any of their children until they have graduated college; and then, in many situations, the young adult child is expect to suddenly assume the responsibilities of adulthood, but without really being allowed to work up to that point. Some have never even had spectacular failures up to that point.

Ecclesiastes 2:21 One man has produced a great deal using wisdom, knowledge and skill; but this will go to a man who did not work at all. The man who did all of the work will give the one who didn't his allotment. This is empty and a really very wrong.

⁶⁸⁰ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:21.

Ecclesiastes 2:21e: You leave all the work behind to someone who did nothing

Chuck Smith: *You do all of the work, you do all of the effort, you do all of the sacrifice, you do all of the strain, you do all of the saving, you do all of the wise prudent planning and everything else, and you die and if you can really amass a great fortune, million dollars or so, the government will come in and get seventy percent. And you know how foolishly they're going to spend it.*⁶⁸¹

Dr. Peter Pett: *Especially disillusioning was the fact that he having exerted himself with wisdom, understanding and skill, the one to whom it was all passed on might well treat all his hard efforts as irrelevant, looking on it as unimportant and not worth bothering about, and making no effort to maintain what had been passed on to him.*⁶⁸²

Keil and Delitzsch: *That what one has gained by skill and good fortune thus falls to the lot of another who perhaps recklessly squanders it, is an evil all the greater in proportion to the labour and care bestowed on its acquisition.*⁶⁸³

Whedon: *If he had had children they would have worked with him to build up the family estate, but it must go to one who has given no aid or sympathy to the work of gathering it. There is a certain beauty in a family co-working to build an estate, like that of the Rothschilds.*⁶⁸⁴

Dunagan poses an outstanding question/observation about one's legacy: *For the successful of this world the last straw that they grasp for as they depart from this life. Solomon, realizes that a physical or material legacy means nothing. We tend to think that our children and grandchildren will greatly prize all our treasures. But think about it, what do you have that belonged to your great-great-great-grandparents? What wealth have you inherited, what possession do you possess that was possessed by an ancestor of yours say, 100 years ago, 150 years ago, 200 years ago? WHAT HAPPENED TO ALL THEIR STUFF!*⁶⁸⁵

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Ecclesiastes 2:21f

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
gam (גַּם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i>]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, as well; even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced <i>zeh</i>]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	masculine singular demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260
hebel (לְבָה) [pronounced <i>HEH^B-vel</i>]	<i>vapor, breath; mist, darkness; unsubstantial, emptiness, empty, vanity, meaningless, vacuous; vain, vainly; idol</i>	masculine singular noun; pausal form	Strong's #1892 BDB #210
w ^e (or v ^e) (וְ, or וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

⁶⁸¹ Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:1–26.

⁶⁸² Dr. Peter Pett, *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:21–22.

⁶⁸³ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 2:21.

⁶⁸⁴ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 2:21.

⁶⁸⁵ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:21.

Ecclesiastes 2:21f

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
râ'âh (רָעָה) [pronounced raw-GAW]	<i>evil, misery, distress, disaster, injury, iniquity, aberration, that which is morally reprehensible</i>	feminine singular adjective/noun	Strong's #7451 BDB #949
Dr. Bob Utley: [T]he Hebrew word "evil" (BDB 948-949). It is used in this context as "grievous injustice" (cf. Eccles. 2:17; Eccles. 5:13[twice], 16; Eccles. 6:1; Eccles. 9:12; Eccles. 10:5). The unfairness and randomness of this fallen world lies heavy on this author! ⁶⁸⁶			
rabbâh (רַבָּה) [pronounced rahb-BAW]	<i>many, much, great (in the sense of large or significant, not acclaimed)</i>	feminine singular adjective	Strong's #7227 BDB #912

Translation: This also is a breath and a greatly wrong. This just did not seem right to Solomon. It seemed empty and wrong.

Ecclesiastes 2:21 One man has produced a great deal using wisdom, knowledge and skill; but this will go to a man who did not work at all. The man who did all of the work will give the one who didn't his allotment. This is empty and a really very wrong.

Ecclesiastes 2:21f: This is also a great evil (various commentators)

Dunagan: [T]he thought of his successor getting everything he had earned, without any effort-and maybe evening squandering it, or not appreciating it-is more than he could stand! Not only was it "vanity" it was unfair!⁶⁸⁷

Benson: *This also is a great evil* — A great disorder in itself, and a great torment to a considering mind.⁶⁸⁸

Dr. Peter Pett: *The thought of this happening had changed his whole way of thinking with regard to matters. It was not only an indication of the meaninglessness of things, but a positive evil. (Thus it was not quite so meaningless after all. The writer does not deny that things have meaning, only that they have final meaning).*⁶⁸⁹

Dr. John Gill: *This also is vanity, and a great evil; not anything sinful and criminal, but vexatious and distressing.*⁶⁹⁰

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *evil* — not in itself, for this is the ordinary course of things, but "evil," as regards the chief good, that one should have toiled so fruitlessly.⁶⁹¹

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⁶⁸⁶ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:21.

⁶⁸⁷ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:21.

⁶⁸⁸ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:20–21.

⁶⁸⁹ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:21–22.

⁶⁹⁰ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:21.

⁶⁹¹ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:21.

Ecclesiastes 2:21 One man has produced a great deal using wisdom, knowledge and skill; but this will go to a man who did not work at all. The man who did all of the work will give the one who didn't his allotment. This is empty and a really very wrong.

Solomon is clearly unhappy with his situation, given a lifetime of work and then realizing that it will go to essentially a lazy, ungrateful son.

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary focuses upon the spiritual approach: *We enter into the labours of others, build upon their foundation, and come into the easy possession of what they have won by careful thought and labour. If we are true spiritual workers, we have a wealthy heritage. Let us strive to use it well.*⁶⁹²

Our spiritual heritage: This is too often taken for granted, but the compilation of spiritual knowledge of the centuries is quite amazing. Furthermore, most of us have easy access to these resources. Personally, I can access easily 50 different commentaries and 100 different translations (give or take) for any Old Testament passage that I study. There are even greater resources for the New Testament. On top of this, I was lucky enough to be exposed to R. B. Thieme, Jr., whom I believe to be the greatest Bible teacher of the 20th century (and there were many great teachers over this period of time).

Given this great access, it would be a shame for my generation and the many which follow to take this spiritual heritage for granted. God has provided for us today—particularly those of us who speak English—the greatest spiritual heritage available. You may think that you were somehow cheated because you were not able to learn in the churches where Paul taught; or learn at the foot of Jesus, but we, in truth, have all of that. We can reach spiritual heights not seen by any other civilization—the key is, do you have the want to? There truly is no greater time to be alive.

The NET Bible: *[Looking back,] Verses 18-21 are arranged into two sub-units (2:18-19 and 2:20-21). Each contains a parallel structure: (1) Introductory lament: "I hated all my toil" and "I began to despair about all my toil." (2) Reason for the lament: "I must turn over the fruit of my labor to the hands of my successor" and "he must hand over the fruit of his work as an inheritance." (3) Description of successor: "who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool?" and "he did not work for it." (4) Concluding statement: "This also is fruitless!" and "This also is profitless and an awful injustice!"*⁶⁹³

This is an excellent organization; and I may want to make a table from this.

Ron Snider's translation of Ecclesiastes 2:20–21 **Therefore I completely despaired of all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun. When there is a man who has labored with wisdom, knowledge and skill, then he gives his legacy to one who has not labored with them. This too is vanity and a great evil.**

Ecclesiastes 2:20–21: The vanity of inheritance (Ron Snider)

1. Solomon has now progressed to the point in his thinking where he loses whatever temporal satisfaction he might have been getting from his elaborate projects and all that has accrued to him.
2. He has acknowledged that there was some measure of temporal gratification in the planning, executing, and completing of his projects.
3. However, he is now to the point that when he looks back on it all he realizes that all he has accomplished and accumulated will simply be given to someone else at his death.
4. At this point, he simply gives himself over to depression, recognizing that for all his hard work and achievement, nothing will be permanently his.
5. The Hebrew is quite expressive as it literally reads, I myself turned around to give my heart over to

⁶⁹² *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:17–23 (suggestive comments).

⁶⁹³ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 20, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:20–21: The vanity of inheritance (Ron Snider)

despair.

6. The verb סָבַח (sabhabh-to turn, turn around) is coupled with an infinitive construct in order to denote the purpose for turning. Eccles. 7:25
7. Qoheleth has made a conscious decision to seek no further satisfaction in his wealth, accumulation of details, or his ambitious projects.
8. The verb should be understood in an ingressive sense and translated I began to despair since this expresses the fact that Qoheleth went from not having a sense of despair to capitulating to a sense of despair.
9. The verb יָאֵשׁ (ya'ash-to despair) has the sense of being depressed or despairing so that one gives up a particular pursuit. 1Sam. 27:1; Isa. 57:10
10. Qoheleth has come to the point where he is so disillusioned with the recognition that he is leaving everything to someone else that he simply now loses interest, destroying any creative impulses he might have had.
11. The New American Standard translation (as well as several others) have recognized that it was not his actual labor that depressed him, it was the results (fruit) of that labor that he was leaving behind.
12. This leads him to the logical (but distressing) conclusion that there is simply no point in working any more.
13. The last phrase of verse 20 again conjures up the idea of a man toiling pointlessly under the heat of a relentless, burning sun.
14. One should recognize that Qoheleth understood that this was not something unique to him, but is something that is common to the human experience.
15. This is documented by the general statement he makes in verse 21, which is designed to make his point in a universal sense.
16. The conjunction כִּי (kiy) has been translated as when, for, or because; however, as Crenshaw observes, "when coupled with the particle of existence שָׁ (yesh-there exists), it introduces a condition."
17. Qoheleth is stating a general truth about the reality that even if anyone works hard and capably and has accumulated a few details, he is forced to leave them all to someone that has not contributed any effort.
18. He describes a person that has worked in a wise fashion, employed the technical skill necessary to complete his work, and was ultimately successful in gaining a measure of prosperity.
19. While one might naturally admire that person and congratulate him on his success, Qoheleth sees nothing to be happy about in this situation.
20. He must then leave all his accumulated success to another person that has not expended any effort, applied any wisdom, or worked with any skill at all.
21. While many of the translations (like the New American Standard) have translated the preposition ב (b) with the third masculine singular suffix as with them, the most natural sense is the singular suffix refers to the man who labored...
22. Although Longman suggests that "this verse does not allude to the normal process of inheritance, since the one who benefits is designated by an individual rather than a son", the natural sense of the verb נָתַן (nathan-give) would suggest that this is voluntary.
23. What is strangely absent from Qoheleth's viewpoint is the natural sense of pleasure that one derives from bestowing blessings upon his heirs.
24. As Crenshaw has keenly observed, "The sages' egocentric perspective stands out here, since his attitude is self-centered."
25. The selfish attitude is expressed by the idea that I earned the wages, I did the work, I made the sacrifices, and everything I have accumulated should remain mine.
26. Qoheleth takes no pleasure in the thought that he will be leaving everything to someone else; further, there can be little doubt that he was thinking in terms of his own life and the fruit of his labor, which he will not be able to keep.
27. He classifies this as another example of vanity, going on to call it a great evil, or serious injustice.
28. This verse is not simply a repetition of verse 19, where he was concerned that his heir might be a fool; what tortures Qoheleth here is that all his hard work will be given to one that did nothing to earn it.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#); accessed September 2, 2018 (will open as a Word Document on your computer).

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A Summation of Ecclesiastes 2:17–21 (by Ray Steadman)

So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me; for all is vanity and a striving after wind. I hated all my toil in which I had toiled under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me; and who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun, because sometimes a man who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave all to be enjoyed by a man who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. (Eccles. 2:17–21 RSV)

Notice the increasing depression there. First, there is a sense of being grieved, of being hurt by life. "I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me," the Searcher says. His experience is one of increasing dislike because there is a diminishing return of pleasure for all the effort he makes to enjoy life. Have you ever seen people determined to have fun even if it kills them? They try their best to extract from the moment all the joy they can, but they get very little for their efforts. This, Solomon says, was a grief to him.

Then, second, he was frustrated. "Why do I have to work to put all this together, using all my wisdom and efforts, and eventually have to leave it to some fool coming behind me who will waste it in a few months?" he asks. He feels frustrated by the unfairness of this.

Finally, he sinks into despair. "I turned about and gave my heart up to despair," he says, because he is helpless to change this law of diminishing returns. I think this is the explanation for the phenomenon of the sudden, unexpected suicides of popular idols, of men and women who apparently had seized the keys to life, who had riches and fame, and whom the media constantly held up as objects worthy of imitation. Every now and then, however, finding nothing but frustration and despair as he has used up life too quickly and there is no joy left in it, one of these beautiful people takes a gun and blows his brains out. Think of people like Jack London, and Ernest Hemingway. Just last week Hemingway's brother committed suicide, as their father had done some years earlier. We think of Freddy Prinz; of Elvis Presley, who virtually killed himself with drugs. Yes, these words which Solomon has faithfully recorded for us are true; they correspond to life. Emptiness and vexation were Solomon's own experience when he tried to live it up without the missing element that it took to meet the hunger of his heart.

From www.raystedman.org/ accessed July 27, 2018. Copyright © 2010 by Ray Steadman Ministries.

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What does man really have, after a lifetime of work?

Many translations believe that vv. 22 & 23 belong together.

V. 22 expresses the same sentiment as v. 21, but interrogatively.⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁹⁴ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:22 (paraphrased).

For what is to the Adam in all his toil and in a striving of his heart, which he toils under the sun?

Ecclesiastes
2:22

For what belongs to the man in all his work and in the striving [possibly, *desires*] of his heart, which he works hard under the sun?

When all is said and done, what belongs to the man for all of his work and the execution of all his plans and ideas, working so hard as he has under the sun?

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	For what is to the Adam in all his toil and in a striving of his heart, which he toils under the sun?
Revised Douay-Rheims	For what <u>profit</u> shall a man have of all his labour, and vexation of spirit, with which he has been tormented under the sun?
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	For what <u>pleasure</u> has this man for all his labour and <u>breaking</u> of his heart, wherewith he laboured under the sun <u>in this world</u> ?
Peshitta (Syriac)	For what <u>profit</u> shall a man have of all his labor and of the <u>desire</u> of his heart wherein he has labored under the sun?
Updated Brenton (Greek)	For it happens to a man in all his labour, and in the <u>purpose</u> of his heart wherein he labours under the sun.

Significant differences: There is no word for *profit* or *pleasure* in the Hebrew of v. 22a. The proper name *Adam* can also be translated *man*, *mankind*. The targum has an additional phrase in it. The Hebrew has *striving of his heart*; the Latin has *vexation of spirit*; the targum has *breaking*; the Syriac has *desire* and the Greek has *purpose*. This is a rare word in Scripture and it might mean *desire*.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	What does a man get for all his work, and for the weight of care with which he has done his work under the sun?
Easy English	People have to do a lot of work on this earth. But they get nothing that they can keep.
Easy-to-Read Version—2001 <i>The Message</i>	What does a person really have after all his work and struggling in this life? So what do you get from a life of hard labor? Pain and grief from dawn to dusk. Never a decent night's rest. Nothing but smoke. V. 23 is included for context.
Names of God Bible	What do people get from all of their hard work and struggles under the sun? Their entire life is filled with pain, and their work is unbearable. Even at night their minds don't rest. Even this is pointless. V. 23 is included for context.
New Simplified Bible	What does a man get for all his work, and for the desire of his heart with which he has done his work under the sun?

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	I ask again, "What profit does man have in all his toil and stress as he struggles upon the earth in the few days of his short life?"
Contemporary English V. The Living Bible	What do we really gain from all of our hard work? So what does a man get for all his hard work? Days full of sorrow and grief, and restless, bitter nights. It is all utterly ridiculous. V. 23 is included for context.
New Life Version	So what does a man get for all his hard work? Days full of sorrow and grief, and restless, bitter nights. It is all utterly ridiculous. V. 23 is included for context.
New Living Translation	So what do people get in this life for all their hard work and anxiety?
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	So it is useless for people to work for all they do.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	What happens to a man and his efforts, And the resolves of his heart under the sun?
Beck's American Translation	What does a man get for all his work and striving with which he wearies himself under the sun?
Common English Bible International Standard V	I mean, What do people get for all their hard work and struggles under the sun? For what does a person gain from everything that he accomplishes and from his inner life struggles that he undergoes while working on earth?
New Advent (Knox) Bible	Tell me, how is a man the richer for all that toil of his, all that lost labour of his, here under the sun?
Translation for Translators	So, it seems that people do not [RHQ] get much for all the hard work that they do and for worrying.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Alpha & Omega Bible	FOR IT HAPPENS TO A MAN IN ALL HIS LABOR, AND IN THE PURPOSE OF HIS HEART WHEREIN HE LABORS UNDER THE SUN.
Conservapedia Translation	What does man have to show for all his life's work, and all the troubles that came with it, in the end?
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	For what continues to a man from all his endeavours, and from all the efforts of his mind, that he has striven for, under the sun?
God's Truth (Tyndale)	For what gets a man of all that labor and travail of his mind, that he takes under the Sun, but heaviness, sorrow and disquietness all the days of his life?
HCSB	For what does a man get with all his work and all his efforts that he labors at under the sun?
NIV, ©2011	What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labor under the sun?
Tree of Life Version	For what does a man get for all his toil and longing of his heart for which he laborers under the sun?
Unlocked Literal Bible	For what profit does the person gain who works so hard and tries in his heart to complete his labors under the sun?
Urim-Thummim Version	Because what has man of all his labor, and of the strivings of his heart in which he has labored under the sun?
Wikipedia Bible Project	Because, what is it to the man, all his labor and the discipline of his heart--- that he has labored under the sun?

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988) The Heritage Bible	For what profit is there for a man in all his work and heart-searching under the sun? Because what shall be to a man of all his wearisome toil, and of the grasping of his heart, in which he has sorrowfully toiled under the sun?
New American Bible (2011)	For what profit comes to mortals from all the toil and anxiety of heart with which they toil under the sun? Eccl 1:3.
New English Bible--1970	What reward has a man for all his labour, his scheming, and his toil here under the sun?
New Jerusalem Bible	For here is one who has laboured wisely, skilfully and successfully and must leave what is his own to someone who has not toiled for it at all. This is futile too, and grossly unjust; for what does he gain for all the toil and strain that he has undergone under the sun- since his days are full of sorrow, his work is full of stress and even at night he has no peace of mind? This is futile too. Vv. 21 and 23 are included for context.
New RSV	What do mortals get from all the toil and strain with which they toil under the sun?

Revised English Bible—1989 What reward does anyone have for all his labour, his planning, and his toil here under the sun?

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible For what does a person get from all his efforts and ambitions permeating the work he does under the sun?

The Complete Tanach For what has a man out of all his toil and the breaking of his heart that he toils under the sun?

For what has, etc.: For what profit has a man in all his toil and the breaking of his heart with toil and worry, which he toils, and leaves for others.

exeGesés companion Bible For what has humanity of all his toil and of the gnawing of his heart wherein he toiled under the sun?

JPS (Tanakh—1985) For what does a man get for all the toiling and worrying he does under the sun?

Orthodox Jewish Bible For what hath adam for all his amal, and for all the striving of his lev, wherein he hath labored under the shemesh?

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible What do people get for all their ·work [toil] and ·struggling [anxiety] ·here on earth [· under the sun; 1:3]?

Kretzmann's Commentary For what hath man of all his labor, and of the vexation of his heart, the hard work with which he applies wisdom and knowledge in all his transactions, wherein he hath labored under the sun?

NET Bible® *Painful Days and Restless Nights*
What does a man acquire from all his labor and from the anxiety that accompanies his toil on earth?¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Heb “under the sun.” The rhetorical question is an example of negative affirmation, expecting a negative answer: “Man acquires nothing” (see E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 949-51).

The Voice What exactly do people get out of all their work and all the stresses they put themselves through here under the sun?

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Concordant Literal Version For what is coming to a man for all his toil, And for the grazing of his heart which he is toiling under the sun?

English Standard Version What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun?

Modern English Version For what becomes of a man with all his labor and with the striving in his heart that he toils under the sun?

Young's Updated LT For what has been to a man by all his labour, and by the thought of his heart that he laboured at under the sun?

The gist of this passage: Solomon asks the question, *what does man get for all of his labor?*

Ecclesiastes 2:22a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כי) [pronounced <i>kee</i>]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
mâh (מה) [pronounced <i>maw</i>]	<i>what, how, why</i>	interrogative; exclamatory particle	Strong's #4100 BDB #552
hâvâh (הוּוֹ) [pronounced <i>haw-VAW</i>]	<i>is, being, becomes; exists; is happening; falling</i>	Qal active participle	Strong's #1933 BDB #216
Keil and Delitzsch: <i>The question literally is: What is (comes forth, results) to a man from all his labour; for "to become, to be, to fall to, happen to," is the fundamental idea of הוּוֹ.</i> ⁶⁹⁵			
There are two sets of meanings for this verb; the second being:			
hâvâh (הוּוֹ) [pronounced <i>haw-VAW</i>]	<i>to breathe; to gape, to yawn, to desire; to rush headlong into anything, to fall headlong, to perish</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1933 BDB #217
This verb is onomatopoeic <i>hâvâh</i> and it properly means <i>to breathe</i> . It can also mean <i>to breathe heavily</i> , as if you are running after something. When you chase after something, it is because you desire it or lust after it. This can also mean that you rush headlong into something, which could mean your <i>fall, ruin, calamity, injury</i> , or even <i>deep pit</i> , which helps to explain the meanings of its noun cognate.			
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
'âdâm (אָדָם) [pronounced <i>aw-DAWM</i>]	<i>a man, a human being, mankind; transliterated Adam</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #120 & #121 BDB #9
The word <i>the Adam</i> can mean <i>man, mankind, humankind, men, human beings</i> .			
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's# none BDB #88
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	<i>every, each, all of, all; any of, any</i>	masculine singular construct not followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
Literally, <i>in all</i> . Although I don't have this in the lexicons, it is rendered by the most literal translations as <i>among all, through all, throughout all, with all</i> .			
'âmâl (עֲמָל) [pronounced <i>gaw-MAWL</i>]	<i>intense labor, exhausting toil, exhaustion, miserable work, work and toil so tiring, you just want to cry; misery, travail; production from labor</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5999 BDB #765

Translation: [For what belongs to the man in all his work...](#) The man that Solomon is speaking of is himself. He has put in all of this work, and what belongs to him at the very end? He will die and none of it will go with him.

⁶⁹⁵ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 2:22–23.

Solomon has laid out the problem that, a man can work all of his life, but at the very end, he leaves it behind in the hands of someone else.

Ecclesiastes 2:22 *When all is said and done, what belongs to the man for all of his work and the execution of all his plans and ideas, working so hard as he has under the sun?*

Ecclesiastes 2:22a: What does a man get for all his labor (various commentators)

Dunagan: *"what does a man get"-If this life is all there is, then in the final analysis, all that really results, even from the most prosperous lifestyle imaginable, is a whole lot of painful labor and restless activity.*⁶⁹⁶

The Pulpit Commentary: *There is, indeed, the pleasure that accompanies the pursuit of objects, and the successful accomplishment of enterprise; but this is poor and unsubstantial and embittered.*⁶⁹⁷

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *The pleasures of the world depart one by one, and leave men the sad heritage of weariness and vexation. There is nothing here that is an adequate recompense for our anxiety of thought, and wasting labour. If this life be all, even our supremacy in the empire of mind is but a poor consolation, seeing our stay is so short and death strikes the sceptre from our hand.*

The Preacher's Commentary continues: *It is well to pause in the midst of our labours, and ask ourselves to what profit do they tend? This is the attitude in which the soul hears the voice of God, bidding her return to enduring pleasures and works of lasting profit.*⁶⁹⁸

Benson: *"To what purpose," a man may well say, "is all this toil of my body, and these solicitous thoughts, and this anguish of my mind? For all that a man can enjoy himself of the anxious labours wherein he spends his days, amounts to little or nothing; and what comfort hath he in thinking who shall enjoy the fruit of them hereafter?"*⁶⁹⁹

Clarke: *Labour of body, disappointment of hope, and vexation of heart, have been all my portion.*⁷⁰⁰

Dr. John Gill: *What profit has he by it, when there is so much vexation in it, both in getting it, and in the thought of leaving it to others? What advantage is it to him, when it is all acquired for and possessed by another; and especially of what use is it to him after his death?*⁷⁰¹

Matthew Poole: *What comfort or benefit remains to any man after this short and frail life is once ended?*⁷⁰²

Whedon: *[M]an has nothing — nothing solid and abiding — when the accumulations of a working life pass from his name and lineage.*⁷⁰³

What does a man truly gain? Eccles. 1:3, Eccles. 3:9, Eccles. 5:10–11, Eccles. 5:17, Eccles. 6:7–8, Eccles. 8:15; Prov. 16:26; 1Tim. 6:8.⁷⁰⁴

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⁶⁹⁶ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:22.

⁶⁹⁷ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:22.

⁶⁹⁸ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:22.

⁶⁹⁹ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:22–23.

⁷⁰⁰ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:22.

⁷⁰¹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:22.

⁷⁰² Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:22.

⁷⁰³ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 2:22.

⁷⁰⁴ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Eccles. 2:22.

Application: I personally have a small company, and it has been what has given me the time and the freedom to spend a significant amount of time in study of the Word of God. I have been quite grateful to God for that. But, I admit that, there are times, I wonder what will happen to the company after I am gone.

Ecclesiastes 2:22b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's# none BDB #88
ra'ôwêr (רַוְעָר) [pronounced <i>rahg'-YOHN</i>]	<i>longing, striving, desire</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #7475 BDB #946
This word is only found 3 times and only in the book of Ecclesiastes.			
E. W. Bullinger: <i>vexation = feeding, or delight. Same word as in Eccles. 1:17; Eccles. 4:16. Not the same as in verses: Eccles. 2:11, Eccles. 2:17, Eccles. 2:26.</i> ⁷⁰⁵			
lêb (לֵב) [pronounced <i>lay^bv</i>]	<i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking; midst</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3820 BDB #524
Should I divide this verse up further right here?			
she- (-שׁ) [pronounced <i>sheh</i>] or shel (שׁל) [pronounced <i>shehl</i>]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
hûw' (אוּה) [pronounced <i>hoo</i>]	<i>he, it; him, himself as a demonstrative pronoun: that, this (one); same</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> , is implied	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
'âmêl (אִמֵּל) [pronounced <i>gaw-MALE</i>]	<i>toiling, working, doing, working until complete misery and exhaustion set in, worn out, tired out, burnt out</i>	masculine singular verbal adjective (also used as a noun)	Strong's #6001 BDB #766
tachath (תַּחַת) [pronounced <i>TAH-khahth</i>]	<i>underneath, below, under, beneath; instead of, in lieu of; in the place [in which one stands]; in exchange for; on the basis of</i>	preposition of location or foundation	Strong's #8478 BDB #1065
shemesh (שֶׁמֶשׁ) [pronounced <i>SHEH-mesh</i>]	<i>sun; sunrise, sun-rising, east, sun-setting, west (of direction); openly, publically</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article; pausal form	Strong's #8121 BDB #1039

This expression, *under the sun*, is found 5 times in this chapter.

⁷⁰⁵ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:22.

Translation: ...and in the striving [possibly, *desires*] of his heart, which he works hard under the sun? Solomon, in this work, worked hard in his mind; he had the striving (or, desires) of his heart—his thinking.

Solomon worked very hard under the sun. He is clearly frustrated when he considers all of his work when stacked up next to what does he really have from life. These are the thoughts of one of the richest men in history. Despite Solomon's great wealth, he is not a happy man.

What is particularly sad for the unbeliever is, this is all he gets. This is set aside and his death and it's gone forever. After that is the judgment.

Ecclesiastes 2:22 *When all is said and done, what belongs to the man for all of his work and the execution of all his plans and ideas, working so hard as he has under the sun?*

Ecclesiastes 2:22b: The emptiness of working so hard under the sun (comments)

Dunagan: *Solomon, like many individuals had truly thrown himself into trying to find meaning and purpose in this life. He had striven. Solomon was a driven man, a go-getter.*⁷⁰⁶ He was striving as hard to make meaning out of his life as he had striven to work for all these years.

Dr. John Gill: *though he has been labouring all his days, yet there is not one thing he has got by his labour that is of any real advantage to him, or can yield him any solid comfort and satisfaction, or bring him true happiness, or lead him to it.*⁷⁰⁷

The Pulpit Commentary: *[Solomon here speaks of] the [futile] striving, the effort of his mind to direct his labor to great ends. What does all this produce? The answer intended is, "Nothing." This striving, with all its wisdom and knowledge and skill (Eccles. 2:21), is for the laborer fruitless.*⁷⁰⁸

Dr. Bob Utley: *What are the ultimate results of physical labors? Is there anything beyond the grave?*⁷⁰⁹

Keil and Delitzsch: *The question looks forward to a negative answer. What comes out of his labour for man? Nothing comes of it, nothing but disagreeableness. This negative contained in the question is established by וְ, 23a.*⁷¹⁰

Matthew Poole (paraphrased): *What advantage does he have as the result of all his labours above him who never laboured, and yet enjoys all the fruits of his labours?*⁷¹¹

Solomon seems to have completely laid aside his knowledge of God, God's plan, and his place in God's plan aside.

Striving and anxiety in life: Eccles. 4:6, Eccles. 4:8; Psalm 127:2; Matt. 6:11, Matt. 6:25, Matt. 6:34, Matt. 16:26; Luke 12:22, Luke 12:29; Phi. 4:6; 1Peter 5:7.⁷¹²

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Ecclesiastes 2:22 *When all is said and done, what belongs to the man for all of his work and the execution of all his plans and ideas, working so hard as he has under the sun?*

⁷⁰⁶ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:22.

⁷⁰⁷ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:22.

⁷⁰⁸ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:22.

⁷⁰⁹ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:22.

⁷¹⁰ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 2:22–23.

⁷¹¹ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:22 (paraphrased).

⁷¹² *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Eccles. 2:23.

Sometimes, a question is rhetorical—asked but not answered, asked, but not needing an answer. But Solomon will answer this question in v. 23:

This verse is not so much of an answer as a continuation with the frustration felt above.

<p>For all his days [are] painful and frustrating his travail. Also in the night, does not sleep his heart. Also this a breath [to] him.</p>	<p>Ecclesiastes 2:23</p>	<p>For all of his days [are] painful and his work [is] frustrating. Furthermore, his heart does not rest at night. This also [is just] a breath [to] him.</p>
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For all of his days are difficult, and his work is frustrating; so that, even at night, his mind won't stop. This is also empty and without substance to him.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	For all his days [are] painful and frustrating his travail. Also in the night, does not sleep his heart. Also this a breath [to] him.
Revised Douay-Rheims	All his days are full of sorrows and miseries, even in the night he does not rest in mind: and is not this vanity?
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	For all his days are sorrowful, and his business <u>kindles his anger</u> , even in the night <u>he sleeps not on account of the thoughts of his heart</u> ; this too is vanity.
Peshitta (Syriac)	For all his days are full of sorrows, and his travail is grief; yea, even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	For all his days are days of sorrows, and <u>vexation of spirit is his</u> ; in the night also his heart rests not. This is also vanity.

Significant differences: The targum has *kindles his anger* rather than *frustrating*. The Greek has *vexation of spirit is his* rather than *his travail is frustrating*. The Latin leaves out *travail*.

There is additional verbiage in the targum; and it seems to be an attempt to give a fuller meaning of the original text (sometimes it is okay and sometimes it is way off).

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	All his days are sorrow, and his work is full of grief. Even in the night his heart has no rest. This again is to no purpose.
Easy English	Every day, their work disappoints them and it makes them sad. Even at night, their minds do not rest. All their work means nothing. The Teacher was very rich, but that did not make him happy. If nobody lives again after death, a wise man and a fool are the same. It is not better to be a wise man than it is to be a fool.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	What do people really have after all their work and struggling in this life? Throughout their life, they have pain, frustrations, and hard work. Even at night, a person's mind does not rest. This is also senseless. V. 22 is included for context.
Good News Bible (TEV)	I knew that I would have to leave it to my successor, and he might be wise, or he might be foolish—who knows? Yet he will own everything I have worked for, everything my wisdom has earned for me in this world. It is all useless. So I came to regret that I had worked so hard. You work for something with all your wisdom, knowledge, and skill, and then you have to leave it all to someone who hasn't had to work for it. It is useless, and it isn't right! You work and worry your way through

life, and what do you have to show for it? As long as you live, everything you do brings nothing but worry and heartache. Even at night your mind can't rest. It is all useless. Vv. 18–22 are included for context.

NIRV What do people get for all their hard work on earth? What do they get for all their worries? As long as they live, their work is nothing but pain and sorrow. Even at night their minds can't rest. That doesn't have any meaning either. V. 22 is included for context.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	For all his days he labors at his task accompanied by pain and grief. Even at night he remembers the vexation of his work and his mind has no rest. This too is vanity.
Contemporary English V.	Our bodies ache during the day, and work is torture. Then at night our thoughts are troubled. It just doesn't make sense.
New Berkeley Version	For all his days are full of pain and his task vexations; even at night his mind has no rest. This also is emptiness.
New Century Version	What do people get for all their work and struggling here on earth? All of their lives their work is full of pain and sorrow, and even at night their minds don't rest. This is also useless. V. 22 is included for context.
New Life Version	For his work brings pain and sorrow all his days. Even during the night his mind does not rest. This also is for nothing.
New Living Translation	Their days of labor are filled with pain and grief; even at night their minds cannot rest. It is all meaningless.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	Every day the work that they do causes them to experience pain and to be worried. And during the night their minds are not able to rest. That also shows how temporary everything is.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	During all of his days there is pain, And rage over things that are being destroyed; So, during the night, his heart knows no rest... Indeed, this too is just folly.
Beck's American Translation	All his life is painful, and his work is troublesome. Even at night his mind can't rest. This also is a vapor.
Common English Bible	All their days are pain, and their work is aggravation; even at night, their hearts don't find rest. This too is pointless.
International Standard V	Indeed, all of his days are filled with sorrow, and his struggles bring grief. In fact, his mind remains restless throughout the night. This is pointless, too!
New Advent (Knox) Bible	His days all painfulness and care, his very nights restless; what is here but frustration?
Translation for Translators	Every day the work that they do causes them to experience pain and to be worried. And during the night their minds are not able to rest. That also is very frustrating.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible	For that befalling to he of mankind, of his labors and longings in the sensibility of his heart, even of his toils under the sun, his days are in protrusions, dejectedness, and annoyance in the sensibility of his heart - is he to have laid down at night? - It is to be vapor! V. 22 is included for context.
Conservapedia Translation	For all his days are sorrows, and his ordeals bring grief; yes, his heart finds no peace at night. This too is vanity.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	Where all his days are griefs, and his efforts sorrows, and his mind does not rest at night ! —This also is vanity !

Peter Pett's translation	For what has a man for all his efforts, and for the striving of his heart with which he exerts himself under the sun? For all his days are spent in painful effort, and his exertions are vexatious. Yes, even in the night his heart is restless. This also is vanity. V. 22 is included for context.
God's Truth (Tyndale) Unlocked Literal Bible	In so much that his heart can not rest in the night. Is this not also a vain thing? Every day his work is painful and stressful, so at night his soul does not find rest. This also is vapor.
Wikipedia Bible Project	Because all of his days are painful, and anger is his business--- at night too, his heart does not rest, and this too, is mirage.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)	All his days bring sorrow, his work grief; he hasn't, moreover, peaceful rest at night: that too is meaningless.
The Heritage Bible	Because all his days are sorrows and being provoked in his employment; yes, in the night his heart does not lie down. This also is vanity.
New American Bible (2002)	All his days sorrow and grief are his occupation; even at night his mind is not at rest. This also is vanity.
New American Bible (2011)	Every day sorrow and grief are their occupation; even at night their hearts are not at rest. This also is vanity.
New English Bible—1970	All his life long his business is pain and vexation to him; even at night his mind knows no rest. This too is emptiness.
Revised English Bible—1989	His lifelong activity is pain and vexation to him; even in the night he has no peace of mind. This too is futility.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	His whole life is one of pain, and his work is full of stress; even at night his mind gets no rest. This too is pointless.
The Complete Tanach	For all his days are pains and his occupation is vexation; even at night his heart does not rest; this too is vanity.

his occupation: Heb. וְיָגַע; his custom.

this too: is one of the vanities that prevail in the world.

exeGesés companion Bible	For all his days are sorrows and his drudgery, vexation; yes, his heart lies not down in the night. This is also vanity.
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	All his days his thoughts are grief and heartache, and even at night his mind has no respite. That too is futile!
Orthodox Jewish Bible	For all his yamim are machovim (sorrows), and his travail ka'as (grief, vexation); yea, his lev taketh not rest balailah. This also is hevel.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	For all his days his work is painful and sorrowful; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is vanity (worthless).
The Expanded Bible	All of their ·lives [^l days] their work is full of pain and ·sorrow [frustration], and even at night their ·minds [^l hearts] don't ·rest [^l lie down]. This is also useless [1:2].
Pastor John Griffith	Because all his days his task is painful and grievous; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is vanity.
Kretzmann's Commentary	For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief, that seems to be the only result and reward of all his labor; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night, since he is

troubled with anxiety and kept awake by worry. This is also vanity. Solomon therefore states his conclusion, so far as this life in itself is concerned.

NET Bible®

For all day long¹⁰² his work produces pain and frustration, and even at night his mind cannot relax!¹⁰⁴

^{102tn} Heb “all his days.”

^{104tn} Heb “his heart (i.e., mind) does not rest.”

The Voice

For every day is filled with pain and every job has its own problems, and there are nights when the mind doesn't stop and rest. And once again, this is fleeting.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Concordant Literal Version	For all his days his experience is filled with pains and vexation; Even in the night his heart will not lie down; This too, it is vanity."
Context Group Version	For all his days are [but] sorrows, and his travail is grief; yes, even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is emptiness.
<i>Emphasized Bible</i>	For, all his days, are pains, and, vexatious, is his employment, even in the night, his heart lieth not down,—even this, was, vanity.
New American Standard B.	Because all his days his task is painful and grievous; even at night his mind [Lit <i>heart</i>] does not rest. This too is vanity.
New King James Version	For all his days are sorrowful, and his work burdensome; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity.
World English Bible	For all his days are sorrows, and his travail is grief; yes, even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity.
Young's Updated LT	For all his days are sorrows, and his travail sadness; even at night his heart has not lain down; this also is vanity.

The gist of this passage: Solomon's days are filled with sorrow; and he cannot sleep at night.

Ecclesiastes 2:23a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i>]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	with a plural noun, it is rendered <i>all of, all; any of</i>	masculine singular construct with a masculine plural noun	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
yâmîym (יָמַי) [pronounced <i>yaw-MEEM</i>]	<i>days, a set of days; time of life, lifetime; a specific time period, a year</i>	masculine plural noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3117 BDB #398
mak ^o ôb (מַכְאוֹב) [pronounced <i>mahk-OHB^v</i>]	<i>anguish, suffering, pain [affliction] [of soul]; sorrow</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #4341 BDB #456

Also spelled mak^oôwb (מַכְאוֹב) [pronounced *mahk-OHB^v*].

Translation: For all of his days [are] painful... Solomon is speaking of himself. He is the grand builder; he is the one with all of the ideas; he is the productive king. Yet, near the end of his life, he began to feel suffering or pain or sorrow. Something was not right in his soul. Solomon also began to feel the aches and pains of age.

Even though Solomon is speaking of himself, he uses the 3rd person. Perhaps the idea is that there is a universality in his frustration and pain.

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *The joys of the children of this world are but the illusions of a dream. There is a deep sorrow running through life which men strive in vain to hide.*⁷¹³

Ecclesiastes 2:23b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ka'âç (כֹּאֵץ) [pronounced KAH-âhhs]	<i>provoking, taunting, provoked anger, a taunting provocation, highly emotional state which has been provoked; frustration</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3708 BDB #495
'in ^e yân (עִנְיָן) [pronounced âhn-YAWN]	<i>employment, business, occupation, task, job; travail</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #6045 BDB #775

E. W. Bullinger: *travail = toil that brings about fatigue. The same word as in Eccles. 1:13; Eccles. 2:26; Eccles. 3:10; Eccles. 4:8; Eccles. 5:14. Not the same word as in Eccles. 4:4, Eccles. 4:6. Occurs only in Ecclesiastes.*⁷¹⁴

Possibly, this means *a bad business, a bad affair, a bad business transaction.*

Translation: ...and his work [is] frustrating. His work was no longer rewarding and a joy, but frustrating.

Application: Sometimes when we get up for work, we are excited about, we have plans, and we cannot wait to execute those plans (I suspect that Solomon, during those first 20 years of building, was like that nearly every day). But there are times when we must get up for work and we have no desire to go to work; it pains us to think of getting up and going off to work. We find it frustrating, painful and meaningless. Solomon was, at this point, having the days of frustration and no longer having those days of anticipation.

Ecclesiastes 2:23 For all of his days are difficult, and his work is frustrating; so that, even at night, his mind won't stop. This is also empty and without substance to him.

Ecclesiastes 2:23b: Work is frustrating, provoking (various commentators)

Matthew Poole: *[For Solomon,]the toils of his body are, or were, accompanied with the vexations of his mind.*⁷¹⁵

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *Much of the work of the world is pursued beyond what is simply necessary for the sustenance and ornament of life. Men try to avoid being left alone with themselves. They contrive to draw off the attention from their own misery. Yet the grief of life remains, and, like a fatal distemper, cleaves to the soul.*⁷¹⁶

⁷¹³ The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:23 (suggestive comments).

⁷¹⁴ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:23.

⁷¹⁵ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:23.

⁷¹⁶ The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:23 (suggestive comments).

Ecclesiastes 2:23b: Work is frustrating, provoking (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *These are the real results of his lifelong efforts. All his days are pains and sorrows, bring trouble with them, and all his labor ends in grief.*⁷¹⁷

Bishop Patrick: *we see many a man, whose life is nothing but a mere drudgery; who never is at leisure to enjoy any thing that he hath, but still engaged in one troublesome employment or other to get more; which he follows so eagerly, as if it were his business to disquiet and vex himself, and make his life uneasy to him! being not content with his daily toils, unless he rack his mind also with cares in the night! This is so void of all reason that nothing can be imagined more vain and foolish.*⁷¹⁸

These afflictions of life: Gen. 47:9; Job 5:7, Job 14:1; Psalm 90:7–10, Psalm 90:15, Psalm 127:2.⁷¹⁹

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 2:23c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
gam (גַּם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i>]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, as well; even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's# none BDB #88
lay ^e lâh (הַלַּיִל) [pronounced <i>LAY-law</i>]	<i>night; that night, this night, the night; possibly, at night, by night, during the night, by night</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3915 BDB #538
lô' (אוּל אוֹל) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
shâkab (שָׁכַב) [pronounced <i>shaw-KAH^{AV}</i>]	<i>to lie down, to lie down [to sleep, to have sexual relations, to die; because of sickness or humiliation], to rest, to sleep; to relax</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #7901 BDB #1011
lêb (לֵב) [pronounced <i>lay^{AV}</i>]	<i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking; midst</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3820 BDB #524

Translation: *Furthermore, his heart does not rest at night.* One of the common issues with a person who is frustrated with his work is, he thinks about it at night and cannot sleep. His mind will not rest.

Solomon was suffering from a very strong case of depression.

⁷¹⁷ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:23.

⁷¹⁸ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:22–23.

⁷¹⁹ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Eccles. 2:23.

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *Sleep is the gift of God, who secures it to the contented mind and clear conscience...There is only one pillow on which the heart can rest—the bosom of the Infinite Father.*

The Preacher's Commentary continues: *The magnetic needle has one position of rest—when it trembles to the pole. In all other positions it is under constraint, and tends to swing itself to rest. So the soul can have no true repose until the affections rest in God.*⁷²⁰

Ecclesiastes 2:23 For all of his days are difficult, and his work is frustrating; so that, even at night, his mind won't stop. This is also empty and without substance to him.

Ecclesiastes 2:23c: The heart does not rest at night (various commentators)

James Burton Coffman: *This is indeed an accurate description of people with great possessions whose lives are oriented to this life alone and who neither believe in God nor try to serve him. The result: sleepless nights, one headache after another, and endless worry and apprehension.*⁷²¹

Dr. John Gill: *[Solomon] cannot sleep quietly and comfortably, his carking cares and anxious thoughts keep him waking; or, if he sleeps, his mind is distressed with dreams and frightful apprehensions of things, so that his sleep is not sweet and refreshing to him.*⁷²²

David Guzik: *If death robs our work of meaning, then life is indeed sorrowful, work is burdensome, and there is no rest or relief from the despair of a meaningless life. Surely, this also is vanity.*⁷²³

Kidner: *The compulsive worker...overloading his days with toil and his nights with worry, has missed the simple joys that God was holding out to him.*⁷²⁴

Matthew Poole: *[Solomon is unable to] rest in the night; either because his mind is distracted, or his sleep broken, with perplexing cares and fears.*⁷²⁵

The Pulpit Commentary: *[Solomon] cannot sleep for thinking over his plans and hopes and disappointments. Not for him is the sweet sleep of the laboring man, who does his day's work, earns his repose, and frets not about the future. On the one hand care, on the other satiety, murder sleep, and make the night torment.*⁷²⁶

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *[Solomon] enjoys no true repose. (Eccles. 2:23.) He has no rest during the progress of his work, nor even when his task is done. The night, which invites repose, is invaded by care and trouble. His wealth can procure luxury; but the heart is unquiet, and sleep is not to be had at any price.*⁷²⁷

Dr. Peter Pett: *He concludes by asking what point there is for a person to wear himself down and exert painful effort, seeking to build up for the future, when the future is so insecure and transient. The very thought of it upsets him. It makes all his exertions vexatious. It makes him unable to sleep at night. It is further evidence of the temporary nature of things, of the meaninglessness of it all.*⁷²⁸

⁷²⁰ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:23 (suggestive comments).

⁷²¹ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 2, 2018.

⁷²² Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:23.

⁷²³ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

⁷²⁴ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:23.

⁷²⁵ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:23.

⁷²⁶ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:23.

⁷²⁷ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:17–23.

⁷²⁸ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:22–23.

Ecclesiastes 2:23c: The heart does not rest at night (various commentators)

Dr. Bob Utley: *Those who possess worldly things worry about them constantly (i.e. day, Eccles. 2:23 a and night, Eccles. 2:23 b; i.e., no rest).*⁷²⁹

Keil and Delitzsch: *Even in the night he has no rest; for even then, though he is not labouring, yet he is inwardly engaged about his labour and his plans.*⁷³⁰

Even after we have had a difficult and frustrating day, sleep is to give us a bit of solace, a time to recharge so that we can tackle those problems tomorrow. But Solomon was not being recharged by his sleep.

Application: One of the fascinating things of life is, all of those hours that you spend tossing and turning, unable to sleep over this or that problem—they are never solved by your lack of sleep. What should the believer do? Rebound and, if you still cannot sleep, get up and listen to accurate teaching from the Word of God.

Difficulties in sleeping; not being refreshed: Eccles. 5:12; Est. 6:1; Job 7:13–14; Psalm 6:6–7, Psalm 32:4, Psalm 77:2–4; Dan. 6:18; Acts 14:22.⁷³¹

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

The NET Bible: *The syntax of this verse has been interpreted in two different ways: (1) The phrase “all his days” (כֹּל־יָמָיו, khol-yamayv) is the subject of a verbless clause, and the noun “pain” (מִבְּאֲכָמ, makh’ovim) is a predicate nominative or a predicate of apposition (see R. J. Williams, Hebrew Syntax, 15-16, §71). Likewise, the noun “his work” (וְיָנֶה, ’inyano) is the subject of a second verbless clause, and the vexation” (כַּעַס, kha’as) is a predicate nominative: “All his days are pain, and his work is vexation.” (2) The noun “his work” (וְיָנֶה) is the subject of both nouns, “pain and vexation” (מִבְּאֲכָמ סַעֲכֹ), makh’ovim vakha’as), which are predicate nominatives, while the phrase “all his days” (כֹּל־יָמָיו) is an adverbial accusative functioning temporally: “All day long, his work is pain and vexation.” The latter option is supported by the parallelism between “even at night” and “all day long.” This verse draws out an ironic contrast/comparison between his physical toil/labor during the day and his emotional anxiety at night. Even at night, he has no break!⁷³²*

Solomon’s great frustration with his life and works: Solomon is frustrated so much that he cannot sleep. He is frustrated because he has worked so hard and his work seems so futile, in the light of him eventually passing away. Who would really appreciate all that he has done? Perhaps the one to inherit his works will be a fool and what would become of all Solomon’s labor then?

Guzik then makes an excellent point: *The Preacher hints at a vital question: why does this [frustration with life, labor and death] bother us so? If this is indeed man’s lot and always has been; if every thought of an eternal meaning to life is a wish and a fantasy, then why does that idea cause discontent in most everyone? Man may wish he could fly like a bird, but there is little sense of meaninglessness in the heart of a man or woman because they cannot fly like a bird. This is because man was not designed to fly like a bird; but he is designed for eternity.*⁷³³

Eccles. 3:11 He [God] has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, He has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. (ESV; capitalized)

⁷²⁹ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:23.

⁷³⁰ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 2:22–23.

⁷³¹ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Eccles. 2:23.

⁷³² From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 20, 2018.

⁷³³ *David Guzik’s Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

This is key—man has eternity in his heart, so he does sorrow over all his work, because it seems for naught. But, we do not get nearly as worked up about not being able to fly or to breathe underwater or to lift up and carry 1000 lbs.

Paul reassures us, in his great chapter on the resurrection. 1Cor. 15:58 **Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.** (ESV)

You can see in Solomon's words how this eternal perspective of life no longer resides in his soul.

Dr. Thomas Constable: *Solomon's perspective was much broader and more altruistic. He was thinking about what long-range changes for good could come out of all human toil.*⁷³⁴

Ecclesiastes 2:23d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
gam (גַּם) [pronounced gahm]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, as well; even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced zeh]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	masculine singular demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260
hebel (הֶבֶל) [pronounced HEH ^B -vel]	<i>vapor, breath; mist, darkness; unsubstantial, emptiness, empty, vanity, meaningless, vacuous; vain, vainly; idol</i>	masculine singular noun; pausal form	Strong's #1892 BDB #210
hūw' (אוּו) [pronounced hoo]	<i>he, it; him, himself as a demonstrative pronoun: that, this (one); same</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> , is implied	Strong's #1931 BDB #214

Translation: This also [is just] a breath [to] him. All of this seems empty to him; meaningless. He is working so hard and there does not seem to be a good end to any of it.

After a life of work and production, one might expect to feel fulfilled, as if he made a difference. Where is a measure of satisfaction and that feeling of accomplishment? But, to Solomon, this is nothing; it is a breath; he has done nothing.

Clarke: *All his days are sorrows; all his labors griefs; all his nights restless; for he has no portion but merely what earth can give; and that is embittered by the labor of acquisition, and the disappointment in the using.*⁷³⁵

The College Press Bible Study: *Some of the magnitude of his despair is sharpened by his question concerning profit. He asks, "For what does a man get in all his labor and in his striving with which he labors under the sun" (Eccles. 2:22)? His answer: He gets nothing! Thus he declares, "I hated all the*

⁷³⁴ Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:18–21.

⁷³⁵ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:23.

fruit of my labor.” In addition he says, “I completely despaired of all the fruit of my labor.” He places a label on the fruit of his labor. It reads: “This too is vanity and a great evil.”⁷³⁶

Ecclesiastes 2:23 For all of his days are difficult, and his work is frustrating; so that, even at night, his mind won't stop. This is also empty and without substance to him.

Solomon is unhappy and his days are difficult. Even though he is frustrated with his work, at night, he cannot sleep. His mind will not allow him to sleep. All life seems so meaningless to him.

Ron Snider's translation of Ecclesiastes 2:22–23 For what does a man get in all his labor and in his striving with which he labors under the sun? Because all his days are painful and his task is vexing; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is vanity.

Ecclesiastes 2:22–23: Vanity in the day and vanity in the night (Ron Snider)

1. Qoheleth asks another rhetorical question, which is designed to underscore what he has just stated in verses 18-21 about the fact that one cannot take anything with them from this world.
2. The force of the question is to reinforce his conclusion that it all is a waste of time since man ends up with nothing for all his hard work.
3. The question anticipates an answer of "nothing"; alternately, it is worse than nothing.
4. When one considers the fact that in the future everything will be lost, left to others and their whims, it leads to the conclusion that there is no use in striving for anything.
5. The language here is slightly different, but corresponds to the original question that was posed in 1:3, coming full circle to sum up the reasoning behind his view that everything is pointless.
6. He uses the noun עָמַל ('amal-labor, toil), which he has used extensively in the first two chapters; the term focuses on the unpleasant aspects of hard work, the labor, the unfulfilling nature of toil under the sun.
7. In this case, he adds another phrase, which adds something to the argument that has not been presented to this point.
8. The New American Standard translates the phrase and in his striving; however, the emphasis is on the longing, striving, or ambition of his heart, which focuses on the mental aspects of labor and toil.
9. We all know that men do what they do in this world based on some inner motivation that inspires them to a particular course of action.
10. For all his mental attitude motivation, mental planning, and overt work, man essentially dies and leaves everything to someone else.
11. The logical conclusion to all these depressing facts is that it is not worth the bother.
12. Qoheleth now introduces the rationale behind his question in verse 22, which is designed to strengthen the fact that a negative response is in order.
13. The phrase all his days is to be understood as an accusative of time and could be translated as during his lifetime.
14. He now makes two points about people and the reality of the physical and mental aspects of work that make it so unpleasant.
15. The sentence characterizes the life of people that work hard during the day, and then moves to describe how those same people often spend their nights.
16. While he has been regularly using the Hebrew word עָמַל ('amal-toil), he now reverts to the term עִנְיָן ('inyan-task, occupation), which he used in 1:13.
17. There he characterized the task of wisdom as being grievous; here, he uses two equally negative words to define the life of the hard worker.
18. The first is מִכְּאֵיב (makh'obh-painful), which can be used of physical pain, but tends to unite the concepts of physical and mental anguish. Ex. 3:7
19. The second term כָּעֵס (ka'as-grievous) encompasses the ideas of vexation, provocation, anger, grief, and sorrow.

⁷³⁶ The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:18–23 (comments).

Ecclesiastes 2:22–23: Vanity in the day and vanity in the night (Ron Snider)

20. While one might expect that the life of a working man would be difficult, unfulfilling, and problematic, one anticipates a time when he can rest and recharge his batteries.
21. However, Qoheleth points out that even during the night, which is also an accusative of time, such is not the case.
22. The literal Hebrew of verse 23 is that his heart will not lie down, which is designed to express the concept of restlessness and possibly anxiety.
23. At times, people can become so frustrated and anxious over the events of the day that they cannot effectively get their minds to stop and rest.
24. So, while man ultimately gets nothing for all his hard work that he can permanently call his own, he does obtain a lot of grief and pressure for his efforts!
25. His conclusion, as it had been for some time, is that this too is vanity; I would suggest that here one could even understand Qoheleth to mean that this is all insanity!
26. In this section, Qoheleth is obviously frustrated about the fact that one expected that hard work should bring some sort of lasting blessing, which is based on typical Hebrew wisdom. Prov. 10:4, 12:24, 13:4, 21:5
27. The hard worker does not find his task easy during the day and does not receive any comfort or ease at night.
28. The daily grind goes on and on; while the worker may prosper in his endeavors (or he may become completely frustrated), he is destined to leave it all to someone else.
29. Essentially, there is no where to go from here logically; either one should stop working altogether, or possibly just end it all and get it over with.
30. While this is written in a general fashion to include all men, it seems evident that this is somewhat autobiographical; Qoheleth knows these realities in his own life.
31. If there is no more to life than Qoheleth has presented throughout this chapter, then life, as he has presented it, is not really worth living.
32. However, as we shall see, there are other factors in life that he has not mentioned or brought to bear.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#); accessed September 2, 2018 (will open as a Word Document on your computer).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

[Chapter Outline](#)

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Does man have only the basic pleasures of life as his reward?

This is the final section of this chapter. What does man have? What is his reward, really?

Pastor John Griffith: [Ecclesiastes] 2:24-26 Solomon gives us here our first incite into DVPT what he's come to learn after all the experiences of life he had pursued seeking satisfaction and happiness. I believe that this is an indication that he is writing from the vantage point of spiritual recovery.⁷³⁷

⁷³⁷ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_08.html accessed September 1, 2018.

The Pulpit Commentary: *From what has been said, Koheleth concludes that man may indeed enjoy the good things which he has provided, and find a certain happiness therein, but only according to God's will and permission; and to expect to win pleasure at one's own caprice is vain.*⁷³⁸

The Doctrine of Providence (Ecclesiastes 2:24–26) (NKJV; a graphic); from [SlideShare](#); accessed September 7, 2018.

I am not quite sure exactly how this is providence. Providence is defined as *divine guidance or care*. And when capitalized, it is often a name for God.

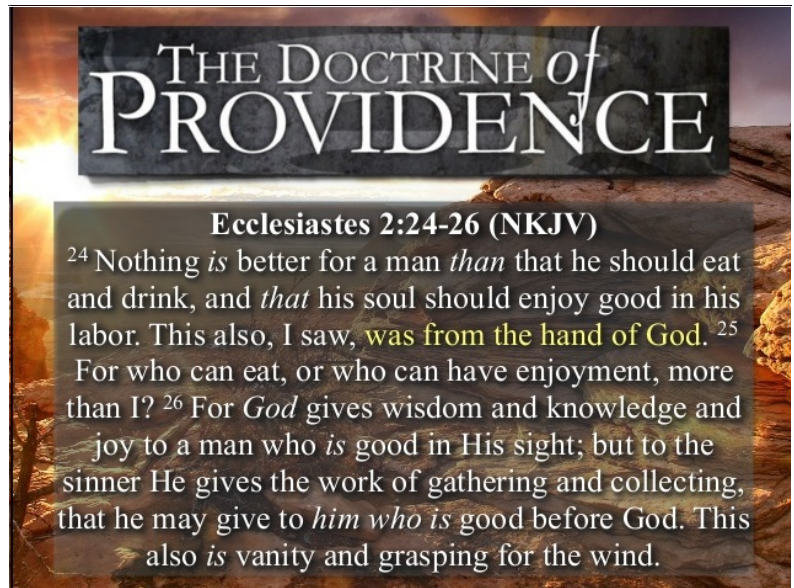
This passage sounds much more like divine provision.

Many translations combine vv. 24 and 25, so I will do the same. There are certainly previous verses that I should have combined.

An Overview of Ecclesiastes 2:24–26 (a graphic); from [SlideShare](#) (slide #9); accessed September 7, 2018.

We have just viewed the text of vv. 24–26; this graphic gives somewhat of a set of bullet points on what we are about to study.

V. 25 is quite difficult. There are a plethora of problems with that verse; so do not be shocked by the variety of translations found below.



Ecclesiastes: 2:24-26

- In verses 24-26 he lays out a solution. “Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I? For God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who is good in His sight; but to the sinner He gives the work of gathering and collecting, that he may give to him who is good before God. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.”
- Notice words like “better” and “satisfaction” and “from the hand of God” and “enjoyment” and “pleases” and “happiness.”
- Why? A new perspective from a vacuum to a life with God.
- He now says that the best thing a man can do is to eat and drink and enjoy his work – no more vanity.
- Here, “eat and drink” are a metaphor for “Everything one does”.
- Implications: Live life and be happy and enjoy the labor of your hands.
- Resulting from “from the hand of God”.

[There is] nothing good in the man who he eats and he has drunk and he has been caused to see his soul good in his labor. Also this I saw—[even] I—for from a hand of Elohim she [is]. For who eats and rushes [to] a street more than me? [alternate reading: *apart from Him*]

Ecclesiastes
2:24–25

[There is] nothing better [in life] for a man who eats and drinks and [that] his soul has been caused to see the good in his labor. This I also observed, that it [was] from the hand of God. For who can eat and enjoy life [possibly, *the outdoors*] apart from Him? [alternate reading: *more than me*]

⁷³⁸ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:24–26 (this is incorrectly noted as vv. 21–26 in e-sword).

In life, is it not good for a man, than to eat and drink, and for his soul to be caused to see the good from his labor. This I also observed as coming from the hand of God. For who can eat and enjoy life apart from God? [alternate reading: *more than me*]

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	[There is] nothing good in the man who he eats and he has drunk and he has been caused to see his soul good in his labor. Also this I saw—[even] I—for from a hand of Elohim she [is]. For who eats and rushes [to] a street more than me? [alternate reading: <i>apart from Him</i>]
Revised Douay-Rheims	Is it not better to eat and drink, and to shew his soul good things of his labours? and this is from the hand of God. Who shall so feast and abound with delights as I?
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	There is nothing comely for a man but that he eat, drink, and make his soul see good <u>before the sons of men, in order to do the commandments, to walk in the straight path before him, so that it may be well with him</u> from his labour; also this I saw, that <u>if a man prospers in this world</u> , it is from the hand of the Lord, <u>who decrees it so for him</u> . For who <u>is occupied with the words of the law, and who is the man that has anxiety about the great day of judgment which is to come</u> , besides me?
Peshitta (Syriac)	There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labor. This also I saw, that it is from the hand of the LORD. For who can eat or who can drink except he?
Updated Brenton (Greek)	A man has nothing really good to eat, and to drink, and to shew his soul as good in his <u>trouble</u> . This also I saw, that it is from the hand of God. For who shall eat, or who shall drink, without him?
Significant differences:	There is additional text in the targum. Some of the targum text is very different from the Hebrew. The Greek has <i>trouble</i> instead of <i>labor(s)</i> .

The final phrase in the Hebrew does not make much sense; we should think that it is related to the previous verse, but the Hebrew does not appear to be. The final sentence in the Syriac and Greek make much more sense than the Hebrew does. This does not mean that they are correct; we may not be able to make any sense of the final line.

The Pulpit Commentary: *The Vulgate makes the sentence interrogative, which the Hebrew does not sanction, Nonne melius est comedere et bibere? Septuagint Ου'κ ε'στιν αγαθον ανθρωπω, ο' φαγεται και ο' π'ιεται, "There is naught good to a man to eat or drink;" St. Jerome and others insert nisi, "except for a man to eat," etc. This and the Authorized Version, which are more or less approved by most critics, make the writer enunciate a kind of modified Epicureanism, quotations in confirmation of which will be found set forth by Plumptre. It is not pretended that the present Hebrew text admits this exposition, and critics have agreed to modify the original in order to express the sense which they give to the passage. As it stands, the sentence runs, "It is not good in (ב) man that he should eat," etc. This is supposed to clash with later statements; e.g. Eccles. 3:12, Eccles. 3:13; Eccles. 8:15; and to condemn all bodily pleasure even in its simplest form. Hence commentators insert ה("than") before שיאכל, supposing that the initial mere has dropped out after the terminal of the preceding word, adam (comp. Eccles. 3:22).*⁷³⁹

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

⁷³⁹ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:24.

Bible in Basic English	There is nothing better for a man than taking meat and drink, and having delight in his work. This again I saw was from the hand of God. Who may take food or have pleasure without him?
Easy English	We should eat and we should drink. And we should enjoy our work. There is nothing better that we can do than those things. I believe that these are gifts from God. Without God's help, nobody can have enough food to eat. And nobody can be happy.
Easy-to-Read Version—2006	There is no one who has tried to enjoy life more than I have. And this is what I learned: The best thing people can do is eat, drink, and enjoy the work they must do. I also saw that this comes from God. Or “ ²⁴ The best people can do is eat, drink, and enjoy their work. I also saw that this comes from God. ²⁵ No one can eat or enjoy life without God.”
Good News Bible (TEV)	The best thing we can do is eat and drink and enjoy what we have earned. And yet, I realized that even this comes from God. How else could you have anything to eat or enjoy yourself at all?
<i>The Message</i>	The best you can do with your life is have a good time and get by the best you can. The way I see it, that's it—divine fate. Whether we feast or fast, it's up to God.
Names of God Bible	With God Even the Simplest Things Have a Point There is nothing better for people to do than to eat, drink, and find satisfaction in their work. I saw that even this comes from the hand of <i>Elohim</i> . Who can eat or enjoy themselves without <i>Elohim</i> ?
NIRV	A person can't do anything better than eat, drink and be satisfied with their work. I'm finally seeing that those things also come from the hand of God. Without his help, who can eat or find pleasure?
New Simplified Bible	There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink, and delight in his work. This also I saw was from the hand of God. After all, who eats and who drinks better than I?

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	Man is not able of himself to find satisfaction in his work or in his pleasure such as eating and drinking. However, if a man finds a temporary satisfaction in his labor or his pleasure, he must recognize that it is entirely from the hand of God. For who can eat and who can find enjoyment apart from God?
Contemporary English V.	The best thing we can do is to enjoy eating, drinking, and working. I believe these are God's gifts to us, and no one enjoys eating and living more than I do.
The Living Bible	So I decided that there was nothing better for a man to do than to enjoy his food and drink and his job. Then I realized that even this pleasure is from the hand of God. For who can eat or enjoy apart from him?
New Berkeley Version	There is nothing better for a man ⁱ than to eat and to drink and to let his soul get enjoyment from his work. This, too, I saw, came from the hand of God. For who can eat with enjoyment apart from Him?
New Century Version	ⁱ Almost invariable the word “man” may well be “person,” for it designates the human being. The best that people can do is eat, drink, and enjoy their work. I saw that even this comes from God, because no one can eat or enjoy life without him.
New Life Version	There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and find joy in his work. I have seen that this also is from the hand of God. For who can eat and who can find joy without Him?
New Living Translation	So I decided there is nothing better than to enjoy food and drink and to find satisfaction in work. Then I realized that these pleasures are from the hand of God. For who can eat or enjoy anything apart from him [As in Greek and Syriac versions; Hebrew reads <i>apart from me?</i>]?

Unlocked Dynamic Bible So I decided that the best thing that we can do is to enjoy what we eat and drink, and also to enjoy our work. And I realized that those things are what God intends for us. There is absolutely no one who is able to enjoy those things if God does not give those things to him.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible Nothing worthwhile comes to a man
But eating, drinking, and searching for good...
These things come from God's hand;
For without Him, who's able to eat or to drink?

Beck's American Translation There is nothing better among men than eating, drinking, and finding satisfaction in your work. I also saw that this comes from God's hand. Without God, who can eat and enjoy himself?

Common English Bible There's nothing better for human beings than to eat, drink, and experience pleasure in their hard work. I also saw that this is from God's hand— Who can eat and find enjoyment otherwise?

International Standard V **The Central Point of Life**
The only worthwhile thing for a human being is to eat, drink, and enjoy life's goodness that he finds in what he accomplishes. This, I observed, is also from the hand of God himself, for who can eat or enjoy life apart from him?

New Advent (Knox) Bible Were it not better to eat and drink, and toil only at his own pleasures? These, too, come from God's hand; and who has better right to food tasted and pleasure enjoyed than I?

Translation for Translators *So I decided that the best thing that we can do is to enjoy what we eat and drink, and also enjoy our work. And I realized that those things are what God intends for us. There is absolutely no one [RHQ] who is able to enjoy those things if God does not give those things to him.*

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Alpha & Omega Bible A MAN HAS NOTHING REALLY GOOD TO EAT, AND TO DRINK, AND TO SHOW HIS SOUL AS GOOD IN HIS TROUBLE. THIS ALSO I SAW, THAT IT IS FROM THE HAND OF THEOS (*The Alpha & Omega*). FOR WHO SHALL EAT, OR WHO SHALL DRINK, WITHOUT HIM?

Awful Scroll Bible It is agreeable for he of mankind, to keep to eat even is he to have drank, that his breath is caused to have perceived that good from his labors. This I am to have perceived is the Hand of He of mighty ones - for maintains there he to eat, either sustains there he to hasten abroad? -

Conservapedia Translation There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should find spiritual satisfaction in his works. I also saw that this was God's will. Who can eat, or provide more for himself than I can?

Ferrar-Fenton Bible There is no benefit to a man to eat and drink and let his mini expect pleasure from his labour. Yet I myself saw that this comes from the hand of God Himself. For who could eat, and who excite himself more than I ?

God's Truth (Tyndale) Is it not better then for a man to eat and drink, and his soul to be merry in his labor? Yes I saw that this also was a gift of God: For who may eat, drink, or bring anything to pass without him?

Jubilee Bible 2000 *There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. I also have seen that this is from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who can care for himself better than I?*

Lexham English Bible There is nothing better for a person than to eat and drink and find delight in his toil. For I also realized that this is from the hand of God! For who can eat *and drink*, and who can enjoy *life* apart from him?

Unlocked Literal Bible	There is nothing better for anyone than to simply eat and drink and be satisfied with what is good in his work. I saw that this truth comes from God's hand. For who can eat or who can have any kind of pleasure apart from God?
Urim-Thummim Version	There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his life to enjoy good in his labor. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of Elohim. Because who can eat, or who is more eager than I am?
Wikipedia Bible Project	There is no good in the man that eats and drinks, and sees his soul well in his labor. This too, I saw, that from the hand of God it comes. Because who will eat and who will feel, except for me?

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)	There is nothing better for man to do than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. I understood that this too comes from the hand of God. For without him who can eat or find enjoyment?
The Heritage Bible	There is nothing better for a man: he should eat and drink, and he should cause his soul to go out after good in his wearisome toil. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God, Because who can eat, or who can hurry, more than I?
New American Bible (2002)	There is nothing better for man than to eat and drink and provide himself with good things by his labors. Even this, I realized, is from the hand of God. For who can eat or drink apart from him? Unrestrained indulgence is not advocated here, but legitimate pleasure and the cheerfulness it begets.
New American Bible (2011)	There is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink and provide themselves with good things from their toil. Even this, I saw, is from the hand of God. Eccl. 3:12–13, 22; 5:17–19; 8:15. For who can eat or drink apart from God? * [2:24–26] The author is not advocating unrestrained indulgence. Rather he counsels acceptance of the good things God chooses to give. This is the first of seven similar conclusions that Qoheleth provides; see 3:12–13, 22; 5:17–18; 8:15; 9:7–9; 11:9.
New English Bible–1970	There is nothing better for a man to do than to eat and drink and enjoy himself in return for his labours. And yet I saw that this comes from the hand of God. for without him who can enjoy his food, or who can be anxious?
New Jerusalem Bible	There is no happiness except in eating and drinking, and in enjoying one's achievements; and I see that this too comes from God's hand; for who would get anything to eat or drink, unless all this came from him?
New RSV	There is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in their toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God; for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?
Revised English Bible–1989	To eat and drink and experience pleasure in return for his labours, this does not come from any good in a person: it comes from God. For without God who can eat with enjoyment?

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	So there is nothing better for a man to do than eat, drink and and let himself enjoy the good that results from his work. I also realized that this is from God's hand. For who will eat and who will enjoy except me?
The Complete Tanach	Is it not good for a man that he eat and drink and show himself enjoyment in his toil? This too have I seen that it is from the hand of God.

Is it not good for a man: This is a question. [Is it not good for a man] that he eat and drink and show himself enjoyment? That is, let him pay heed to performing justice and righteousness with the eating and the drinking, and so it was said to Jehoiakim (Jer. 22:15): "Your father-did he not eat and drink and perform justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him."

For who will eat and who will hasten [to swallow it] except me?

For who will eat, etc.: Why shall I not rejoice with my portion in eating and drinking? Who is fit to eat what I toiled for, and who will hasten to swallow it, except me?

except me: lit. outside of me. This is the trait of the wicked, who gather for others [i.e., they gather wealth that will ultimately go to others.

exeGesés companion Bible	Naught is better for a human, than to eat and drink and to delight his soul - to see good in his toil. This also I saw, that this is from the hand of Elohim. For who eats, or who else hastens more than I?
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	There is nothing worthwhile for a man but to eat and drink and afford himself enjoyment with his means. And even that, I noted, comes from God. For who eats and who enjoys but myself?
Orthodox Jewish Bible	There is nothing better for adam, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his nefesh find satisfaction in his amal. Also this I saw; even this was from the Yad HaElohim. For who can eat, or who can find enjoyment without Hashem?

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible	·The best that people can do is [L There is nothing better for people than to] eat, drink, and enjoy their ·work [toil]. I saw that even this comes from God, because ·no one [L who...?] can eat or ·enjoy life [or worry] without him.
Pastor John Griffith	There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God. Corrected TXLN: There is not good (tobh - no comparative = inherent good) in man (adham - natural) that he should be able to eat or drink and get satisfaction from his labor. Even this, I have seen is from the hand of God (His provision). There is quit a difference, instead of citing a hedonistic, materialistic philosophy of life which would effectively cut God out of the picture of one's life, he is saying that even the simple mundane routine things of life like eating and drinking are gifts from the gracious hand of God. [Ecclesiastes] 2:25 Asks a rhetorical question: For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him? - If one is to find true happiness and enjoyment in life they must develop a relationship with the living God who is the only source of this enjoyment
Kretzmann's Commentary	There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labor , cheerfully making use of all the blessings which God bestows on His children and accepting them with a grateful heart. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God , namely, the feeling of quiet and appreciative contentment in the midst of all the wearing vicissitudes of life. For who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto , to the enjoyment of God's gifts, more than I? Christians may profit by the sad experiment which Solomon made without paying the high price which the Jewish king had to pay for the wisdom so gained.
NET Bible®	<i>Enjoy Work and its Benefits</i> There is nothing better for people ¹⁰⁶ than ¹⁰⁷ to eat and drink, and to find enjoyment ¹⁰⁸ in their ¹⁰⁹ work. I also perceived that this ability to find enjoyment ¹¹⁰ comes from God. ¹¹¹ For no one ¹¹² can eat and drink ¹¹³ or experience joy apart from him.

^{106tn} Heb “man.”

^{108tn} Heb “to cause his soul to see good.”

^{109tn} Heb “his.”

^{110tn} The phrase “ability to find enjoyment” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

^{111tn} Heb “is from the hand of God.”

^{111sn} The phrase “from the hand of God” is an anthropomorphism (depicting God, who is an invisible spirit, in the form of man with hands) or anthropopatheia (depicting God performing human-like actions). The “hand of God” is a figure often used to portray God’s sovereign providence and benevolence (see E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 878). The phrase “the hand of God” is often used to connote the favor or grace of God (2 Chr 30:12; Ezra 7:9; 8:18; Neh 2:8, 18; see BDB 390 s.v. יָד 1.e.2).

^{112tn} Heb “For who can...?” The rhetorical question is an example of negative affirmation, expecting a negative answer: “No one can!” (see E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 949-51).

^{113tn} The phrase “and drink” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for stylistic harmonization with v. 24.

The Voice

There is nothing better than for people to eat and drink and to see the good in their hard work. These *beautiful gifts*, I realized, too, come from God’s hand. For who can eat *and drink* and enjoy *the good things* if not me?

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

C. Thompson (updated) OT	(a) Hath not a man something good which he can eat and drink and which he can point out to his soul as a good by his labour? (b) With respect to that I saw indeed that even this is from the hand of God; for who can eat or who can drink without him? I don’t know if (a) is a footnote or not.
Darby Translation	There is nothing good for man, but that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who be eager, more than I?
<i>Emphasized Bible</i>	There was nothing more blessed for Man than that he should eat and drink, and see his desireth for blessedness in his toil,—even this, saw, I myself, that, from the hand of God, it was. For who could eat and who could enjoy, so well as I?
Keil and Delitzsch	There is nothing better among men, than that one eat and drink, and that he should pamper his soul by his labour: this also have I seen, that it is in the hand of God. For who can eat, and who can have enjoyment, without [= except from Him?]
Modern Literal Version	There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink and make his soul enjoy good in his labor. This also I saw, that it is from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, without him?
New American Standard B.	There is nothing better for a man <i>than</i> to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good [Lit <i>cause his soul to see good in his labor</i>]. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God. For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him [So Gr; Heb <i>me</i>]?
New King James Version	Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I [So with MT, Tg., Vg.; some Heb. mss., LXX, Syr. <i>without Him</i>]?
John Trapp	[There is] nothing better for a man, [than] that he should eat and drink, and [that] he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it [was] from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who else can hasten [hereunto], more than I?

A Voice in the Wilderness Is it not good for a man to eat and drink and make his soul behold the good in his labor. This also, I saw, that it was from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who can enjoy, apart from Me?

Young's Updated LT There is nothing good in a man who eats, and has drunk, and has shown his soul good in his labour. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God. For who eats and who hastens out more than I?

The gist of this passage: Solomon concludes that simple eating, drinking and enjoying one's labor is all that we should expect from life. Isn't that from the hand of God?

vv. 24-25

Ecclesiastes 2:24a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
'êyn (אין) [pronounced ān]	<i>nothing, not, [is] not; not present, not ready; expresses non-existence, absence or non-possession; [there is] no [none, not one, no one, not]</i>	particle of negation; substantive of negation	Strong's #369 BDB #34
ʔôwb (טוב) [pronounced toh ^b v]	<i>pleasant, pleasing, agreeable, good, better; approved</i>	masculine singular adjective which can act like a substantive	Strong's #2896 BDB #373
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's# none BDB #88
'ādām (אָדָם) [pronounced aw-DAWM]	<i>a man, a human being, mankind; transliterated Adam</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #120 & #121 BDB #9

The word *the Adam* can mean *man, mankind, humankind, men, human beings*.

The NET Bible:: The preposition ב (bet) on אָדָם (ba'adam) has been taken in two ways: (1) locative with טוב ("good") in reference to man's moral nature: "There is nothing [inherently] good in man." (2) advantage with טוב ("good") in reference to the enjoyment theme of 2:24-26: "There is nothing better for a man than..." (this assumes a comparative מן, min, on מִשְׂעוּבָה, misheyyo'khal); see text critical note on the word "than" below). The latter is preferred for two reasons: (1) The preposition ב is used with a similar idiom in 3:12 in collocation with the particle phrase כִּי...יִמ (ki...im, "except"): "There is nothing better...than to rejoice/be happy" (NASB, NIV). (2) The theme of 2:1-26 focuses on the futility of human toil, concluding that the only real reward that man has in his labor is to find enjoyment in it (e.g., 2:10, 24-26). The section says nothing about man's inherent sinful nature.⁷⁴⁰

she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced sheh] or shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced shehl]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
'âkal (אָכַל) [pronounced aw-KAHL]	<i>to eat; to dine; to devour, to consume, to destroy</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #398 BDB #37

⁷⁴⁰ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 20, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:24a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
shâthâh (שָׁתָּה) [pronounced shaw-THAW]	to drink [actually or metaphorically]; to drink together [at a banquet]; to feast; to sit	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #8354 BDB #1059

Translation: [There is] nothing better [in life] for a man who eats and drinks... Could there be a double meaning here? On the one hand, there is the man who is dissatisfied with life, and he thinks, *is there nothing better for me than to eat and drink?*

On the other hand, there is the man who is satisfied with his life, and he enjoys the very simple pleasure of eating his meals and having a drink. Perhaps Solomon is saying, *this is all there is; no more, no less*. Perhaps this is not a great revelation, but more or a resignation to life.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: [Perhaps this] means, "*It is not good that a man should feast himself, and falsely make as though his soul were happy*"; he thus refers to a false pretending of happiness acquired by and for one's self; in Eccles. 3:12, Eccles. 3:22; Eccles. 5:18, Eccles. 5:19, to real seeing, or finding pleasure when God gives it. There it is said to be good for a man to enjoy with satisfaction and thankfulness the blessings which God gives.⁷⁴²

The idea appears to be, life is a day-by-day affair. We enjoy our meals, we enjoy our drinks; and, this implication is, *why should we look for anything more?*

Let me add to this that, Solomon is not speaking about being gluttonous or being a drunk. The pleasure in eating and drinking is *not* over-eating nor is it imbibing to the point of drunkenness.

Ecclesiastes 2:24–25 *In life, is it not good for a man, than to eat and drink, and for his soul to be caused to see the good from his labor. This I also observed as coming from the hand of God. For who can eat and enjoy life apart from God? [alternate reading: more than me]*

Ecclesiastes 2:24a: There is nothing better than to eat and drink (commentators)

Trapp writes: *This may seem to savor of epicurism, as may also some following passages of this book. For which cause some of the old Jew doctors were once in a mind to hide this whole book out of the way, and not suffer the common sort to see it any more.*⁷⁴³

⁷⁴¹ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 20, 2018.

⁷⁴² Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:24.

⁷⁴³ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

Ecclesiastes 2:24a: There is nothing better than to eat and drink (commentators)

James Burton Coffman: *Scholars dispute the obvious meaning here; but what appears is that basic enjoyment comes to the man who works for a living and is blessed of God to enjoy his food and drink. The king with all of his wealth here seems to sense the fact that it has brought him no more, actually, than that which comes from the working man's livelihood.*⁷⁴⁴

David Guzik: *Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink: This thought is prominent in Ecclesiastes, being repeated some five times. It seems that the Preacher advised us how to make the best of a bad situation. If life really is as despairing and meaningless as he has shown it to be, then we should simply accept that true meaning is impossible to find, and simply find contentment in moderate and responsible pleasures.*

Guzik continues: *This thinking is prominent in our day. Few people live for true, eternal meaning in their life; so they live with under the sun rules. They try to work hard, enjoy life, have fun, be nice, don't get caught doing wrong, and try not to hurt anybody. This thinking may work in making a bad situation better; but it gives no true meaning to life in light of eternity.*⁷⁴⁵

Dr. John Gill: *There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink,.... Not in an immoderate and voluptuous manner, like the epicure and the atheist, that disbelieve a future state and the resurrection of the dead, and give up themselves to all sinful and sensual gratifications; but in a moderate way, enjoying in a cheerful and comfortable manner the good creatures of God, which he has given; being contented with them, thankful for them, and looking upon them as the blessings of divine goodness.*⁷⁴⁶

The Pulpit Commentary: *[W]hat is stated is that it does not depend on man, it is not in his power, he is not at liberty to eat and drink and enjoy himself simply at his own will; his power and ability proceed wholly from God. A higher authority than his decides the matter. The phrase, "to eat and drink," is merely a periphrasis for living in comfort, peace, and affluence... So in our passage we find only the humiliating truth that man in himself is powerless to make his life happy or his labors successful. There is no Epicurean-ism, even in a modified form, in the Hebrew text as it has come down to us.*⁷⁴⁷

Ray C. Stedman may have the most correct view of this passage:

Ray C. Stedman has unique take on this: *There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. (Eccles. 2:24a RSV) Unfortunately here is another instance where we have lost the true meaning of the verse by a bad translation. In the next chapter there is a similar passage that properly includes the words, "there is nothing better than," but that is not what it says here. Delete from the text the words, "better than," because they are not in the Hebrew and they do not belong here. What this text actually says is: **There is nothing in man that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil.***

Stedman continues: *There is nothing in man, there is no inherent value in him that makes it possible for him to extract true enjoyment from the things he does.*

Stedman then ties this in with what follows: *What does, then? He tells us: **This also, I saw, is from the hand of God; for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?** (Eccles. 2:24b–25 RSV).*

Stedman concludes: *That is his second declaration, and that is the true message of this book. Enjoyment is a gift of God. There is nothing in possessions, in material goods, in money, there is nothing in man himself that can enable him to keep enjoying the things he does. But it is possible to have enjoyment all your life if you take it from the hand of God.*⁷⁴⁸

⁷⁴⁴ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 2, 2018.

⁷⁴⁵ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

⁷⁴⁶ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:24.

⁷⁴⁷ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:24.

⁷⁴⁸ From www.raystedman.org/ accessed July 27, 2018. Copyright © 2010 by Ray Stedman Ministries.

Ecclesiastes 2:24a: There is nothing better than to eat and drink (commentators)

Hard Sayings of the Bible: *The Preacher's point is not one of despair— "There is nothing left for us to do than the basic physical acts of feeding one's face and trying to get in as many kicks out of life as we can." Rather, his point is that whatever good or value is to be found, its worth cannot be determined merely by being part of the human race.*

Hard Sayings continues: *We mortals must realize that if we are to achieve satisfaction and pleasure from anything in life, even things as base and mundane as eating and drinking, we must realize that it all comes from the hand of God. The source of pleasure, joy and goodness does not reside in the human person, as humanism or idealism would want us to believe.*⁷⁴⁹

John Trapp: *This may seem to savour of epicurism, as may also some following passages of this book. For which cause some of the old Jewish doctors were once in a mind to hide this whole book out of the way, and not allow the common sort to see it any more.*

Trapp continues: *[Solomon will later clearly state that] the happiness of a man stands in fearing God and keeping his commandments; {Eccles. 12:13–14} all which is point blank against atheism and epicurism.*⁷⁵⁰ In other words, Solomon will get to a godly conclusion, but it will take some time for him to get there.

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Ecclesiastes 2:24 In life, is it not good for a man, than to eat and drink, and for his soul to be caused to see the good from his labor. This I also observed as coming from the hand of God.

Is Solomon commending hedonism here? (When Critics Ask)

PROBLEM: Solomon concluded, "There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor." But this is hedonism, which is condemned elsewhere in the Bible (Luke 12:19–20 ; 1 Cor. 10:7).

SOLUTION: Solomon is not recommending pleasure-seeking hedonism apart from God. There is a big difference between the hedonist's "Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die" and Solomon's exhortation to enjoy life because it comes "from the hand of God" (Ecc. 2:24). The kind of pleasures Solomon commended is that "which God gives him under the sun" (Ecc. 8:15), and that "is the gift of God" (Ecc. 3:13).

From http://crusadefortruth.com/links/PDFS/When_Critics_Ask.pdf (Ecclesiastes 2:24); accessed September 9, 2018.

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Bear in mind that eat and drinking are normal and legitimate activities necessary to maintain a person's life. These can also be enjoyable activities; but they cannot be the focus of your life.

Ecclesiastes 2:24b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or וי) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

⁷⁴⁹ *Hard Sayings of the Bible*; Walter Kaiser Jr., Peter Davids, F.F. Bruce, Manfred Brauch; InterVarsity Press; ©1996; p. 293 (slightly edited).

⁷⁵⁰ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 2:24.

Ecclesiastes 2:24b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
râ'âh (רָאָה) [pronounced raw-AWH]	<i>to cause to see, to cause to look; to show; to cause to see [with pleasure]; to cause to know, to cause to learn; to cause to experience [evil or good]</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect	Strong's #7200 BDB #906
'êth (אֵת) [pronounced ayth]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
nephesh (נֶפֶשׁ) [pronounced NEH-fesh]	<i>soul, life, living being; breath; mind; desire, volition; will</i>	feminine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5315 BDB #659
ʔôwb (בּוֹט) [pronounced toh ^b v]	<i>pleasant, pleasing, agreeable, good, better; approved</i>	masculine singular adjective which can act like a substantive	Strong's #2896 BDB #373
<p>The NET Bible: <i>The idiom בּוֹט הָאֵר (ra'ah tov, "to see good") is a metonymy of association, meaning "to find enjoyment" (e.g., 3:13; 5:17; 6:6). In 3:12-13 and 5:17-18 it is in collocation and/or parallelism with בֵּט (bet) + חֲשֵׁךְ (samakh, "to rejoice in," or "to find satisfaction or pleasure in" something). Here, it is used in collocation with נִוֵּשׁ (khush, "to enjoy"). The term נֶפֶשׁ (nafsho, "his soul") is a metonymy of part (i.e., soul) for the whole (i.e., whole person), e.g., Num 23:10; Judg 16:30; Pss 16:10; 35:13; 103:1 (see E. W. Bullinger, Figures of Speech, 640-41).⁷⁵¹</i></p>			
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's# none BDB #88
'âmâl (אֲמָל) [pronounced gaw-MAWL]	<i>intense labor, exhausting toil, exhaustion, miserable work, work and toil so tiring, you just want to cry; misery, travail; production from labor</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5999 BDB #765

Translation: ...and [that] his soul has been caused to see the good in his labor. Perhaps this phrase is somewhat the key—if the man is persuaded in his soul, then he can see the good in his labor.

A man's labor is an integral part of his day-to-day life; and we ought to enjoy that as best we can. For much of my life, I have enjoyed my work. I don't work nearly the hours that I used to (I am 67); but I still, for the most part, enjoy the work. This has not been the case for my entire life, but certainly for the greater portion of it.

My father, on the other hand, did not like his work for most of his life. It was hard, back-breaking work with very long hours and very little appreciation. However, at some point, he stopped doing that and became a handyman, working for himself, and he greatly enjoyed doing that.

This is very interesting phrasing. Ecclesiastes 2:24b ...and that he should make his soul see good in his labor. (HRB) This is an interesting way to put it. Solomon's soul—his perception of life—does not automatically see the good in his labor. He has to make himself see that good. Now and again, us in our busy lives, we have to look

⁷⁵¹ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 20, 2018.

at the work that we do and think about, *am I doing something that is worthwhile?* As a teacher, I believed that I was; but I can also see, in retrospect, just how fleeting that work could be.

Solomon's building projects were marvelous and important; but Pharaoh Shishak would come into Israel, not too far into the future, and undo much of what Solomon has done. He would take as plunder many of the riches found in the Temple of God. So, despite Solomon's great building projects, they would not all last but a few years into the reign of Rehoboam (2Chron. 12).

Application: We have a place in this life for 70 or even 100 years. What will be your legacy? Will you leave behind anything of note or importance? Solomon's writings—we still study them today. Solomon's great building projects—they are long gone, destroyed and decayed by history and antagonistic nations.

Application: If you are a believer in Jesus Christ (and it seems only likely that you are; otherwise, why even read this exposition on Eccles. 2?), you are in Satan's crosshairs and all that you have done in this life—Satan will go after that as well.

Ecclesiastes 2:24–25 *In life, is it not good for a man, than to eat and drink, and for his soul to be caused to see the good from his labor. This I also observed as coming from the hand of God. For who can eat and enjoy life apart from God? [alternate reading: more than me]*

Ecclesiastes 2:24b: Taking joy in one's toil (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *And that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labor; i.e. taste the enjoyment of his labor, get pleasure as the reward of all his exertions, or find it in the actual pursuit.*⁷⁵²

Matthew Henry: *These things will not make a happiness for the soul; all the good we can have out of them is for the body, and if we make use of them for the comfortable support of that, so that it may be fit to serve the soul and able to keep pace with it in the service of God, then they turn to a good account. There is therefore nothing better for a man, as to these things, than to allow himself a sober cheerful use of them, according as his rank and condition are, to have meat and drink out of them for himself, his family, his friends, and so delight his senses and make his soul enjoy good, all the good that is to be had out of them; do not lose that, in pursuit of that good which is not to be had out of them.*⁷⁵³

John W. Ritenbaugh: *Undoubtedly, earning a living is important to life. However, we can easily drift into over-emphasizing the day-to-day, wage-earning job above Christian responsibilities. At the same time, the Kingdom of God can easily suffer from the "out of sight, out of mind" syndrome. To guard against this happening, we must consciously put God's Word and work as our highest priorities. This is not to say that Christian works should be given the greater time but that we must have a higher regard for them. We must consider it an absolute necessity not to neglect them.*⁷⁵⁴

Joy is a part of the fruit of the Spirit. Gal. 5:22

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Ecclesiastes 2:24–25 *In life, is it not good for a man, than to eat and drink, and for his soul to be caused to see the good from his labor. This I also observed as coming from the hand of God. For who can eat and enjoy life apart from God? [alternate reading: more than me]*

Three Significant Things about Work (John W. Ritenbaugh)

1) God gives no indication to man that he is entitled to something for nothing.

⁷⁵² *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:24.

⁷⁵³ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:17–24.

⁷⁵⁴ From [Bible Tools.org](http://BibleTools.org); accessed September 3, 2018.

Three Significant Things about Work (John W. Ritenbaugh)

- 2) The command to work preceded Adam and Eve's sin, so we must understand that work is not a penalty for sin. Genesis 3:17-19, God's pronouncement of Adam's curse, makes this point plain: Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return." The curses for their sin definitely made work more difficult, but the responsibility to work continued otherwise unchanged.
- 3) Therefore, Ecclesiastes 2:24 highlights God's original command regarding work: "There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God." Thus, work is a blessing, a valuable gift from God.

Later, Ritenbaugh adds this: Apart from angels, we are the only created beings who can labor like this. We can work using creativity, objectivity, and purpose, but no animal can. We need to give thanks for such ability because it places mankind in a category that no animal can ever enter. We are still less than God but so far above animals that there is no adequate comparison.

From [Bible Tools.org](http://BibleTools.org); accessed September 3, 2018.

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What seems to be the key to life is, simple meals, a drink now and again, and your job.

Ecclesiastes 2:24–25 [In life, is it not good for a man, than to eat and drink, and for his soul to be caused to see the good from his labor. This I also observed as coming from the hand of God. For who can eat and enjoy life apart from God? \[alternate reading: *more than me*\]](#)

Ecclesiastes 2:24a-b: Summing up what is good in life (various commentators)

Perhaps all Solomon is saying is, *aren't these simple pleasures—eating, drinking and one's labor—the most basic pleasures of life, coming surely from the hand of God?*

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink] Not in the Epicurean sense, worshipping the triad of sensual life—eat, drink, and be merry; but in the sense of a rational and righteous enjoyment. In his labour. Thus it was not the luxurious enjoyment of the idle.*

The Preacher's Commentary then continues: *There must be some lawful means of enjoying the world's good. The Creator, in His works, has provided both for ornament and delight. We must not be as sulky children, refusing to enjoy ourselves when He invites us. To condemn all that the world offers to cheer the spirit of man, without showing how it may be properly enjoyed, or substituting some other pleasures, would either drive the soul to despair, or plunge it more deeply into unlawful pleasures. The state of our souls determines what is good or bad in pleasure. We project our nature upon the external world. "To the pure, all things are pure." How are we to enjoy the blessings of this life?*⁷⁵⁵

The College Press Bible Study: *This conclusion is clearly stated: "Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward" (Eccles. 5:18).*⁷⁵⁶

⁷⁵⁵ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:24–26.

⁷⁵⁶ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:24–26 (comment).

Ecclesiastes 2:24a-b: Summing up what is good in life (various commentators)

Benson writes: *That, studying first to free his mind from overmuch care and anxiety, he should, instead of heaping up perpetually for his heirs, allow himself a moderate and decent use of all the good things that he hath gotten by his honest labours; praising God for them, and cheerfully communicating them with his friends and neighbours, and to the relief of the necessitous poor and afflicted.*⁷⁵⁷ Obviously, he has added a little bit to what Solomon had originally written.

The Cambridge Bible: *The pursuit of riches, state, luxury, is abandoned for the simple joys that lie within every man's reach, the...[life] of one who has learnt the lesson of regulating his desires. The words "to eat and drink" are closely connected with "enjoying good in his labour." What is praised is not the life of slothful self-indulgence or æsthetic refinement, but that of a man who, though with higher culture, is content to live as simply as the ploughman, or the vinedresser, or artificer.*

The Cambridge Bible continues: *[T]he Epicurean rule of wisdom [is this:] Pleasure was not found in feasts and sensual excess but in sobriety of mind, and the conquest of prejudice and superstition... The real wants of such a life are few, and there is a joy in working for them. Here again the thought finds multiform echoes in the utterances of men who have found the cares and pleasures and pursuits of a more ambitious life unsatisfying.*

Then The Cambridge Bible adds: *[T]he lower Epicureans...said "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (1Cor. 15:32).*⁷⁵⁸

Kidner: *[I]n themselves, and rightly used, the basic things of life are sweet and good. Food, drink and work are samples of them, and Qoheleth will remind us of others [cf. Eccles. 9:7-10; Eccles. 11:7-10]. What spoils them is our hunger to get out of them more than they can give; a symptom of the longing which differentiates us from the beasts, but whose misdirection is the underlying theme of this book.*⁷⁵⁹

Or is Solomon complaining here, rather than giving the conclusion that he has come to. *Is this it? Is this all there is to life? Eating and drinking and our jobs?*

Solomon returns to eating and drinking and labor as being somehow related to our happiness. Eccles. 3:12–13 Eccles. 3:22 Eccles. 5:18 Eccles. 8:15 Eccles. 9:7–9.⁷⁶⁰

Rom. 14:17–18 **For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.**

1Cor. 1:30 **And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.**

Col. 3:16–17 **Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (ESV; capitalized) See also James 3:17**

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From time to time, it appears to me that Solomon is almost thinking out loud. He is considering this option then that, and presenting it, to see how it sounds when he says it.

⁷⁵⁷ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:24.

⁷⁵⁸ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:24 (slightly edited).

⁷⁵⁹ Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:24–26.

⁷⁶⁰ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Eccles. 2:24.

Ecclesiastes 2:24c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
gam (גַּם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i>]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, as well; even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced <i>zeh</i>]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	masculine singular demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260
râ'âh (רָאָה) [pronounced <i>raw-AWH</i>]	<i>to see, to look, to look at, to view, to behold; to observe; to perceive, to understand, to learn, to know</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #7200 BDB #906
'ânîy (אֲנִי) [pronounced <i>aw-NEE</i>]	<i>I, me; in answer to a question, it means I am, it is I</i>	1 st person singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #589 BDB #58
These words are found together back in v. 13.			
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i>]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>mihn</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
yâd (יָד) [pronounced <i>yawd</i>]	<i>hand; figuratively for strength, power, control; responsibility</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #3027 BDB #388
'Ēlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i>]	<i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #430 BDB #43
hîy' (הִיא) [pronounced <i>hee</i>]	<i>she, it; also used as a demonstrative pronoun: that, this (one)</i>	3 rd person feminine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>is</i> , <i>is</i> implied	Strong's #1931 BDB #214

Translation: This I also observed, that it [was] from the hand of God. These simple acts of eating, drinking and feeling some personal satisfaction from the work you have done. Is this not from the hand of God?

Solomon is not speaking of a close, interactive relationship with God; but he seems to see this more as a deist. A deist believes that God set everything in motion and then wandered off to do something else. There was a time when school textbooks falsely taught that the founding fathers of the United States were mostly deists (they were not; most of them were evangelical Christians).

Ecclesiastes 2:24–25 In life, is it not good for a man, than to eat and drink, and for his soul to be caused to see the good from his labor. This I also observed as coming from the hand of God. For who can eat and enjoy life apart from God? [alternate reading: *more than me*]

Ecclesiastes 2:24c: Taking blessing from the hand of God (various commentators)

The College Press Bible Study: *This is the first time in Solomon's book that he reaches above the "sun" and speaks of God. As previously noted, however, it is not in the sense of a warm, covenant relationship. Rather, he speaks of God as the Creator who is in complete control of His universe. God's laws govern our world.*⁷⁶¹

Later, The College Press Bible Study writes: *The fact that the good man recognizes that his enjoyment is from "the hand of God," should not be interpreted in the context that God has given him a detailed rule book by which he works and lives to increase his joy. Rather, it is simply that the good man realizes that food and drink are gifts, which he acknowledges to be from God, and he finds genuine joy in the use of them.*⁷⁶²

Barnes: *The one joy of working or receiving, which, though it be transitory, a man recognizes as a real good, even that is not in the power of man to secure for himself: that good is the gift of God.*⁷⁶³

Benson: *[M]an should thankfully take, and freely and cheerfully enjoy and communicate with others, the comforts which God gives him...[this is] a singular gift of God, and not to be procured by a man's own wisdom and diligence.*⁷⁶⁴

This simpler approach is suggested in Luke 12:15 **And He said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."** (ESV; capitalized)

David Guzik: *We again see that the Preacher is no atheist; he certainly believes in God. But the God of the Preacher is not the God who matters and gives meaning to life as it is connected to eternity. The God of the Preacher simply teaches us to make the best of a bad situation.*⁷⁶⁵

Expositor's Bible Commentary: *It is right that a man should eat and drink, and take a natural pleasure in his toils and gains. Who, indeed, has a stronger claim than the labourer himself to eat and enjoy the fruit of his labours?*⁷⁶⁶

Morgan: *Everything is vanity. To live under the sun is to decide at last that the natural thing to do is to take what comes. Materialism necessarily becomes fatalism.*⁷⁶⁷

Matthew Henry: *We must herein acknowledge God; we must see that it is from the hand of God, that is, [1.] The good things themselves that we enjoy are so, not only the products of his creating power, but the gifts of his providential bounty to us. And then they are truly pleasant to us when we take them from the hand of God as a Father, when we eye his wisdom giving us that which is fittest for us, and acquiesce in it, and taste his love and goodness, relish them, and are thankful for them. [2.] A heart to enjoy them is so; this is the gift of God's grace. Unless he give us wisdom to make a right use of what he has, in his providence, bestowed upon us, and withal peace of conscience, that we may discern God's favour in the world's smiles, we cannot make our souls enjoy any good in them.*⁷⁶⁸

⁷⁶¹ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:24–26 (comment).

⁷⁶² *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:24–26 (comment).

⁷⁶³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:24.

⁷⁶⁴ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:24.

⁷⁶⁵ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

⁷⁶⁶ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:24–26.

⁷⁶⁷ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

⁷⁶⁸ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:17–26.

Ecclesiastes 2:24c: Taking blessing from the hand of God (various commentators)

Matthew Poole: *[Man] should thankfully take, and freely and cheerfully enjoy, the comforts which God gives him...[furthermore, that this is] from the hand of God; that this also is a singular gift of God, and not to be procured by a man's own wisdom or diligence.*⁷⁶⁹

Gary Everett: *When we devise projects and set goals and work towards them, and after we accomplish some great feat, we are still left empty inside and without purpose when we are not walking in fellowship God. It is better that we take one day at a time and enjoy that day's labours with thankfulness in our hearts. For a child, this seems to come naturally for he has no thoughts of tomorrow, but rather finds things to enjoy and laugh about today. He does not understand the cares of this world. God created the family unit so that we can see our children and their natural desire to rejoice. If we are not careful, we as adults can allow the cares of this life to choke out the blessings that God gives to us today. The weight of our cares and energies diminishes our joy.*

Everett continues: *When the Preacher tells us to enjoy the good of our labour, he is talking about contentment. This theme of learning to be content in life and not covet after material things is woven throughout the book of Ecclesiastes. Note similar verses.*⁷⁷⁰

Eccles. 3:13 **also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God's gift to man.**

Eccles. 5:18 **Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot.**

Eccles. 5:19 **Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God.**

1Tim. 6:6–7 **But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.** (ESV)

Matthew Henry: *We must set God always before us, and give diligence in every thing to approve ourselves to Him.*⁷⁷¹

E. W. Bullinger: *God (as Creator) is the subject which is continued through the next verse as the source and giver of all good. It is not therefore necessary to suppose that "another hand has been here at work."*⁷⁷²

The Christian way of life does not turn us into ascetics. Even though we are told that we are not of this world and that we should hate the world, this does not mean that we live life shunning all pleasure and joy.

Robertson: *the worldly man's triad—to eat, drink, and be merry—may be ennobled by an abiding intention of pleasing God in all that we do. Christians may have earthly joy. Let there be no half-remorseful sensations as though they were stolen joys. Christ had no sympathy with that tone of mind which scowls on human happiness. His first manifestation of power was at a marriage feast. Who would check the swallows' flight, or silence the gush of happy melody which the thrush pours forth in spring?*⁷⁷³

This approach to blessing also comes with a warning: Eccles. 3:13 Eccles. 5:19 Eccles. 6:2 Mal. 2:2 Luke 12:19–20.⁷⁷⁴

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⁷⁶⁹ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:24.

⁷⁷⁰ Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:24.

⁷⁷¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:17–26.

⁷⁷² E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:24.

⁷⁷³ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:24–26 (suggestive comments).

⁷⁷⁴ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Eccles. 2:24.

Ecclesiastes 2:24–25 **In life, is it not good for a man, than to eat and drink, and for his soul to be caused to see the good from his labor. This I also observed as coming from the hand of God. For who can eat and enjoy life apart from God?** [alternate reading: *more than me*]

Simple Pleasures from the Hand of God (Dr. Bob Utley)

“This also I have seen, that it is from the hand of God” The simple pleasures of life are gifts from God (cf. Eccles. 3:13; Eccles. 5:19; Eccles. 9:7; Prov. 13:22; Job 27:16–17). See note at Eccles. 2:1. In many ways this is one of just a few great truths in this book.

1. Enjoy the simple pleasures of daily life (Eccles. 2:1; Eccles. 2:24; Eccles. 3:12–13; Eccles. 3:22; Eccles. 5:18; Eccles. 8:15; Eccles. 9:7–9)
 - a. Food (fellowship)
 - b. Drink (although this can refer to revelry [cf. Ex. 32:6; 1Sam. 30:16; 1Kings 1:25] in this context it refers to daily family and social life)
 - c. Sense of self-worth from life's work
 - d. Rejoicing in life (Eccles. 9:8)
 - e. Marriage and family (Eccles. 9:9)
2. Fear God, keep the commandments (Eccles. 2:25; Eccles. 12:13–14)

At this point in Ecclesiastes, I don't believe that Solomon has a well-defined understanding of God and His blessings (despite being endowed with divine wisdom in previous years).

When Solomon develops a more full view of God, it appears that this is the God of Israel, with whom people may or may not have a personal relationship. The emphasis through this book, apart from its philosophical searchings, is on the laws of divine establishment.

Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:24 (slightly edited).

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The God of Solomon in this book is very much the deist God, where God made the earth, the universe, and all that is in them, and then just picked up and walked away. He is the Creator God Who has appeared to walk away from His creation. Even though Solomon recognizes the reality of God, he does not appear to see God as Someone to interact with regularly or directly.

Ecclesiastes 2:24 **In life, is it not good for a man, than to eat and drink, and for his soul to be caused to see the good from his labor. This I also observed as coming from the hand of God.**

Solomon appears to be giving a fairly crass and superficial interpretation to life and contentment. We have our meals, our drinks and our work—it all comes from God—and it is there for us to enjoy. Don't try to probe life for anything more substantial than that (although, Solomon will caveat this thought in v. 26).

Ecclesiastes 2:24–25 **In life, is it not good for a man, than to eat and drink, and for his soul to be caused to see the good from his labor. This I also observed as coming from the hand of God. For who can eat and enjoy life apart from God?** [alternate reading: *more than me*]

Ecclesiastes 2:24: Qoheleth Coming to a Conclusion (various commentators)

Dunagan on the blessings of life: *Going out to eat, having nice things, living in a comfortable house, and other pleasures of this life are great---as long as we understand that they aren't the source of our happiness and neither do they add any meaning to our lives. They are simply things, which we appreciate, but which we could also live without and still be completely happy...The verse and context also point out that only God can really enable us to enjoy the things of this life. The Christian, while not being covetous, greedily or materialistic, truly enjoys the nice 'things' of this life more than the sinner.*⁷⁷⁵

The Pulpit Commentary: *This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God. This is the point—the power of enjoyment depends on the will of God. The next verse substantiates this assertion.*⁷⁷⁶

Whedon: *We now have the inference drawn from the investigations here recorded, as a conclusion to the first section of the book. The best way, seeing that neither wisdom nor pleasure can appease the craving soul, is to mingle moderate and cheerful self-indulgence with the reasonable business of life, pushing neither study nor pleasure to excess, but acknowledging the good hand of God as balancing the gifts it confers.*⁷⁷⁷

I think that Dunagan and Whedon may be assuming too much in terms of the conclusion that Solomon has come to. The reason that I say this is, at the end of v. 26, Solomon is back to speaking of emptiness and chasing the wind.

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V. 25 is particularly difficult to translate and understand; and it is possible that some of the words at the end of this verse are simply wrong (in the Hebrew). There are 3 problems: (1) there is a verb which occurs here and here only (so proper translation of that verb is in question); (2) that verb is followed by a noun that nearly every translation ignores (as it is hard to figure out how to translate it and put it into the verse); (3) there are two very different endings to this verse: *from me, apart from Him*.

Ecclesiastes 2:25

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
mîy (מִי) [pronounced mee]	<i>who, whom; whose, whomever; what; occasionally rendered how, in what way</i>	pronominal interrogative; the verb <i>to be</i> may be implied	Strong's #4310 BDB #566
Under some circumstances, the mîy pronominal interrogative can express a wish or a desire, as in Deut. 5:28 2Sam. 15:4 or 23:15. ⁷⁷⁸ So, it could be translated, <i>o that!</i>			
'âkal (אָכַל) [pronounced aw-KAHL]	<i>to eat; to dine; to devour, to consume, to destroy</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #398 BDB #37

⁷⁷⁵ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:24.

⁷⁷⁶ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, eccles 2:24.

⁷⁷⁷ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 2:24.

⁷⁷⁸ *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*; Hendrickson Publishers; ©1996; p. 566.

Ecclesiastes 2:25

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
mîy (מִי) [pronounced <i>mee</i>]	<i>who, whom; whose, whomever; what; occasionally rendered how, in what way</i>	pronominal interrogative; the verb <i>to be</i> may be implied	Strong's #4310 BDB #566
chûsh (חוש) [pronounced <i>khoosh</i>]	<i>to rush, to hasten, to come swiftly, to approach swiftly, to make haste, to move swiftly, to act quickly</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #2363 BDB #301

Notice that chûsh sounds a little like our verbalized sound effect *whoosh*. It has a secondary meaning of *strong feelings of emotion, internal feelings of urgency*. Perhaps it can be related to *enjoyment*.

The NET Bible: *The verb חוש (khush, "to enjoy") is a hapax legomenon which BDB defines as "to feel; to enjoy [with the senses]" on the basis of the context, and the cognates: Arabic "to feel; to perceive [by senses]"; Aramaic חוש "to feel pain," and New Hebrew חוש "to feel pain" (BDB 301 s.v. II חוש). HALOT relates the Hebrew root to Akkadian havavu "to be delighted with" (HALOT 300 s.v. II חוש 1). The Vulgate renders this term as "to enjoy." The Greek versions (LXX, Theodotion) and the Syriac Peshitta, however, did not understand this hapax; they rendered it as "to drink," making some sense of the line by filling out the parallelism "to eat [and drink]" (e.g., Eccl 8:15).⁷⁷⁹*

Dr. Bob Utley: *"have enjoyment" This is a rare Hebrew term used only here in the OT. Most English translations take the meaning from the Arabic "feel" or "perceive by the senses" (BDB 301 II). However, the NJB has "drink," following the Septuagint, which tried to make Eccles. 2:24-25 parallel.⁷⁸⁰*

chûts (חוץ) (צח) [pronounced <i>khoots</i>]	<i>outside, outward; street</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2351 BDB #299
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Many modern translations ignore this noun; or replace it with something very different.

The similarities between this and the verb which precedes it are striking; and perhaps there is a problem with this particular noun.

min (מִן) [pronounced <i>mihn</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
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E. W. Bullinger: *Some codices, with Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic, read mimmennu, instead of mimmenni, "without Him" (i.e. without His favour).⁷⁸¹*

Utley provides the following translations:

⁷⁷⁹ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 20, 2018.

⁷⁸⁰ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:25.

⁷⁸¹ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:25.

Ecclesiastes 2:25

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
NASB	"without Him"		
NKJV	"more than I"		
NRSV (NIV)	"apart from him"		
TEV	[nothing]		
NJB	"came from Him"		
JPSOA	"but myself"		

Dr. Bob Utley: A Hebrew textual variation ("apart from Him") in some manuscripts is preserved in the Septuagint, Peshitta, and Jerome. Does this phrase reflect Qoheleth's thinking or has a major theological insight been reached (i.e. "gift from God") beginning in Eccles. 2:24? I think Eccles. 2:24-26 should be seen as a whole new thought.⁷⁸²

The NET Bible: The MT reads מִמֶּנִּי (mimmenni, "more than I"). However, an alternate textual tradition of מִמֶּנּוּ (mimmennu, "apart from him [= God]") is preserved in several medieval Hebrew mss, and is reflected in most of the versions (LXX, Syriac, Syro-Hexapla, and Jerome). The textual deviation is a case of simple orthographic confusion between י (yod) and ו (vav) as frequently happened, e.g., MT וצל וצ וצ (tsv ltsv tsv ltsv) versus 1QIsaa 28:10 יצל יצ יצ (tsy ltsy ts ltsy); see P. K. McCarter, Jr., *Textual Criticism*, 47. It is difficult to determine which reading is original here. The MT forms a parenthetical clause, where Qoheleth refers to himself: no one had more of an opportunity to experience more enjoyment in life than he (e.g., 2:1-11).

The NET Bible continues: The alternate textual tradition is a causal clause, explaining why the ability to enjoy life is a gift from God: no one can experience enjoyment in life "apart from him," that is, apart from "the hand of God" in 2:24. It is possible that internal evidence supports the alternate textual tradition. In 2:24-26, Qoheleth is not emphasizing his own resources to enjoy life, as he had done in 2:1-11; but that the ability to enjoy life is the gift of God. On the other hand, the Jerusalem Hebrew Bible project retains the MT reading with a "B" rating; see D. Barthélemy, ed., *Preliminary and Interim Report on the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project*, 3:570. The English versions are split on the textual problem: a few retain MT מִמֶּנִּי ("more than I"), e.g., KJV, ASV, YLT, Douay, NJPS, while others adopt the alternate reading מִמֶּנּוּ; "apart from him" (NEB, NAB, MLB, NASB, RSV, NRSV, NIV, Moffatt).⁷⁸³

The Pulpit Commentary: The Septuagint had a different reading, which obtains also in the Syriac and Arabic versions, and has been adopted by many modern critics. Instead of מִמֶּנִּי, they read מִמֶּנּוּ; "without him," i.e. except from God. "For who shall eat or who shall drink without him (πᾶρεξ αὐ' του)?" This merely repeats the thought of the last verse, in agreement with the saying of St. James (James 1:17), "Every good gift and every perfect boon is from above, coming down from the Father of lights." But the received reading, if it admits the rendering of the Authorized Version (which is somewhat doubtful), stands in close connection with the personal remark just preceding, "This also I saw," etc; and is a more sensible confirmation thereof than a tautological observation can be. The next verse carries on the thought that substantial enjoyment is entirely the gift of God, and granted by him as the moral Governor of the world.⁷⁸⁴

In the Greek, the final sentence is: **For who shall eat, or who shall drink, without Him?** The Syriac is quite similar.

Assuming that there is some sort of accuracy to be found in one or more of the ancient translations, there are probably two basic approaches to this final verse:

**For who can eat or drink apart from Him? Or,
Who can eat and enjoy [life] more than me?**

⁷⁸² Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:25.

⁷⁸³ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 20, 2018.

⁷⁸⁴ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:25.

Ecclesiastes 2:25

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
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The first interpretation suggests that there must be some connection with God in order to enjoy any part of life. The second translation, Solomon is saying that no one could enjoy life more than he does.

Translation: [For who can eat and enjoy life](#) [possibly, *the outdoors*] [apart from Him?](#) [alternate reading: *more than me*] The second verb is somewhat tricky and many understand this to mean *to have pleasure, to enjoy*. Most translations ignore the word that means *outside, street*.

The final 3 boxes above pretty much narrow v. 25 to one of two interpretations.

Ecclesiastes 2:25 [For who can eat, and who can have pleasure outside of Him?](#) (CLV)
 Ecclesiastes 2:25 [For who shall eat, or who shall drink, without Him?](#) (Complete Apostles' Bible)

Ecclesiastes 2:25 ...[apart from Him?](#) (Various commentators)

The College Press Bible Study: *There is enjoyment to be found in one's labor, but it is only when God blesses or permits... There is a definite moral involved. If avarice is the foe which keeps one from enjoying life, then setting oneself free from such a vain sin would result in the daily satisfaction with life.*⁷⁸⁵

The Cambridge Bible: *The sequence of thought is obscure, and many commentators follow the LXX. and the Syriac version, as implying an original text which gives a better meaning, Who can eat and who can hasten (i.e. be eager in this pursuit of pleasure), or, as some take the words, have enjoyment, without Him, i.e. without God. This, it is obvious, follows on the thought of the preceding verse, that the calm enjoyment of which it speaks as "good," is "from the hand of God."*⁷⁸⁶

Clarke: *No one can have a true relish of the comforts of life without the Divine blessing.*⁷⁸⁷

Solomon does not come to a great many conclusions which he can stand by. It seems like this, so far, is one of his few conclusions which seems reasonable. How do I enjoy my life apart from God? No doubt, that is a true concept.

This particular approach seems to follow v. 24 quite naturally.

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Ecclesiastes 2:25 [For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I?](#) (WEB)

Ecclesiastes 2:25: ...[more than me?](#) (Various commentators)

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *[Who better to] eagerly pursue such enjoyments [is the sense of this verse]. None can compete with me in this. If I, then, with all my opportunities of enjoyment, failed utterly to obtain solid pleasure of my own making, apart from God, who else can?*⁷⁸⁸

⁷⁸⁵ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 24–26 (comment).

⁷⁸⁶ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:25.

⁷⁸⁷ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:26 (it says v. 26; it ought to be v. 25).

⁷⁸⁸ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:25.

Ecclesiastes 2:25: ...more than me? (Various commentators)

Gary Everett: *No man has ever possessed so much wealth and sources of pleasure as was King Solomon. Who of all sons born to man had a greater opportunity to pursue the wealth and luxuries and wisdom of this world? Yet, in the midst of all of his material possessions and pursuits, he had to reevaluate the meaning of life. He had to acknowledge that there is no joy in such earthly pursuits, no matter how great they may seem.*⁷⁸⁹

Benson: *For the truth of this you may rely upon my experience: for who can more freely and fully enjoy the comforts of this life than I did? Who can pursue them with more diligence, obtain them with more readiness, or embrace them with more greediness? And yet, (as his words imply,) I had not comfort in these things till God was pleased to impart it unto me; till he gave me grace to see and consider that they were his gifts, to acknowledge his goodness in bestowing them upon me, and to use and enjoy them with prudence and moderation according to his will, not seeking my happiness in them, or in any creatures, but in himself, above all creatures.*

Benson continues: *[T]his verse is evidently added to confirm, from his own experience, what he said in the foregoing verse: and surely no man's experience, in such a case, was ever greater; no man was ever a more capable judge in these matters: none could either have more creature-comforts, or more addict himself to the enjoyment of them, or improve them to better advantage than he did; and therefore he could best tell what was the greatest good to be found in them, and whether they were able of themselves, without God's special gift, to yield a man satisfaction.*⁷⁹⁰

The Cambridge Bible: *Those who keep to the received text give it very different meanings, of which the two most prominent are: (1) that we have, as it were, the words of the labourer whose lot the Debater here admired, "Who has a right to eat and enjoy himself, if not I?" the thought being parallel to that of 2Tim. 2:6 ("The husbandman that labours must be first partaker of the fruits"); and (2) that the Debater speaks in his own person, "Who could eat or enjoy more than I? Who therefore can better attest that it is all in vain without the gift of God."*

The Cambridge Bible continues: *On the assumption that the writer was one who had come into contact with Greek thought, we may trace in this utterance partly the old faith of Israel reasserting itself and giving a higher sanction to the life of regulated enjoyment which the Greek teachers counselled, partly, perhaps, the mingling of Stoic and Epicurean counsels natural in a mind that had listened to both and attached himself definitely to neither. So in the Meditations of Aurelius we have like thoughts:..."all these things require the help of the Gods and of Fortune"; and again..."the works of the Gods are full of Providence"...Kohelah, of course, as an Israelite, used the language of the wiser Stoics, like Cleanthes, and spoke of one God only.*⁷⁹¹

Dr. John Gill: *"who can prepare...a better table than I?" [might be the sense of this verse.] No man had a greater affluence of good things than Solomon, or had a greater variety of eatables and drinkables; or had it in the power of his hands to live well, and cause his soul to enjoy good; or was more desirous to partake of pleasure, and hasten more to make the experiment of it in a proper manner; and yet he found, that a heart to do this was from the Lord; that this was a gift of his; and that though he abounded in the blessings of life, yet if God had not given him a heart to use them, he never should have really enjoyed them.*⁷⁹²

David Guzik: *For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I? Given the Preacher's premise, his life should be the best in a meaningless world. He could enjoy this world of despair better than anyone else. Yet his life was almost infinitely poorer than the most humble life lived with true meaning.*⁷⁹³

⁷⁸⁹ Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:25.

⁷⁹⁰ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:25.

⁷⁹¹ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:25 (slightly edited).

⁷⁹² Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:25.

⁷⁹³ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1-26.

Ecclesiastes 2:25: ...more than me? (Various commentators)

Matthew Poole: *Who can more freely and fully enjoy the comforts of this life than I did? This verse is added to confirm what he said in the foregoing verse from his own experience, which was the more considerable, because no man ever was a more capable judge of these matters, none could either have more creature-comforts, or more addict himself to the enjoyment of them, or to improve them to better advantage, than he did; and therefore he could best tell what was the greatest good to be found in them, and whether they were able of themselves, without God's special gift, to yield a man satisfaction.*⁷⁹⁴

The Pulpit Commentary: *"Eat" means enjoy one's self, as in the preceding verse; "hasten hereunto" implies eager pursuit of pleasure; and Koheleth asks—Who had better opportunity than he for verifying the principle that all depends upon the gift of God?*⁷⁹⁵

This particular approach (which is the Masoretic text), does not easily follow v. 24.

The truth of this concept is clearly found in Eccles. 2:1–12 1Kings 4:21–24.

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The alternate reading is easier to interpret: you cannot enjoy life and the simple pleasures of life apart from Him (God). Now, since the former reading seems to logically fit, why is this not universally accepted as the correct rendering? The reason is—and you are going to find that this does not make sense at first—when given two readings of the same verse, the preferred reading is the one which is the most difficult or the hardest to interpret. I know that seems counterintuitive, but the reason is, it is far more likely that someone would *change* Scripture to text which is easier to understand; and far less likely that someone would change the text to something more difficult or abstruse. Now, this does not mean that there were thousands of people wanting to change this or that Scripture; but let's say that a copyist is working with a smudged/damaged manuscript and they come to this verse. "Well, it could be X and it could be Y," they think, "and Y makes the most sense, so that must be what it is."

Trapp actually presents a third interpretation: *And yet I have found - and so shall you - that tranquillity and true happiness, the kingdom of God, doth not consist in meats and drinks. A Turk may believe sensualities in his fool's paradise, but no servant of God is a slave to his palate.*⁷⁹⁶

Dunagan gives us the correct conclusion: *I can't truly enjoy the things "under the sun" until my mind is set on things above the sun (Colossians 3:1-2; Philippians 4:11ff). God has enabled me to be freed from my demand that physical things make me happy. No longer do I expect or demand things, events or people to do the impossible (i.e. make me happy). Hence, I can enjoy wonderful things and humble things. Here is a warning to the wealthy or those bent on physical success, without God you will probably end up resenting what you have instead of enjoying it.*⁷⁹⁷

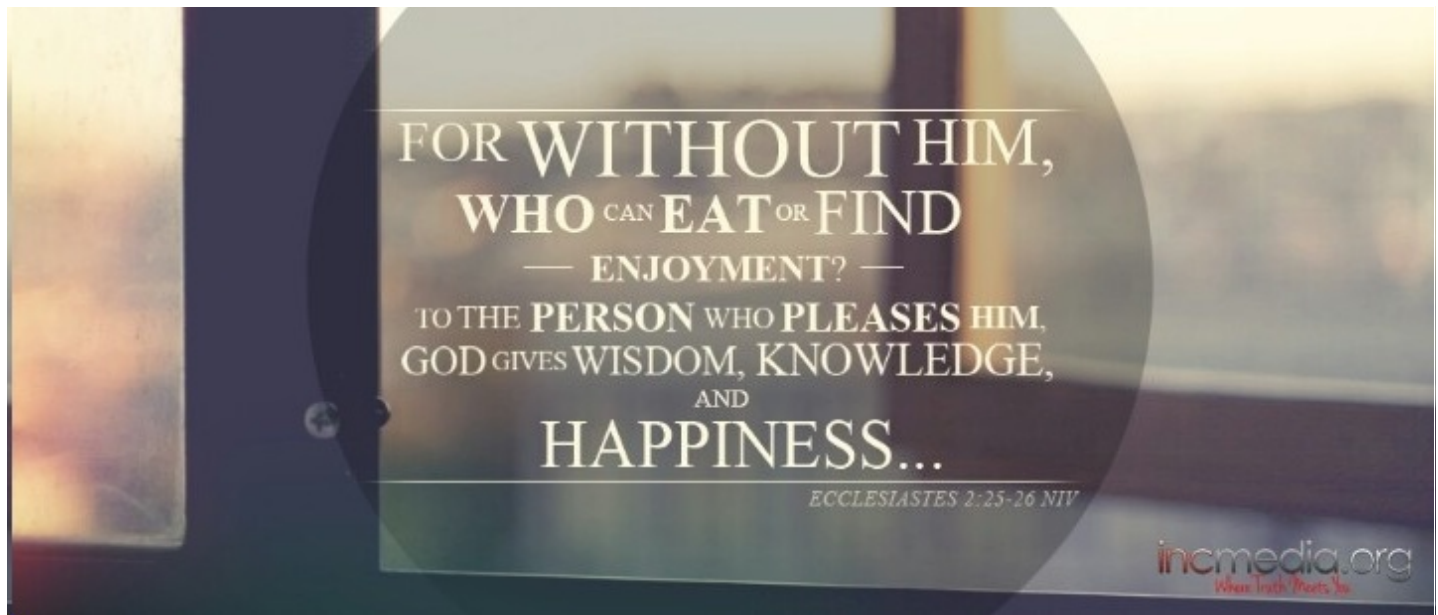
Ecclesiastes 2:24–25 [In life, is it not good for a man, than to eat and drink, and for his soul to be caused to see the good from his labor. This I also observed as coming from the hand of God. For who can eat and enjoy life apart from God? \[alternate reading: *more than me*\]](#)

⁷⁹⁴ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:25.

⁷⁹⁵ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:25.

⁷⁹⁶ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 2:25.

⁷⁹⁷ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:25.



Ecclesiastes 2:25–26a (a graphic); from [Pinterest](#); accessed September 7, 2018.

Ron Snider's translation of Ecclesiastes 2:24–25 [There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen, that it is from the hand of God. For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?](#)

Ecclesiastes 2:24–25: Qoheleth begins to relate it all to God (Ron Snider)

1. For the first time in this book, we now hear the voice of the older, wiser Qoheleth, who weighs in with some observations and comments, which will continue through the end of chapter three.
2. Qoheleth is now writing about his conclusions following his existential experiment, when he has come to the conclusion that nothing really matters.
3. In our present verse Qoheleth begins his first major summary of his thinking, based on his conclusions that meaning is not to be found in life through pleasure, wisdom, or productive labor.
4. As we will observe, simply because Qoheleth begins to relate these matters to the sovereignty of God and His plan, he will continue to work through his struggles with the realities of life.
5. In that regard, he is not any different than any believer that has pondered the difficulties of this life, considered the realities that govern it, and sought some sort of permanent contentment and resolution to the issues.
6. While the traditional wisdom teachers would have highly valued both the pursuit of wisdom and the virtue of hard work, Qoheleth now seemingly advocates the simple life, being content with the basic necessities and enjoying the life one has been given.
7. However, as he will point out, there is a Divine element of blessing that must be present in order to make life worthwhile.
8. These two verses are among some of the most difficult from a grammatical standpoint, which has raised the issue of textual problems, as well as creating interpretative challenges.
9. Generally speaking, there are three translations of the first part of verse 24, each of which dramatically affects the interpretation.
10. The first understands Qoheleth to say that man is not inherently good simply because he can eat, drink, and find some measure of satisfaction in his labors.
11. However, that interpretation reads a moral sense into טוב (tohb-good), which it has not had in any of the previous usages in this book. Eccles. 2:1,3
12. The second rendering of the text produces an idea that there is a measure of satisfaction in life, but it

Ecclesiastes 2:24–25: Qoheleth begins to relate it all to God (Ron Snider)

does not lie within man to bestow it upon himself.

13. This translation is certainly in harmony with what follows, which indicates that man himself is not the ultimate source of pleasure; true enjoyment in life comes as a blessing from God.
14. These two interpretations are based on the most literal translation of the Hebrew text, without any emendations or suggestions of textual inaccuracy.
15. The third (and most common) translation is reflected in the New American Standard, which sees the phrase אֵין־טוֹב בְּאָדָם (there does not exist good with man) as being comparative and having the sense that there is nothing better for a man. cf. Eccles. 3:12, 22, 8:15
16. This translation makes sense and is consistent with the fact that Qoheleth uses the Hebrew noun טוֹב (tobh-good) in a comparative sense in other passages. Eccles. 4:9, 7:3
17. However, as many have noted, when טוֹב (tobh-good) is used in a comparative sense it is most of-ten followed by the preposition מִי (min-from); to be good from something is to be better than something.
18. Secondly, this tends to translate the prefixed preposition בְּ (b-in, with, by) as though it was אֶל (l-to, for). cf. 2:3
19. This has caused many ancient versions and modern interpreters to suspect that an incident of haplo-graphy (writing once what should be written twice) has occurred between בְּאָדָם (ba'adham) and שְׂיֵאכַל (sheyyo'khal).
20. Based on this suggestion, some ancient interpreters have read this as a question however, this does not materially change the force of what Qoheleth is saying.
21. The translation would then read Is it not better with a man who eats and drinks and causes his soul to see good in his toil?
22. However, there is no good reason to read this as a question since it is evident from what follows that Qoheleth is stating a conclusion based on his observations.
23. Further, his questions have been completely rhetorical to this point and have been introduced by the normal interrogative pronouns.
24. It would seem that the second rendering fits the context better and is the most true to the Masoretic Text; mankind will not find satisfaction apart from the blessing of the sovereign God.
25. In fact, this passage indicates that man will not even enjoy the common blessings of eating, drinking, and productive labor unless God grants him those blessings and some ability to enjoy them.
26. This is the first real allusion to God as the slightly older, wiser Qoheleth begins to turn the spiritual corner by factoring the sovereignty of God into his equation.
27. This is the first real comfort that is mentioned in the book; after his brutally honest, but somewhat cynical, view of life in a cursed environment, Qoheleth now acknowledges the sovereignty of God.
28. He strongly asserts that he has personally observed this reality and that it is not in question. Indeed, I myself have observed/perceived/understood/learned...
29. The latter part of the verse poses a small problem in that one must identify the antecedent of the near demonstrative feminine adjective זֶה (zoh-she, it).
30. The most logical reference is to the phrase that follows the conjunction יְכִי (kiy-that), which here serves to introduce the content of what Qoheleth has perceived.
31. He indicates that the ability to eat, drink, and find enjoyment in the labor of life is contingent upon God's blessing and not upon man's ability to bless or please himself.
32. The phrase the hand of Elohiym is an anthropomorphism (ascribing to God human form), which is a figure that is used to portray God's sovereignty, power, and providence, whether in benevolence (Eccles 2:24) or in judgment. Ex. 3:30; 1Sam. 5:11
33. He will continue to emphasize the importance of God in the life of man in the verse that follows, as he asks another rhetorical question.
34. The New American Standard translation seems to be pretty straightforward, but there are three issues that confront the interpreter.
35. The first part of the verse is quite straightforward and is accurately translated by the New American Standard Bible. For/because who will eat?
36. The first problem is the meaning of the verb חוּשׁ (chush), which normally is defined by the concepts of

Ecclesiastes 2:24–25: Qoheleth begins to relate it all to God (Ron Snider)

- hurrying or hastening to do something; a cognate חִישׁ (chiysh) has the sense of quickly.
37. Clearly, such a definition does not work in our passage, and the ancient versions do not provide a definitive answer.
 38. The Septuagint (3rd century BC), Peshitta (Syriac Version, 2-4th century AD), and Theodotion (2nd century AD) read the text as שָׁתָּה (shathah-drink) in order to harmonize it with the previous verse; this is exactly what one would expect after the verb אָכַל ('akha-eat).
 39. Scholars have suggested the following meanings for the verb, all of which are derived from cognate languages such as Akkadian, Ugaritic, or Arabic
 - 1) Enjoy.
 - 2) Be anxious, fret.
 - 3) Refrain.
 - 4) Eat.
 - 5) Consider.
 40. The reality is that the term is unclear and there is no consensus, so we will leave it as the New American Standard has translated it since the context supports the translation.
 41. The second problem in this verse is found in the next word חוּץ (chuts), which normally refers to that which is outside, either immediately outside or removed some distance. Gen. 6:14, 24:11
 42. While our English idiom outside of him has the sense of apart from someone, there is no other verse in which the Hebrew would appear to support this meaning.
 43. Beyond this issue is the last word of the verse מִמֶּנִּי (mimenny), which is translated as a third person singular suffix (from Him), but is actually a first person singular (from me)
 44. If the Masoretic text is correct (which we presume it to be), there are two possible options as to how we are to understand this.
 45. The first is that Solomon is referring to himself; he would be the foremost judge, who could speak with authority about the pleasures of life and the ability to enjoy them.
 46. The second interpretation would understand it as a proverbial expression that Solomon was quoting to justify his conclusions in verse 24 and verse 26.
 47. This would be a common saying of which his readers would be aware; further, this was something that we have seen him do in chapter one, when he justified his conclusions citing to proverbial sayings. Eccles. 1:15,18
 48. If the text is to be emended to the third person singular (apart from Him) it clearly makes the point that true pleasure comes from God.
 49. In either case, the interpretation is that man will not find his happiness in the normal aspects of life apart from the sovereign will of God.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#); accessed September 2, 2018 (will open as a Word Document on your computer).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

For to man who [is] pleasing to His faces, He gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; and to the sinner, He gives the labor—to gather and to heap. To give to [the] pleasing [one] to faces of the Elohim. Also this [is] a breath and chasing after wind.

Ecclesiastes
2:26

For to the man who pleases Him, He gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner, He gives [him excessive] labor—to gather and to heap up—to give to the [one who is] pleasing before Elohim. This also [is just] breath and chasing after wind.

God gives wisdom, knowledge and joy to the man who pleases Him; but to the sinner, God gives him all of the labor—the gathering and the heaping up—so that he can give the benefits to the one who pleases God. That also is just empty and chasing the wind.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	For to man who [is] pleasing to His faces, He gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; and to the sinner, He gives the labor—to gather and to heap. To give to [the] pleasing [one] to faces of the Elohim. Also this [is] a breath and chasing after wind.
Revised Douay-Rheims	God has given to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he has given vexation, and <u>superfluous care</u> , to heap up and to gather together, and to give it to him that has pleased God: but this also is vanity, and a fruitless solicitude of the mind.
V. Alexander's Aramaic T.	For to the man whose <u>works are</u> straight before God, he gave wisdom and knowledge <u>in this world</u> , and joy <u>with the righteous in the world to come</u> ; and to the wicked he gave <u>all evil</u> employment, to gather <u>money</u> and to heap up <u>much wealth</u> , <u>to be taken away from him</u> , and to be given to him who pleases the Lord; this, too, is vanity for the wicked, and breaking of spirit.
Peshitta (Syriac)	For, to a man who is good in his presence, God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he gives toil, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him who is good in the presence of the LORD. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	For God has given to the man who is good in his sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but he has given to the sinner <u>trouble</u> , to add and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God; for this is also vanity and waywardness of spirit.
Significant differences:	There is additional text in the targum. God is specifically named as the subject of the verb in the Latin and Syriac, but not in the Hebrew. There appears to be additional text in the Latin. The Greek has <i>trouble</i> rather than <i>toil, labor</i> .

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	To the man with whom he is pleased, God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he gives the work of getting goods together and storing up wealth, to give to him in whom God has pleasure. This again is to no purpose and desire for wind.
Easy English	If we obey God, he will help us. He will make us wise. He will make us clever. And he will help us to enjoy our life. But if we do not obey God, our lives will be difficult. He will give what is ours to another person. This, too, is not good. It is like somebody who tries to catch the wind. The Teacher wants us to enjoy the good things that God gives to us. So he wants us to believe what God says. Look at verse 26. There the Teacher tells us about the two ways for us to live. The best thing that we can say is, 'Ask God for his help. Then do what he says.'
Easy-to-Read Version—2006	If people do good and please God, he will give them wisdom, knowledge, and joy. But those who sin will get only the work of gathering and carrying things. God takes from the bad person and gives to the good person. But all this work is useless. It is like trying to catch the wind.
Good News Bible (TEV)	God gives wisdom, knowledge, and happiness to those who please him, but he makes sinners work, earning and saving, so that what they get can be given to those who please him. It is all useless. It is like chasing the wind.
<i>The Message</i>	The best you can do with your life is have a good time and get by the best you can. The way I see it, that's it—divine fate. Whether we feast or fast, it's up to God. God may give wisdom and knowledge and joy to his favorites, but sinners are assigned

Names of God Bible	a life of hard labor, and end up turning their wages over to God's favorites. Nothing but smoke—and spitting into the wind. Vv. 24–25 are included for context. Elohim gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to anyone who pleases him. But to the person who continues to sin, he gives the job of gathering and collecting wealth. The sinner must turn his wealth over to the person who pleases Elohim . Even this is pointless. It's like trying to catch the wind.
NIRV	God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness to the person who pleases him. But to a sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth. Then the sinner must hand it over to the one who pleases God. That doesn't have any meaning either. It's like chasing the wind.
New Simplified Bible	To the man who is good, God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy. But to the sinner he gives the work of getting goods together and storing up wealth, to give to him who is good before God. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	Let us consider what happens to the one whom God favors and also to the one who offends God. To the person who is good in God's sight, God gives wisdom, knowledge and joy. To the sinner, however, God gives the vexing task of collecting and heaping up a fortune under the sun. Then the one who offends God must give it to the one who is good in God's sight. My conclusion is that this too is as unfulfilling as feasting on the wind.
The Living Bible	For who can eat or enjoy apart from him? For God gives those who please him wisdom, knowledge, and joy; but if a sinner becomes wealthy, God takes the wealth away from him and gives it to those who please him. So here, too, we see an example of foolishly chasing the wind. V. 25 is included for context.
New Berkeley Version	For to the man who pleases Him He gives wisdom, knowledge and joy; ^j while to the sinner He commits the task of gathering and heaping, to give it to the man who pleases God. This, too, is profitless and chasing after wind. ^j God awards the good of life to the godly.
New Century Version	If people please God, God will give them wisdom, knowledge, and joy. But sinners will get only the work of gathering and storing wealth that they will have to give to the ones who please God. So all their work is useless, like chasing the wind.
New Life Version	For God has given wisdom and much learning and joy to the person who is good in God's eyes. But to the sinner He has given the work of gathering and getting many riches together to give to the one who pleases God. This also is for nothing, like trying to catch the wind.
New Living Translation	God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to those who please him. But if a sinner becomes wealthy, God takes the wealth away and gives it to those who please him. This, too, is meaningless—like chasing the wind.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	To those whom He declares to be good, He gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy... But, from the sinners, He rips this away! They're just given to those whom He deems to be good, And who stand before the face of [our] God. Yet, this is also just folly, And just a waste of [good] breath.
Beck's American Translation	To anyone who pleases Him He gives wisdom, knowledge, and pleasure. But to one who lives in sin He gives the job of gathering and collecting wealth only to turn it over to one who pleases God. This also is a vapor and like trying to catch the wind.

Common English Bible	Who can eat and find enjoyment otherwise?— because God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to those who please God. But to those who are offensive [Or <i>to those who sin</i>], God gives the task of hoarding and accumulating, but only so as to give it all to those who do please God. This too is pointless and a chasing after wind. A portion of v. 25 is included for context.
International Standard V	After all, to the person who is good in God's sight, he gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy, but to the sinner he gives the troublesome task of acquiring and accumulating in order to leave it to someone who is good in the sight of God. This also is pointless and chasing after the wind.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	Who wins God's favour, has wisdom and skill for his reward, and pleasure too; it is the sinner that is doomed to hardship and to thankless care, hoarding and scraping, and all to enrich some heir God loves better! For him frustration, for him the labour lost.
Translation for Translators	God enables those who please him to be wise, to know <i>many things</i> , and to enjoy <i>many things</i> . But if sinful people work hard and become rich, God <i>can</i> take their money away from them and give it to those who please him. But that also is something that is difficult for me to understand. <i>Their working hard seems</i> useless, <i>like</i> chasing the wind.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Conservapedia Translation	God gives wisdom, knowledge and joy to a man He finds good in His judgment; but to the sinner He gives ordeals, to gather and accumulate, before He gives good things to him. This too is vanity and troubling to the soul.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	—For to the man who pleases HIM, He gives science, and knowledge and pleasure; but to the offender He gives the trouble to gather and accumulate, to give the product to the pleasing before GOD.—'His, however, is vanity, and vexation of spirit!
God's Truth (Tyndale)	And why? He gives unto man, what it pleases him: whether it be wisdom, understanding, or gladness. But unto the sinner he gives weariness and sorrow, that he may gather and heap together the thing, that afterward shall be given unto him whom it pleases God. This is now a vain thing, yes a very disquietness and vexation of mind.
HCSB	For to the man who is pleasing in His sight, He gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy, but to the sinner He gives the task of gathering and accumulating in order to give to the one who is pleasing in God's sight. This too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.
NIV, ©2011	To the person who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.
Peter Pett's translation	There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy good as a result of (in) his efforts. I also saw this, that it is from the hand of God. For who can eat and who can have enjoyment more than I? For to the man who pleases him (literally 'is good before him') God gives wisdom, knowledge and joy, but to the blameworthy one he gives constant struggle, to gather and to heap up, so that he may give to the one who pleases God. Vv. 24–25 are included for context.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

The Heritage Bible	Because he has given wisdom, and knowledge, and joy to a man who is good before his face, and he has given employment to the sinner to gather and to collect that he may give to him who is good before the face of God. This also is vanity and a grasping of spirit.
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New American Bible (2011)	For to the one who pleases God, he gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the one who displeases, God gives the task of gathering possessions for the one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a chase after wind. Eccl 7:26; Prv 13:22. * [2:26] According to 7:15 and 9:1–3, God does not make an objective, evidential, moral distinction between saint and sinner. God “gives” as God pleases.
New English Bible–1970	God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to the man who pleases him, while to the sinner is given the trouble of gathering and amassing wealth only to hand it over to someone else who pleases God. This too is emptiness and chasing the wind.
Revised English Bible–1989	He gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to whoever is pleasing to him, while to the one who fails to please him is given the task of gathering and amassing wealth only to hand it over to someone else who does please God. This too is futility and a chasing of the wind.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	For to the man who is good from [God’s] viewpoint he gives wisdom, knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he gives the task of collecting and accumulating things to leave to him who is good from God’s viewpoint. This too is pointless and feeding on wind.
The Complete Tanach	For to a man who is good in His sight, He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner He has given an occupation to gather and to accumulate, to give to him who is good in God's sight; this too is vanity and frustration.

For to a man who is good in His sight: in the sight of God, mentioned above, “that it is from the hand of God.”

He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy: a heart to engage in the Torah and in the commandments and to rejoice in his portion of eating, drinking, and clean clothing.

but to the sinner He has given an occupation: a habit and a concern to gather and to accumulate, and to give to him who is good in God’s sight, as it is stated (Esther 8:2): “and Esther placed Mordecai in charge of the house of Haman.”

this too: is one of the vanities that were given to the creatures, that they toil, and someone else takes [the fruits].

JPS (Tanakh—1985)	To the man, namely, who pleases Him He has given the wisdom and shrewdness to enjoy himself; and to him who displeases, He has given the urge to gather and amass—only for handing on to one who is pleasing to God. That too is futile and pursuit of wind.
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Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible	If people please God, God will give them wisdom, knowledge, and joy [pleasure]. But sinners [or people who offend; ^c offend God] will get only the work of gathering wealth that they will have to give to the ones who please God. So all their work is useless [1:2], like chasing the wind [3:12–14, 22; 5:18–20; 8:15; 9:7–10; C the little pleasures are distractions from the meaningless world].
Pastor John Griffith	For to a person who is good in His sight - by God's STD - the one who is good is the experientially righteous man; one who is justified by faith and exemplifying that righteousness in his life before others. He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, - wisdom which is linked to reverence for God and His Word - Prov 1:7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom

- Prov 2:6 For the Lord gives wisdom; out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding.

- knowledge - emph on knowing what is right and wrong – having a conscience built on divine viewpoint thinking, God's STD's

- joy - contentment with our place in God's will and with what we have in our niche at that moment.

The Contrast: **while to the sinner** (unregenerate - living their life under the sun) **He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight.**

- Another way to define the sinner is one who does not fear God; does not reverence or respect God and His word - does not take it seriously (8:12-13)

This too is vanity and striving after wind.

The provision is there for the sinner to break this pattern by coming to know God himself and to please Him and then he too would receive the ability to find joy and satisfaction in all of life just as the one who fears God has found.

Kretzmann's Commentary

For God giveth to a man that is good in His sight, who lives before Him in the fear of God, **wisdom, and knowledge, and joy**, as a reward dealt out by His mercy; **but to the sinner**, the godless, the unbeliever, **he giveth travail**, misery and tribulation, **to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God**, unconsciously, of course, and in spite of himself. Solomon, conducting himself with piety, enjoyed his wealth in agreement with God's blessing upon him; the same king, forsaking the precepts of the Lord, became unhappy, while the riches which he had heaped up became the prey of the Egyptian king, 2 Chronicles 12. **This also is vanity and vexation of spirit**, but the lesson which it teaches should be heeded well by all believers.

NET Bible®

For to the one who pleases him,¹¹⁶ **God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy, but to the sinner, he gives the task of amassing**¹¹⁷ **wealth**¹¹⁸ – **only to give**¹¹⁹ **it**¹²⁰ **to the one who pleases God.**

This task of the wicked¹²² **is futile – like chasing the wind!**

^{116tn} Heb “for to a man who is good before him.”

^{117sn} The phrase the task of amassing wealth (Heb “the task of gathering and heaping up”) implicitly compares the work of the farmer reaping his crops and storing them up in a barn, to the work of the laborer amassing wealth as the fruit of his labor. However, rather than his storehouse being safe for the future, the sinner is deprived of it.

^{118tn} The word “wealth” does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

^{119sn} The three-fold repetition of the Hebrew word translated “give” in the first part of this verse creates irony: God “gives” the righteous the ability to prosper and to find enjoyment in his work; but to the wicked He “gives” the task of “giving” his wealth to the righteous.

^{120tn} The word “it” (an implied direct object) does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

^{122tn} The phrase “task of the wicked” does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

Syndein/Thieme

To the man, namely, who pleases Him {God} He has given the wisdom and shrewdness to enjoy himself {capacity to be happy regardless his circumstances - divine viewpoint from the Word}. And to him who displeases {God}, He has given the urge to gather and amass {meaningless details of life - money, wealth, power, sex, social life} only for handing on to one who is pleasing to God. That too is futile/meaningless and pursuit/chasing the wind.

The Voice

To those who seek to please God, He gives wisdom and knowledge and joyfulness; but to those who are wicked, God keeps them busy harvesting and storing up for

those in whom He delights. But even this is fleeting; it's like trying to embrace the wind.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Ecclesiastes 2:26 (a graphic); from [the Bottom of a Bottle](#); accessed September 7, 2018.

Concordant Literal Version For to the man who is good before Him, He gives wisdom and knowledge and rejoicing; Yet to the sinner He gives the experience of gathering and of collecting wealth, To give it to one who is good before the One, Elohim; This too is vanity and a grazing on wind."

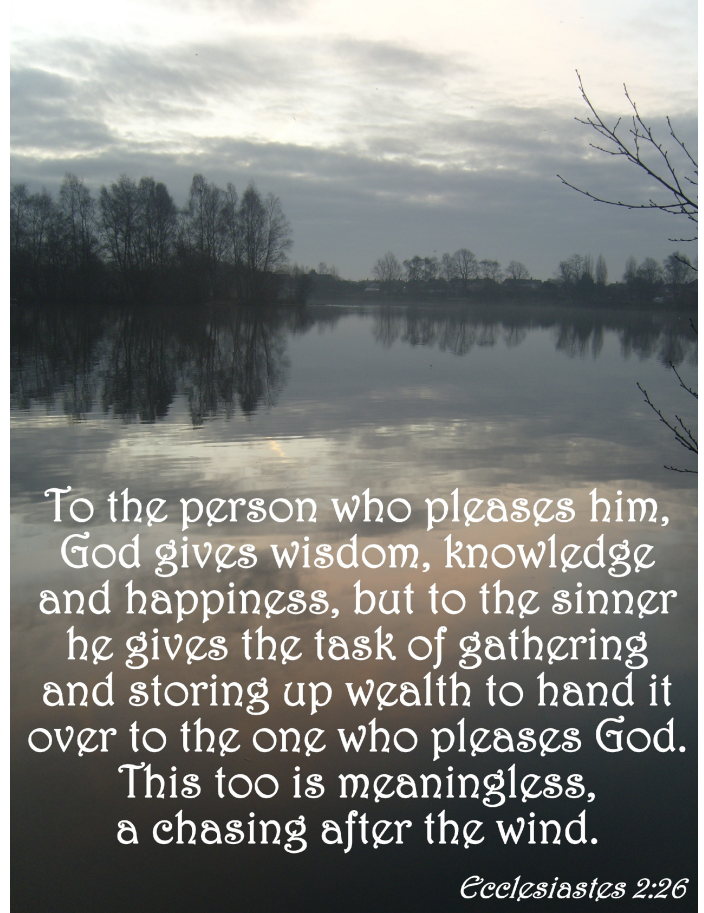
English Standard Version For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

New American Standard B. For to a person who is good in His sight He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight. This too is vanity and striving after wind.

Webster's Bible Translation For *God* giveth to a man who *is* good in his sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth toil, to gather, and to amass, that he may give to *him that is* good before God. This also *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.

Young's Updated LT For to a man who is good before Him, He has given wisdom, and knowledge, and joy; and to a sinner He has given travail, to gather and to heap up, to give to the good before God. Even this is vanity and vexation of spirit.

The gist of this passage: Solomon makes the assumption that God gives wisdom, knowledge and joy to those He approves of, but toil to those who are sinners. But he finds even this to be empty and chasing wind.



To the person who pleases him,
God gives wisdom, knowledge
and happiness, but to the sinner
he gives the task of gathering
and storing up wealth to hand it
over to the one who pleases God.
This too is meaningless,
a chasing after the wind.

Ecclesiastes 2:26

Ecclesiastes 2:26a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כי) [pronounced <i>kee</i>]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>le</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
'âdâm (אָדָם) [pronounced <i>aw-DAWM</i>]	<i>a man, a human being, mankind; transliterated Adam</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #120 & #121 BDB #9
The word <i>the Adam</i> can mean <i>man, mankind, humankind, men, human beings</i> .			
she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced <i>sheh</i>] or shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced <i>shehl</i>]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
ṭôwb (טוֹב) [pronounced <i>tohbv</i>]	<i>pleasant, pleasing, agreeable, good, better; approved</i>	masculine singular adjective which can act like a substantive	Strong's #2896 BDB #373
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>le</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
pânîym (פָּנִים) [pronounced <i>paw-NEEM</i>]	<i>face, faces countenance; presence</i>	masculine plural noun (plural acts like English singular); with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
Together, they mean <i>before him, before his face, in his presence, in his sight, in front of him</i> . Literally, this reads <i>to his faces</i> .			
nâthan (נָתַן) [pronounced <i>naw-THAHN</i>]	<i>to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set; to make</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5414 BDB #678
châk ^e mâh (חָכְמָה) [pronounced <i>khawk^e-MAW</i>]	<i>wisdom [in all realms of life], doctrine in the soul; skill [in war]</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #2451 BDB #315
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
da'ath (דַּעַת) [pronounced <i>DAH-ġahth</i>]	<i>knowledge, knowing; intelligence, understanding, wisdom</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #1847 BDB #395
These were both alluded to back in v. 21.			
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
sim ^e châh (שִׂמְחָה) [pronounced <i>sim^e-KHAW</i>]	<i>joy, gladness, mirth, great joy, rejoicing, enjoyment, pleasure</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #8057 BDB #970

Translation: For to the man who pleases Him, He gives wisdom and knowledge and joy;... Solomon comes to another hypothesis. God gives the man who pleases him wisdom, knowledge and joy. Bear in mind, Solomon is not right with every hypothesis that he makes—or with any of them. It seems to be a mixture of truth and fiction.

Dr. John Gill on the man who pleases God: *No man is of himself good, or naturally so, but evil, very evil, as all the descendants of Adam are; there are some that are good in their own eyes, and in the sight of others, and yet not truly good; they are only really good, who are so in the sight of God, who sees the heart, and knows what is in man; they are such who are made good by his efficacious grace; who are inwardly, and not merely outwardly so.*⁷⁹⁸

It ought to be clear that no man, in and of himself, pleases God. We are sinners saved by grace, and whatever divine good we perform is done in the Spirit.

Dr. Dan Hill: *To be good in God's sight is to know Him, to have a relationship with Him, to be intimate, to walk with Him as a friend...Who are we going to spend eternity with? Someone we know well, and anticipate being with them, or someone who is a stranger to us? For too many believers the God of eternity will be someone they do not really know.*⁷⁹⁹

However, it is much better to have an eternal relationship with a God Whom you barely know, as opposed to the alternative of not knowing Jesus Christ at all.

Dr. John Gill: *[These are men] who have good hearts, clean hearts, new and right spirits created in them; who have a good work of grace upon their hearts, and the several graces of the Spirit implanted there; who have the good Spirit of God in them, in whose heart Christ dwells by faith; and who have the good word of Christ dwelling in them, and have a good treasure of rich experience of the grace of God; and who, in one word, are born again, renewed in the spirit of their minds, and live by faith on Jesus Christ.*

Gill continues: *[The one who pleases God is he who] is accepted with God in Christ, his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased; who is clothed with his righteousness, made comely through his comeliness, and so is irreprovable in his sight; and who by faith looks to and lays hold on this righteousness, and does all he does in the exercise of faith, without which it is impossible to please God.*⁸⁰⁰

We please God because we are in His Son.

For the man who is in God's plan, pleasing God, he has access to wisdom, knowledge and joy. This is certainly true. However, this is somewhat confusing, as Solomon will conclude by saying, **This is all empty and chasing after wind**. Is Solomon suggesting that, somehow, this is wrong or unfair or inequitable?

The College Press Bible Study on joy: *Solomon employs the term "joy" in much the same way that it is understood today. It carries the idea of cheerfulness and satisfaction with life. It is used three other times in Ecclesiastes...(Eccles. 2:10, 26 5:20 9:7). In each reference it speaks to the excitement of discovery and living life to its fullest each day. This kind of "joy" does not come to the man who is motivated by greed, or gathering wealth and possessions for his own use.*⁸⁰¹

⁷⁹⁸ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:26.

⁷⁹⁹ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> accessed September 1, 2018 (pp. 13–16).

⁸⁰⁰ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:26.

⁸⁰¹ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 24–26 (comment) (slightly edited).

In the previous passage, Solomon appeared to simply be stuck in God's creation, and he was trying to make the best of it. Here, Solomon suggests that God does have a hand in our lives, as He gives wisdom, knowledge and joy to the man who pleases Him.

Ecclesiastes 2:26 God gives wisdom, knowledge and joy to the man who pleases Him; but to the sinner, God gives him all of the labor—the gathering and the heaping up—so that he can give the benefits to the one who pleases God. That also is just empty and chasing the wind.

Ecclesiastes 2:26a: God gives to the man who pleases him (various commentators)

The College Press Bible Study: *The good man's...wisdom does not bring grief. His knowledge does not bring sorrow. His joy comes to him because he finds satisfaction in the labor within a single day.*⁸⁰²

The Pulpit Commentary: *To the man that finds favor in God's sight (1Sam. 29:6; Neh. 2:5), i.e. who pleases him, he gives blessings, while he withholds them or takes them away from the man who displeases him. The blessings specified are wisdom, and knowledge, and joy.*⁸⁰³

The Cambridge Bible on wisdom, knowledge and joy: *The combination forms an emphatic contrast with ch. Eccles. 1:18 [For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow—ESV], and marks a step onward in the seeker's progress. There is a wisdom which is not grief, an increase of knowledge which is not an increase of sorrow. We are reminded of the parallel thought which belongs to a higher region of the spiritual life.*⁸⁰⁴

Solomon comes to many conclusions in the book of Ecclesiastes. However, he seems to negate these conclusions with his final statement.

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Ecclesiastes 2:26 God gives wisdom, knowledge and joy to the man who pleases Him; but to the sinner, God gives him all of the labor—the gathering and the heaping up—so that he can give the benefits to the one who pleases God. That also is just empty and chasing the wind.

Ecclesiastes 2:26a: Wisdom, Knowledge and Joy (various commenators)

Dr. John Gill: *wisdom, and knowledge, and joy; wisdom to acquire knowledge, to keep, use, and improve it; and joy, to be cheerful and thankful for the good things of life: or rather this may design, not natural wisdom, but spiritual wisdom, wisdom in the hidden part, so as to be wise unto salvation, and to walk wisely and circumspectly, a good man's steps being ordered by the Lord; and knowledge of God in Christ, and of Christ, and of the things of the Gospel, and which relate to eternal life; and so spiritual joy, joy and peace in believing, in the presence of God, and communion with him; joy in Christ, and in hope of the glory of God.*⁸⁰⁵

Clarke:

1. God gives wisdom - the knowledge of himself, light to direct in the way of salvation.
2. Knowledge - understanding to discern the operation of his hand; experimental acquaintance with himself, in the dispensing of his grace and the gifts of his Spirit.
3. Joy; a hundred days of ease for one day of pain; one thousand enjoyments for one privation; and to them that believe, peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Spirit.⁸⁰⁶

⁸⁰² *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 24–26 (comment).

⁸⁰³ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:26.

⁸⁰⁴ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:26.

⁸⁰⁵ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:26.

⁸⁰⁶ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:26 (slightly edited).

Ecclesiastes 2:26a: Wisdom, Knowledge and Joy (various commenators)

Trapp, describing the purpose of knowledge and wisdom: *To get these things rightly, and to use them comfortably.*⁸⁰⁷

Dr. Dan Hill: *Now here is the wisest and wealthiest man in the world telling us there are certain things in life that we will never have apart from a relationship with God.*⁸⁰⁸

See also: 2Chron. 31:20–21 Prov. 3:13–18.

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Wisdom, Knowledge and Joy (by Ray C. Stedman)

For to the man who pleases him God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy;... (Eccles. 2:26a RSV) Wisdom and knowledge have been mentioned before as things you can get from "under the sun," but they will not continue. To have added to it the ingredient of pleasure, of continual delight going on and on, unceasing throughout the whole of life, you must take it from the hand of God. The man who pleases God is given the gift of joy.

It is wonderful to realize that this book -- and the whole Bible -- teaches us that God wants us to have joy. He gave us life that we might have joy. In his letter to Timothy, Paul said, "He gives us richly all things to enjoy." It is God's desire and intent that all the good things of life that are mentioned here should contribute to the enjoyment of man; but only, says this Searcher, if you understand that that enjoyment does not come from things or from people. It is an added gift of God, and only those who please God can find it.

How do you please God? In many places in Scripture we are told, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." It is faith that pleases him, belief that he is there and that everything in life comes from his hand. Underscore in your minds the word all. Pain, sorrow, bereavement, disappointment, as well as gladness, happiness and joy, all these things are a gift of God. When we see life in those terms then any and every element of life can have its measure of joy -- even sorrow, pain, and grief. These things were given to us to enjoy. That is the message of this book. The writer will develop this further in the passages that follow.

This is also the message of Rom. 8:28: "All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose." It is also the message of Prov. 3:5–6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths."

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Ecclesiastes 2:26a God gives wisdom, knowledge and joy to the man who pleases Him;...

Whereas, I see Solomon as the one who is given to by God; others see it differently.

Benson: *[Solomon here] seems to intimate the reason why he found no more comfort in his labours, namely, because his ways had been very displeasing to God, and therefore God justly denied him that gift; wisdom and knowledge — To direct him how to use his comforts right, that so they may be*

⁸⁰⁷ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 2:26.

⁸⁰⁸ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> accessed September 1, 2018 (pp. 13–16).

blessings, and not snares and curses to him; and joy — A mind thankful for, and contented with, his portion.⁸⁰⁹

Bishop Patrick: *This is a blessing, which God reserves for him whom He loves; whose sincere piety he rewards with wisdom to judge when, and with knowledge to understand how, he should enjoy and take the comfort of all he has; especially with inward joy, satisfaction of heart, and tranquillity of mind in this favour of God to him; whereby the troublesome affairs of this life are tempered and seasoned.*⁸¹⁰

Ecclesiastes 2:26b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>leh</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
châṭâ' (חַטָּא') [pronounced <i>khaw-TAW</i>]	<i>the sinner, the one sinning [against], the one missing [the mark], the one violating the law, the one in error; the one doing wrong; the one deviating [from], the one straying from or going astray from [with an object]</i>	Qal active participle with the definite article	Strong's #2398 BDB #306
E. W. Bullinger: <i>[The] Hebrew [word] chata'... Occurs again in Ecclesiastes six times. (Eccles. 5:6 Eccles. 7:20 Eccles. 7:26 Eccles. 8:12 Eccles. 9:2 Eccles. 9:18).</i> ⁸¹¹			
nâthan (נָתַן) [pronounced <i>naw-THAHN</i>]	<i>to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set; to make</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5414 BDB #678
'in ^e yân (עִנְיָן) [pronounced <i>gihn-YAWN</i>]	<i>employment, business, occupation, task, job; travail</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #6045 BDB #775

Possibly, this means a *bad business, a bad affair, a bad business transaction.*

Translation: ...but to the sinner, He gives [him excessive] labor... To those who are bad before God, He gives them all of the labor.

God gives travail to the sinner. The Cambridge Bible: *The words point to a further perception of a moral order in the midst of the seeming disorders of the world. The fruitless labour of the sinner in heaping up his often ill-gotten gains is not altogether wasted. His treasure passes into hands that make a better use of it than he has done. So we find a like thought in Prov. 28:8, "Whoever multiplies his wealth by interest and profit gathers it for him who is generous to the poor," [ESV] and in Job 27:16–17 [Though he heap up silver like dust, and pile up clothing like clay, he may pile it up, but the righteous will wear it, and the innocent will divide the silver.—ESV].*⁸¹²

⁸⁰⁹ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:26.

⁸¹⁰ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:26 (slightly edited).

⁸¹¹ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:26 (slightly edited).

⁸¹² *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:26 (edited).

This suggests that, Solomon is looking over his workforce and he has determined, *these are the sinners and God has given them this labor; and I am the one favored by God who has received wisdom, knowledge and joy.*

It is also true that, quiet often, those who are in opposition to God, face a more difficult life. So Solomon, to some degree, is part right.

Others believe that Solomon his talking about himself here, that he has been given the labor:

Ecclesiastes 2:26 God gives wisdom, knowledge and joy to the man who pleases Him; but to the sinner, God gives him all of the labor—the gathering and the heaping up—so that he can give the benefits to the one who pleases God. That also is just empty and chasing the wind.

Ecclesiastes 2:26b: God gives travail to the sinner (various commentators)

Benson: *But to the sinner he gives travail* — He gives him up to insatiable desires, and wearisome labours, to little or no purpose, that he may have no comfort in the riches he gains, but leave them to others, yea, to such as he least expected or desired, to good and virtuous men, into whose hands his estate falls, by the wise and all-disposing providence of God.⁸¹³

Clarke: *But to the sinner he gives travail* - He has a life of labor, disappointment, and distress; for because he is an enemy to God, he travails in pain all his days; and, as the wise man says elsewhere, the wealth of the wicked is laid up for the just. So he loses earthly good, because he would not take a heavenly portion with it.⁸¹⁴

See also Job 27:16–17 Prov. 13:22 28:8.⁸¹⁵

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The problem with Solomon thinking of himself as doing all the labor and yet getting the short stick, who else does he see as profiting from his labors? Surely Solomon sees that the bulk of the material benefits are coming to him, even if he is unhappy.

Ecclesiastes 2:26c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
'âçaph (אָפַף) [pronounced aw-SAHF]	<i>to collect, to relocate, to transfer, to transport, to gather (together), to gather and remove, to remove</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #622 BDB #62
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, וְ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
kânaç (כָּאָץ) [pronounced kaw-NAHS]	<i>to gather [together], to collect; to heap up</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #3664 BDB #488

⁸¹³ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:26 (slightly edited).

⁸¹⁴ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:26 (slightly edited).

⁸¹⁵ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Eccles. 2:26.

Translation: ...—to gather and to heap up—... In other words, all of the scut work. This is the kind of work done by slaves—those who have been captured and subjugated.

There are two views of this portion of v. 26. (1) V. 26c describes this the kind of work, the kind of labor, which God assigns to the sinner. It is to him to do the most menial chores. (2) This describes a man's search for happiness through the accumulation of things.

Trapp is one of the few to see this as a case of #1: *To gather and to heap up.]...to rake and scrape together - the muckworm's occupation.*⁸¹⁶

Ecclesiastes 2:26 God gives wisdom, knowledge and joy to the man who pleases Him; but to the sinner, God gives him all of the labor—the gathering and the heaping up—so that he can give the benefits to the one who pleases God. That also is just empty and chasing the wind.

Although I don't believe that this is the correct interpretation of this phrase in this context, what is said below is true, nonetheless.

Searching for happiness by the accumulation of things (various commentators)

R. B. Thieme, Jr. interprets this: *[To] amass meaningless details of life - money, wealth, power, sex, social life.*⁸¹⁷

Dr. John Gill takes the same approach: *but to the sinner he gives travail, to gather and to heap up; to gather mammon, and to heap up a large possession...to gather together a great deal of riches, but without wisdom and knowledge to use them, without any proper enjoyment of them, or pleasure in them; all he has is a deal of trouble and care to get riches, without any comfort in them.*⁸¹⁸

The College Press Bible Study: *The sinner has a grievous task because he gathers and collects with selfish intent.*⁸¹⁹

Dunagan: *But look at the task given to the sinner, the frustrating business of amassing what cannot be kept. If you decide to reject God, then this is the lot that you have chosen for yourself in life! And you really don't have any right to complain about being miserable or unhappy if that is your choice.*⁸²⁰

There is no joy or satisfaction in life simply from accumulating things.

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Dunagan sees it this way: *From this chapter it would seem that Solomon is saying, "I walked in the shoes of the sinner! I tried to find happiness in things. And I found it to be a very disappointing, frustrating and miserable experience!"*⁸²¹

⁸¹⁶ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 2:26.

⁸¹⁷ From http://syndein.com/Ecclesiastes_2.html accessed July 20, 2018.

⁸¹⁸ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:26.

⁸¹⁹ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 24–26 (comment).

⁸²⁰ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:26.

⁸²¹ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:26.

Ecclesiastes 2:26d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
nâthan (נתן) [pronounced naw-THAHN]	<i>to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set; to make</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #5414 BDB #678
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ṭôwb (טוב) [pronounced toh ^b v]	<i>pleasant, pleasing, agreeable, good, better; approved</i>	masculine singular adjective which can act like a substantive	Strong's #2896 BDB #373
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
pânîym (פנים) [pronounced paw-NEEM]	<i>face, faces countenance; presence</i>	masculine plural noun (plural acts like English singular); with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
Literally, this would be translated <i>to faces of me, to my faces</i> . Together, these words mean <i>before me, before my face, in my presence, in my sight, in front of me; before me (in the sense of, before my time), prior to my being here</i> .			
ʿĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	<i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #430 BDB #43

Translation: ...to give to the [one who is] pleasing before Elohim. By this, God is able to give the good to those who please Him.

The College Press Bible Study: *There are two classes of people who are identified. One is the “good” man who receives approval from God, and thus enjoys his labor. The other is the “sinner” who does not find this approval from God. Perhaps the intention here is to explain that a wise man, in this instance the good man, works in harmony with God’s laws as he interprets them through the revelation of God through nature. As a result he pleases God and finds favor. On the other hand, the sinner is literally one who offends God. He sets aside the rules he discovers in this world. As a result he runs contrary to what he knows to be the better way to live. When one does this, he does not discover wisdom, knowledge or joy.*⁸²²

This appears to be a conclusion that Solomon has come to; perhaps an hypothesis (which may explain some of the conclusions that he comes to in this book). There are those who please God and those who do not. Perhaps God has designed things so that those He does not like, work and suffer, and give much of what they produce to the man who pleases God. Where is Solomon getting this from? He has overseen great building projects in his lifetime, and he has seen slaves working to the point of death, build the Temple, which would be given over to the Levites.

⁸²² *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 24–26 (comment).*

His conclusion appears to be, *I am the good and wise man; these slave workers before me are sinners; they do all the menial labor, and their production is shifted to me.* Whereas, there is some truth to what Solomon says, he is not quite there yet when it comes to understanding his life and the life of others.

His reasoning does not appear to be completely faulty. He is taking what he observes—he is clearly a man known for his wisdom and before him are all of these workers doing the most menial work; and Solomon, more than anyone else, will be the beneficiary. So Solomon takes all of those observations and comes to a conclusion.

In his reasoning, Solomon also throws into the mix the overriding will of God. So he takes his observations and the fact that God is sovereign, and tries to reach some conclusions while mixing these things together. Now, what is the fundamental problem in Solomon's reasoning? That he is much greater than his servants who are doing all of the hard work. In fact, Solomon's reasoning is circular. God redistributes the bulk of the wealth to him, which indicates that he is superior in wisdom and morality; causing him to conclude that, God gives the greater portion to those who please Him.

I am finding the philosophical approach of Solomon to be quite fascinating. And what he lacks, at this point, is divine revelation (which is the basis for the book of Proverbs). At one time, Solomon understood God's plan and his place in it; but now he seems to have lost it.

Application: This tells us that it is possible to break the maturity barrier, and then to lose almost all of it, to a point where you do not know the most basic facts about God.

Ecclesiastes 2:26 God gives wisdom, knowledge and joy to the man who pleases Him; but to the sinner, God gives him all of the labor—the gathering and the heaping up—so that he can give the benefits to the one who pleases God. That also is just empty and chasing the wind.

Ecclesiastes 2:26a-d: Solomon is suggesting that God is the great redistributionist

Barnes: *The doctrine of retribution, or, the revealed fact that God is the moral Governor of the world, is here stated for the first time (compare Eccles. 3:15, Eccles. 3:17 ff) in this book.*⁸²³

The College Press Bible Study: *The sinner does not enjoy what he has gathered. This has been the basic premise of the book thus far. Not only has Solomon demonstrated this to be true, but what the sinner has gathered and collected for his own use will be inherited by one who is "good" in God's sight. This principle of retribution is taught in Prov. 28:8 which reads: "He who increases his wealth by interest and usury, gathers it for him who is gracious to the poor." Again he writes: "The wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous" (Prov. 13:22).*⁸²⁴

Dunagan: *The idea that the sinner only gathers and collects for the righteous seems to be the same idea as the "meek will inherit the earth". Not that the righteous will get all the things owned by sinners, but the righteous end up appreciating the things of this life more than those who worship the things of this life.*⁸²⁵

Expositor's Bible Commentary: *[T]he faculty of enjoying that harvest may be lacking. It is lacking to the sinner; his task is to heap up gains which the good will inherit. But he that is good before God will have the gains of the sinner added to his own, with wisdom to enjoy both. This [Solomon writes] ...is the law of God's giving: that the good shall have abundance, while the bad lack; that more shall be given to him who has wisdom to use what he has aright, while from him who is destitute of this wisdom, even that which he has shall be taken away.*⁸²⁶

⁸²³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:26.

⁸²⁴ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:24–26 (comment).

⁸²⁵ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:26.

⁸²⁶ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:24–26 (slightly edited).

Ecclesiastes 2:26a-d: Solomon is suggesting that God is the great redistributionist

So the argument appears to be, the sinner cannot really enjoy that which God has given him, so why not take from him and give it to the godly man?

As we read these interpretations, remember who Solomon is and how he views this. He is vastly wealthy, a man renowned for his wisdom, and the hardest work is being done by others, and he enjoys the results. But, let's quickly add one thing: Solomon is not really enjoying his life.

Dr. Thomas Constable: *Sometimes God channels the fruits of a wicked person's work into a righteous person's hands.*⁸²⁷

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *Though the retribution be not so visible and immediate now as then, it is no less real.*⁸²⁸

Matthew Henry: *God makes riches a punishment to a bad man if He denies him a heart to take the comfort of them, for they do but tantalize him and tyrannize over him: To the sinner God gives by travail, by leaving him to himself and his own foolish counsels, to gather and to heap up that, which, as to himself, will not only burden him like thick clay (Habbak. 2:6), but be a witness against him and eat his flesh as it were fire (James 5:3); while God designs, by an overruling providence, to give it to him that is good before him; for the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just, and gathered for him that will pity the poor.*

Henry continues: *First, Godliness, with contentment, is great gain; and those only have true joy that are good in God's sight, and that have it from Him and in Him. Secondly, Ungodliness is commonly punished with discontent and an insatiable covetousness, which are sins that are their own punishment. Thirdly, When God gives abundance to wicked men it is with design to force them to a resignation in favour of his own children, when they are of age and ready for it, as the Canaanites kept possession of the good land till the time appointed for Israel's entering upon it.*⁸²⁹

Hard Sayings of the Bible: *God will grant three gifts to those who please Him: wisdom, knowledge and joy. But to the sinner who persists in trying to remake God's world, there is also an outcome: "a chasing after the wind." This reference to the chasing of wind is to the frustrating activity in which the sinner works night and day to keep things up only to find in the end that he must, and as a matter of fact does, turn them over to the one who pleases God.*⁸³⁰

Trapp gives 3 examples: *As he did the Egyptians' goods to Israel, Nabal's to David, Haman's to Mordecai.*⁸³¹

Gary Everett: *The fool will continue in his vain labour and travail, for he is addicted to it, even though it will fall into the hands of another (Eccles. 2:18). By God's design, these possessions will eventually make their way into the hands of a good man. The Scriptures provide a number of examples of the transfer of wealth from the wicked to the righteous.*⁸³²

Exodus 12:35–36 [The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.](#)

⁸²⁷ Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:24–26.

⁸²⁸ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:26.

⁸²⁹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:17–26 (edited).

⁸³⁰ *Hard Sayings of the Bible*; Walter Kaiser Jr., Peter Davids, F.F. Bruce, Manfred Brauch; InterVarsity Press; ©1996; p. 294 (slightly edited).

⁸³¹ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 2:26.

⁸³² Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:26.

Ecclesiastes 2:26a-d: Solomon is suggesting that God is the great redistributionist

Job 27:16–17 Though he heap up silver like dust, and pile up clothing like clay, he may pile it up, but the righteous will wear it, and the innocent will divide the silver.

2Sam. 8:6 Then David put garrisons in Aram of Damascus, and the Syrians became servants to David and brought tribute. And the LORD gave victory to David wherever he went.

2Chron. 9:1 Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to Jerusalem to test him with hard questions, having a very great retinue and camels bearing spices and very much gold and precious stones. And when she came to Solomon, she told him all that was on her mind.

2Chron. 18:1–2 Now Jehoshaphat had great riches and honor, and he made a marriage alliance with Ahab. After some years he went down to Ahab in Samaria. And Ahab killed an abundance of sheep and oxen for him and for the people who were with him, and induced him to go up against Ramath-gilead.

2Chron. 26:8 The Ammonites paid tribute to Uzziah, and his fame spread even to the border of Egypt, for he became very strong.

Psalms 105:44 And He gave them the lands of the nations, and they took possession of the fruit of the peoples' toil,...

Prov. 13:22 A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous.

Prov. 28:8 Whoever multiplies his wealth by interest and profit gathers it for him who is generous to the poor. (ESV; capitalized)

We should bear in mind that, if God sometimes redistributes the wealth of the wicked to the righteous, this certainly implies that, at various points in time, the wicked are going to be wealthy. Logically, you must first possess wealth before God can redistribute it. So, if you view a wicked man

Dr. Dan Hill: *Do the wicked prosper? Of course, and maybe it is to bless the nation, the believers who know God. Don't ever complain about the prosperity of the wicked, the unbeliever, the carnal believer. First, that is they have, and Secondly, their prosperity can bless you. But notice also what he says of their prosperity, it is all like chasing after the wind.*⁸³³

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *Happiness even here is more truly the portion of the godly (Psalm 84:11 Matt. 5:5 Mark 10:29, Mark 10:30 Rom. 8:28 1Tim. 4:8).*⁸³⁴

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Matthew Henry: *Why we should have this in our eye, in the management of ourselves as to this world, and look up to God for it? Because Solomon himself, with all his possessions, could aim at no more and desire no better (Eccles. 2:25): "Who can hasten to this more than I? This is that which I was ambitious of: I wished for no more; and those that have but little, in comparison with what I have, may attain to this, to be content with what they have and enjoy the good of it."* Yet Solomon could not obtain it by his own wisdom, without the special grace of God, and therefore he directs us to expect it from the hand of God and pray to him for it. Secondly, because riches are a blessing or a curse to a man according as he has or has not a heart to make good use of them. God makes them a reward to a good man, if with them he give him wisdom, and knowledge, and joy, to enjoy them cheerfully himself and to communicate them charitably to others.

⁸³³ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> accessed September 1, 2018 (pp. 13–16).

⁸³⁴ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:26.

Henry then adds: *To those who are good in God's sight, who are of a good spirit, honest and sincere, pay a deference to their God and have a tender concern for all mankind, God will give wisdom and knowledge in this world, and joy with the righteous in the world to come...Or He will give that wisdom and knowledge in things natural, moral, political, and divine, which will be a constant joy and pleasure to them.*⁸³⁵

Elsewhere, Henry writes: *Riches are a blessing or a curse to a man, according as he has, or has not, a heart to make a good use of them. To those that are accepted of the Lord, he gives joy and satisfaction in the knowledge and love of him. But to the sinner he allots labour, sorrow, vanity, and vexation, in seeking a worldly portion, which yet afterwards comes into better hands. Let the sinner seriously consider his latter end. To seek a lasting portion in the love of Christ and the blessings it bestows, is the only way to true and satisfying enjoyment even of this present world.*⁸³⁶

This strikes me as a working hypothesis that Solomon has come to, based upon what he has observed. He has come to this conclusion, but is it really true?

The Pulpit Commentary: *The sinner takes great pains, expends continuous labor, that he may amass wealth, but it passes into other (more worthy) hands...This idea is found in Prov. 28:8, "He that augmenteth his substance by usury and increase, gathereth it for him that hath pity upon the poor;" and Ecclesiastes 13:22, "The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the righteous" (comp. Job. 27:16, Job. 27:17). So in the parable of the talents, the talent of the unprofitable servant is given unto him who had made best use of his money (Matt. 25:28).*⁸³⁷

Ecclesiastes 2:26 God gives wisdom, knowledge and joy to the man who pleases Him; but to the sinner, God gives him all of the labor—the gathering and the heaping up—so that he can give the benefits to the one who pleases God. That also is just empty and chasing the wind.

There are times when God does redistribute the wealth of the ungodly (Stedman)

The fourth thing which Solomon says here is that all others labor for the benefit of those who please God. Verse 26b: *...but to the sinner he gives the work of gathering and heaping, only to give to one who pleases God.* (Eccles. 2:26b RSV)

That explains a remarkable thing that I have observed many times. Privileged as I often am to speak in various conference centers around the country, I have often noted the fact that many of these Christian gatherings are held in the expensive homes of millionaires who were not Christians:

I am thinking, for instance, of Glen Eyrie, the headquarters of the Navigators, outside Colorado Springs. There in a beautiful natural glade, General William Palmer, founder of Colorado Springs and founder of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad, built an English-style stone castle for his British bride. She never lived in it more than a few weeks, and he himself never enjoyed that property at all. It sat empty for years. Finally it was sold several times and ended up in the hands of the Navigators, who are using it as a Christian conference ground and world headquarters for their training movement.

Twice I have been invited to be conference speaker at a beautiful site on a bluff overlooking the Columbia River in Oregon, an estate called Menucha. This wonderful home, covering almost an acre of ground, was built by a wealthy Jewish businessman who had little interest in spiritual things. He entertained Presidents at that home, but now it is in the hands of the Alliance Churches of Oregon.

⁸³⁵ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:17–26 (edited).

⁸³⁶ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:18–26.

⁸³⁷ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:26.

There are times when God does redistribute the wealth of the ungodly (Stedman)

You can duplicate this kind of story many, many times. Isn't it remarkable that God so planned life that these multimillionaires in their pursuit of pleasure spent lavishly on their homes in order that their estates might at last be given into the hands of those who please God? These lavish spenders will not get anything for all their efforts. There is a deep irony about this.

From www.raystedman.org/ accessed July 27, 2018. Copyright © 2010 by Ray Stedman Ministries.

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Solomon has decided that, if God does redistribute the wealth, then this also is empty and chasing the wind:

I need to expand on this list at some point. I had been thinking about such a list in the past few weeks—called something like, Solomon's theological understanding of God in the book of Ecclesiastes. This is a quick view of that.

Solomon's View of God in Ecclesiastes (New International Dictionary of OT Theology)

There is an interesting list concerning Qoheleth's understanding of God's actions in this fallen, temporal world (i.e., NIDOTTE, vol. 4, p. 553):

God is:

1. Creator, Eccles. 11:5; Eccles. 12:1; Eccles. 12:7 (like Psalms)
2. Judge, Eccles. 3:17–18; Eccles. 11:9
3. Benefactor, Eccles. 2:24–26; Eccles. 3:13; Eccles. 5:18–20
4. One to be feared, Eccles. 3:14; Eccles. 5:1–7; Eccles. 7:18 (like Proverbs)
5. One to be obeyed, Eccles. 5:4; Eccles. 7:26; Eccles. 8:2; Eccl. 13:13–14 (like Proverbs)
6. One causality in the universe, Eccles. 3:11; Eccles. 5:18 to Eccles. 6:2; Eccles. 7:13–14 (like Psalms)
7. Unknowable, Eccles. 3:11; Eccles. 8:16 to Eccles. 9:1 (like Job)
8. Fair, Eccles. 8:12–13

What we do not appear to have is God the Redeemer, God Who is gracious, the God Who forgives.

In Solomon's fall from grace, he did not appear to ever lose his faith in God; but his full understanding of God took quite a beating.

Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org/; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:24–26 (slightly edited).

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Ecclesiastes 2:26e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
gam (גַּם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i>]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, as well; even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced <i>zeh</i>]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	masculine singular demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260

Ecclesiastes 2:26e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
The NET Bible: <i>The antecedent of the demonstrative pronoun רֶה (zeh, "this") is debated: (1) Some refer it to the enjoyment which Qoheleth had just commended in 2:24-26. However, this is inconsistent with the enjoyment theme found elsewhere in the book. It also ignores the fact that 2:24-26 states that such enjoyment is a good gift from God. (2) Others refer it to the term "toil" (מַלְמַע, 'amal) which is repeated throughout 2:18-26. However, Qoheleth affirmed that if one is righteous, he can find enjoyment in his toil, even though so much of it is ultimately futile. (3) Therefore, it seems best to refer it to the grievous "task" (מְיֻנָּן, 'inyan) God has given to the sinner in 2:26b. Consistent with the meaning of לְבָה (hevel, "futile; profitless; fruitless"), 2:26b emphasizes that the "task" of the sinner is profitless: he labors hard to amass wealth, only to see the fruit of his labor given away to someone else. The righteous man's enjoyment of his work and the fruit of his labor under the blessing of God (2:24-26a) is not included in this.</i> ⁸³⁸			
hebel (לְבָה) [pronounced HEH ^b -veh]	vapor, breath; mist, darkness; unsubstantial, emptiness, empty, vanity, meaningless, vacuous; vain, vainly; idol	masculine singular noun; pausal form	Strong's #1892 BDB #210
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or וּ) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
r ^e uwth (תוּעַר) [pronounced reh-GOOH]	longing, striving; grasping after; chasing after; a vexation	feminine singular construct	Strong's #7469 BDB #946
rûwach (רוּחַ) [pronounced ROO-ahkh]	wind, breath, spirit, apparition	feminine singular noun	Strong's #7307 BDB #924
Solomon is repeating these words from vv. 11 & 18.			
This striving after or chasing after the wind is found 9 times total in the book of Ecclesiastes.			
Dr. John Gill: <i>it is vanity to the sinner, a breaking of spirit.</i> ⁸³⁹			

Translation: This also [is just] breath and chasing after wind. But all of this is, to Solomon, empty and chasing after wind.

Perhaps Solomon is first stating a conclusion that he has come to; or an hypothesis, but that is just seems empty in stating it. Solomon tries this philosophical approach, and then he says, "This is empty; this is like chasing after wind." Then he will try another philosophical approach, concluding, "This too is a dead end; I am still chasing after wind."

The accuracy of Solomon's hypothesis is revealed by his final disposition of the matter, that this approach is also empty as air; as if one is chasing wind.

Ecclesiastes 2:26 God gives wisdom, knowledge and joy to the man who pleases Him; but to the sinner, God gives him all of the labor—the gathering and the heaping up—so that he can give the benefits to the one who pleases God. That also is just empty and chasing the wind.

⁸³⁸ From https://bible.org/netbible/ecc2_notes.htm accessed July 20, 2018.

⁸³⁹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:26.

Ecclesiastes 2:26e: Just what is breath and chasing the wind? (Commentators)

David Guzik: *This also is vanity and grasping for the wind*: The Preacher knew that his seeming redistribution from God's hand was not enough to give true meaning to life lived under the sun.⁸⁴⁰

Barnes: *Not only the travail of the sinner. Even the best gifts of God, wisdom, knowledge, and joy, so far as they are given in this life, are not permanent, and are not always (see Eccles. 9:11) efficacious for the purpose for which they appear to be given.*⁸⁴¹

Matthew Henry: *This is also vanity and vexation of spirit. It is vanity, at the best, even to the good man; when he has all that the sinner has scraped together it will not make him happy without something else; but it is vexation of spirit to the sinner to see what he had laid up enjoyed by him that is good in God's sight, and therefore evil in his. So that, take it which way you will, the conclusion is firm, All is vanity and vexation of spirit.*⁸⁴²

The College Press Bible Study sees it this way: *The vanity of "striving after wind" of verse twenty-six, does not refer to the activities of the good man. It has reference to the sinner who is collecting and gathering fruit of his labor, but will not enjoy it because it will soon belong to another. (Read carefully Eccles. 2:11, 17-18.)*⁸⁴³

G. Campbell Morgan: *This repetition of Solomon's main theme concludes round 1 of facts proving it: the monotonous, repetitious grind of the material universe (1:4-11), his unparalleled acquisition of knowledge and wisdom that brought great grief (1:12-18), his pursuing lawful and unlawful pleasures beyond what most people could even imagine that left him feeling empty (2:1-3), and his amassing wealth beyond measure that truly was of little value (2:4-11). Here is a man richly endowed in himself, living in the midst of marvelous things, yet finding nothing in them upon reflection. Solomon's example is meant to keep us from thinking we would be happy if only we had more knowledge, pleasures, and wealth. Solomon is teaching us to think about life from a spiritual perspective over the sun and above the material. Forgetting that, everything is vanity. This is as modern as the ennui, disillusion, disappointment, and despair of every person who seeks satisfaction in life through knowledge, pleasure, wealth, and anything else apart from God.*⁸⁴⁴

Keil and Delitzsch: *[It is called] "striving after the wind," because that which is striven for, when one thinks that he has it, only too often cannot be grasped, but vanishes into nothing.*

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 2:26 God gives wisdom, knowledge and joy to the man who pleases Him; but to the sinner, God gives him all of the labor—the gathering and the heaping up—so that he can give the benefits to the one who pleases God. That also is just empty and chasing the wind.

Ron Snider's translation of Ecclesiastes 2:26 For to a person who is good in His sight He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight. This too is vanity and striving after wind.

Ecclesiastes 2:26 Exposition (Ron Snider)

1. Qoheleth now continues his explanation of the fact that whatever measure of happiness may be found

⁸⁴⁰ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 2:1–26.

⁸⁴¹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:26.

⁸⁴² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 2:17–26.

⁸⁴³ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:24–26 (comment).

⁸⁴⁴ From <https://allacin.blogspot.com/search/label/Ecclesiastes> accessed September 8, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 2:26 Exposition (Ron Snider)

in life does not ultimately originate with man himself.

2. He now explains his rationale with respect to how he sees the sovereign God dealing with the human race
3. He simply divides humanity into two classes of individuals—those that are good in his sight, and those that are sinners
4. While these are certainly the two extremes, it would appear that the terms are to be taken in a moral sense of the one that pleases God and the one that misses the mark
5. This brings the attribute of righteousness to bear since the mark they are missing must be related to God's perfect standards
6. There is no evidence here that Qoheleth is remotely attempting to say that God gives good things to good people and bad things to bad people, as some have attempted to suggest
7. What he is explaining, beginning with the causal כִּי (kiy—for, because) is that there are two distinct categories of humanity and God deals with each of them according to His sovereign choice
8. The first category is identified in the text as a man who is good, an individual that is contrasted with the more succinct term a sinner
9. Again, there is reason to read a moral connotation into the words; one should understand them as referring to the one of whom God approves, and the one who misses the mark
10. Ginsberg is close to the truth as he observes, "these terms mean respectively 'pleasing to God' and 'displeasing to God'—not righteous and wicked.
11. However, is not one pleasing to God or displeasing because he is either living according to God's standards or he is not
12. In that regard, we are dealing with the simplest categories of positive volition and negative volition this would include the entire human race, encompassing believers and unbelievers alike
13. We certainly know that negative unbelievers miss the mark in a far greater way than negative believers; however, the point here is that we are dealing with all those that miss the mark
14. Therefore, in context, the man who is good is the man that hits the mark with respect to God and His plan
15. The overriding consideration that is not to be overlooked here is that we are not talking about human evaluation, what the human race thinks, or how it evaluates people; the qualifier that really matters is whether one is acceptable before Elohim
16. His standards, and His standards alone, form the basis by which the sovereign God chooses to impart His gifts and blessings to the human race
17. In that regard, if anyone intends to come under the greatest blessings of God, he must recognize, understand, and orient to God's standards
18. Further, every believer should have a strong grasp on the concept of volition, and the difference between positive and negative volition
19. Positive volition is defined as one that wants a relationship with God, and is willing to orient himself to God and His way of doing things
20. Negative volition either does not want a relationship with God, or it refuses to humble itself and do things in the way that God has established
21. Qoheleth is not saying that God simply makes sovereign choices to bless some and frustrate others apart from any other considerations
22. God is not arbitrary (although this verse may tend to make it sound that way); He exercises His sovereign will according to, and in harmony with, all the other attributes of the Divine Essence
23. We know (as Solomon knew) that God is righteous; this chief attribute of His essence is the sum total of all His norms and standards with respect to what is right or correct. 1Kings 8:4
24. In that regard, God can do nothing that would violate His own standards of righteousness, even when it might be in the best interests of others for Him to do so. Ps. 89:14
25. This attribute of the Divine Essence forms the basis as to why Elohiym is holy, separate from all that which is not compatible with His standards of right and wrong. Ps. 97:
26. Therefore, we can readily identify the man who is good in His sight as the man that seeks to orient to God's standards. Jn. 14:2
27. Given what Solomon knew of the Old Testament, it would seem that his clear definition of the man who was good before God was the one who listened to God and applied what he learned. Ex. 15:2

Ecclesiastes 2:26 Exposition (Ron Snider)

28. This demonstrates the fear of the Lord and true humility; anyone that insists on doing things in his own way, and is rejecting God's way at that point, is manifesting a very real lack of the fear of the Lord
29. In both cases, the Qal perfect of the Hebrew verb נתן (nathan—give, He has given) is used in a gnomic sense, which is designed to convey a constant, axiomatic, or universal truth
30. Further, the use of that verb emphasizes the grace nature of God's plan, which does not emphasize human achievement, but orientation to God and reception of His grace blessings
31. What should be very obvious in this verse is not only the two divisions of humanity, those that please God and those that don't, but the nature of what comes to each category
32. The blessings of God promised to any man who is good in his sight are the intangible blessings of wisdom, knowledge, and joy
33. The wisdom, knowledge, and joy that God provides must be quite different from the wisdom, knowledge, and joy that a man can provide for himself
34. This seems evident based on the words of Qoheleth, who has previously acknowledged that his own wisdom, knowledge, and pleasure has proven to be quite unsatisfactory. Eccles. 1:13,18, 2:1,
35. Therefore, we must make a clear distinction between the blessings of God, which are freely given under grace, and those things that are pursued and apprehended by human ability and effort
36. The latter will prove to be unsatisfying in the long term; the former are grace gifts that can ultimately provide lasting satisfaction
37. While God provides positive rewards that ultimately make life worthwhile for those that please Him, He establishes the thankless task of amassing things for those that miss the mark spiritually
38. The task of gathering and collecting refers to the tangible, material things in life that materialistic people tend to spend their time pursuing and collecting
39. This is reminiscent of the agricultural world, which encompasses the work of the farmer reaping his crops and then storing them up in the barn
40. However, the irony is that those that miss the mark before God will find their storehouses are not safe, and their goods will eventually be given to another. Lk. 12:2
41. Ultimately, God will work by His own sovereign means to redistribute the wealth that so many have wasted their lives pursuing and amassing
42. There certainly seems to be an element of despair in this recognition that it is not man, but God, who ultimately determines the disposition of His blessings and the world's goods
43. Perhaps Qoheleth recognized that he had not been the sort of man that was good in God's sight; he certainly recognized and lamented the fact that all his goods were going to be given to someone else upon his death. Eccles. 2:18-2
44. However, the recognition of the sovereign working of God behind the obvious inequities of life is designed to bring a measure of comfort to the positive believer.

Snider suggests the Doctrine of the Essence of God and the Doctrine of Volition.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#); accessed September 2, 2018 (will open as a Word Document on your computer).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Pastor John Griffith's translation of Ecclesiastes 2:24–26 [There is not good in man that he should be able to eat or drink and get satisfaction from his labor. Even this, I have seen is from the hand of God. For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him? For to a person who is good in His sight He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight. This too is vanity and striving after wind.](#)

Observations on Ecclesiastes 2:24–26 (Pastor John Griffith)

1. There is nothing inherently good in man. (All have sinned and fall short of the glory - essence character the +R std of God) The "good" one is the one who is righteous before God - who stands justified before

Observations on Ecclesiastes 2:24–26 (Pastor John Griffith)

Him by means of faith in Lord Jesus Christ.

2. With a personal relationship with the Living God thru His Son all of life is meaningful - has purpose. (this is Life above the sun)
3. It is God alone, not things or human wisdom, who gives satisfaction and joy in life. (+H)
4. Part of the distortion - deception of sin nature is to get us to believe that it's the world - kosmos system - that is the source of enjoyment in life and God who clubs us if we want to have fun.
5. God uses the labor of UnBel'rs for the believer's benefit in time. - Prov 13:22; Job 27:16-17
6. God can turn even a little into +H for the believer applying His word. - Ps 37:16; Prov 15:16; 16:8; Philip. 4:10-13; 1 Tim 6:6

From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_08.html accessed September 1, 2018 (slightly edited).

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[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Solomon seems to have come to a solid conclusion in vv. 24–25, but suddenly, he says that this is empty and chasing after wind.

Conclusions made by Solomon at the end of Ecclesiastes 2 (various commentators)

Ray C. Stedman: *This also is vanity and a striving after wind.* (Eccles. 2:26c RSV) *Isn't it strange that the more you run after life, panting after every pleasure, the less you find, but the more you take life as a gift from God's hand, responding in thankful gratitude for the delight of the moment, the more that seems to come to you? Even the trials, the heartaches and handicaps that others seek to avoid are touched with the blessing of heaven and seem to minister to the heart of the one who has learned to take them from the hand of God.*

Stedman continues: *That is the philosophy that pleases God, and that is what the Searcher is talking about here. All the objections that can be raised against this are going to be examined and tested in the pages that follow. When we finish the book we will find that the Searcher has established without a doubt that joy is a gift of God, and it comes to those who take life daily, whatever it may bring, from the hand of a loving Father.*

The College Press Bible Study: *To try and discover happiness where God has not ordained that happiness can be found, has always been man's failing. Jesus redirects men's minds to those higher and nobler efforts which result in genuine happiness. Never has it been that joy results from the pursuit of joy. Our Lord's beatitudes underscore the truth that when one seeks higher values such as purity, peace, and righteousness, that "blessedness," in this case "joy," overtakes him, and he discovers that he is experiencing real joy where God has ordained that it is to be found.*⁸⁴⁵

Dr. Thomas Constable: *Since we cannot expect permanent changes to come out of our work, changes that will continue forever after, the best we can do is to enjoy its fruits and find some satisfaction in the work itself (cf. Eccles. 3:12-13; Eccles. 3:22; Eccles. 5:18-19; Eccles. 8:15; Eccles. 9:7; Eccles. 9:9). This is the first of seven passages in which the writer recommended the wholehearted pursuit of enjoyment (Eccles. 2:24 a; Eccles. 3:12; Eccles. 3:22 a; Eccles. 5:17; Eccles. 8:15 a; Eccles. 9:7-9 a; and Eccles. 11:7 to Eccles. 12:1 a), and they make the point with increasing intensity and solemnity. [Note: For a study of these passages, see R. N. Whybray, "Qoheleth, Preacher of Joy," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 23 (1982):87-98, reprinted in Zuck, ed., *Reflecting with . . .*, pp. 203-12.] However, this is possible only with God's help (Eccles. 2:24-25).*

⁸⁴⁵ The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:24–26 (comment).

Conclusions made by Solomon at the end of Ecclesiastes 2 (various commentators)

Later, Constable writes: *In these verses, Solomon implied that God's rewarding or punishing a person for his trust in God and his ethical behavior would take place before death. This is normally what happens (cf. Proverbs). Therefore, Solomon's counsel is good advice. However, from later revelation we learn that final judgment will take place after this life, and that God's rewards are not just temporal but eternal (cf. Job's problem). Therefore, as believers, we can find greater satisfaction in our work itself than Solomon could. In short, later revelation has not invalidated Solomon's views but enriched them.*⁸⁴⁶

The Open Bible: *This is one of the several conclusions that assert the best way to approach life. It calls for us to (1) enjoy the simple things of life—food, drink, work; (2) recognize God as the source of all benefits (James 1:17); and (3) recognize that the good things from His hand are designed for our enjoyment. See also Ecclesiastes 8:15 9:7–10 12:13–14.*⁸⁴⁷

Whedon: *A final comparison to the advantage of obedience to God, is now drawn. No solid, satisfying good is obtained from worldly pursuits, as thus far tried. But Koheleth affirms from his experience that God gives to the obedient much gratification as they pass through life, and the sinner seems often as a servant working for the happiness of better men than himself. Yet even this — the experience of a brief and transient life — cannot satisfy the craving of a human soul.*⁸⁴⁸

Wiersbe: *Solomon is not advocating 'Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die!' That is the philosophy of fatalism not faith. Rather, he is saying, 'Thank God for what you do have, and enjoy it to the glory of God.'*⁸⁴⁹

The Pulpit Commentary: *Taking the view contained in verse 24 as the central idea of the passage, we see that Koheleth feels that the restriction upon man's enjoyment of labor imposed by God's moral government makes that toil vain because its issue is not in men's hands, and it is a striving for or a feeding on wind because the result is unsatisfying and vanishes in the grasp.*⁸⁵⁰

Expositor's Bible Commentary; *Nevertheless even this wise use and enjoyment of temporal good does not and cannot satisfy the craving heart of man; even this, when it is made the ruling aim and chief good of life, is vexation of spirit.*⁸⁵¹

Dr. Bob Utley: *[T]hese verses offer a new perspective on the author's previous comments about the futility of life (i.e., enjoy the immediate). However, they seem to answer the question of Eccles. 1:3. It is true there is no lasting benefit (cf. Eccles. 2:11) apart from God, but Eccles. 2:24-26 finally brings "above the sun" into focus. There is more to life than birth, life, and inevitable death. There is God, judgment, and an afterlife. Things will be set straight (cf. Eccles. 1:15), but not here, not now. Unfairness, injustice, and vanity seem to reign (because of the Fall, cf. Genesis 3), but wait, God reigns! He and His will spend eternity together. For now, the righteous must trust in His revelation, this world-view and enjoy the simple daily pleasures that this world offers (when and while one can).*⁸⁵²

⁸⁴⁶ Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:24–26.

⁸⁴⁷ *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 861 (footnote).

⁸⁴⁸ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 2:26.

⁸⁴⁹ Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:24–26.

⁸⁵⁰ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:26.

⁸⁵¹ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:24–26.

⁸⁵² Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 2:24–26.

Conclusions made by Solomon at the end of Ecclesiastes 2 (various commentators)

The Cambridge Bible: *[The Qoheleth] practically confesses that the life of the pleasure-seeker, or the ambitious, or the philosopher seeking wisdom as an end, was not good before God, and therefore failed to bring contentment.*⁸⁵³

James Burton Coffman: *One may chase any earthly rainbow that he may choose, but, apart from the blessing of God, the utmost futility, despair and destruction will be his eternal reward. The forcefulness with which Ecclesiastes teaches this truth is the secret of its value.*⁸⁵⁴

The NIV Study Bible: *Only in God does life have meaning and true pleasure. Without Him, nothing satisfies, but with Him, we find satisfaction and enjoyment. True pleasure comes only when we acknowledge and revere God (Ecclesiastes 12:13).*⁸⁵⁵

We should bear in mind that, even though God is brought into the picture at this point in Solomon's set of discourses, this does not mean that he has come upon the final answer (which is made clear by his final words in this verse). There is no indication that Solomon ever stopped believing in God. The problem is, Solomon has lost sight of Who and What God is, and how his life is related to the God of the Universe.

Let me offer a problem with Solomon's logic. On the one hand, he speaks of wealth being redistributed to those approved of by God; but, on the other hand, he speaks of his wealth remaining here on earth when he dies; and that wealth being under the control of an heir who may not be all that wise. Do you see the contradiction in his logic? I believe that Solomon does as well, so, in Eccles. 3, he will take a different approach.

J. Vernon McGee: *If you are living just for self — whether you are God's man or an unregenerate sinner — it will come to naught. It will lead to bitterness in your heart, and you will be holding nothing but dead leaves in your hands at the end.*⁸⁵⁶

You have, no doubt, had a dream where you got something that you wanted, but then you woke up, and it was gone—poof!—as if it did not exist (well, it didn't). When you pass from this life to the next, all that you have accumulated in material goods will remain here, on earth.

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Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *The godly Solomon had satisfaction in his riches and wisdom, when God gave them (2Chron. 1:11, 2Chron. 1:12). The backsliding Solomon had no happiness when he sought it in them apart from God; and the riches which he heaped up became the prey of Shishak (2Chron. 12:9).*⁸⁵⁷

One of the things which I find remarkable is a man like Solomon, who had, at one time, a great spiritual life and great knowledge of things theological, to be now at a place where he seems to have no more than the most basic understanding of God and His relationship to man. In fact, I think that it might be an interesting study to see how Solomon views God, as per the book of Ecclesiastes. What does he seem to recall, understand and apply to how own life?

It is quite amazing that Ecclesiastes was written by the same man who built the Temple of God and the same man who gave that tremendous inaugural address. We see just how far Solomon has wandered from his spiritual knowledge and from his previous level of spiritual maturity.

⁸⁵³ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 2:26.

⁸⁵⁴ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-2.html> accessed September 2, 2018.

⁸⁵⁵ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 988 (footnote) (slightly edited).

⁸⁵⁶ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt (chapter 2) accessed September 3, 2018.

⁸⁵⁷ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:26.

Minimal Requirements for the Church Age Believer: It is not just the natural man or carnal Christians who lack contentment and direction in life. This occurs among the clergy and in congregations. Some churches work very hard to entertain their congregation; so give them a high, to make them feel good for having gone to church—but that is emotion and it is fleeting.

There is no substitute for Bible doctrine; there is no substitute for a church teaching the Christian way of life; there is no substitute for knowing spiritual mechanics.

I know of one particular believer, R. B. Thieme, Jr., who devoted his life to studying and teaching the Word. According to his own testimony, he might spend 8, 10 or 12 hours a day studying the Bible. Bob was the exception; and he gave himself over to teaching a very intensive schedule, up to 9 classes a week. He would teach for an hour and fifteen minutes a class, and he talked fast. This is quite rare for a pastor-teacher. Pastor-teachers who have come out of Berachah Church typically teach 2–4 classes per week, hour long sermons, limited both by their own ability to study (few men can approximate Bob's schedule of study), and partially limited by interest (in Houston, there were people—thousands, in fact—who came Berachah and got 7 or 8 sessions of teaching in each week; but this is also rare).

Personally, I am able to put in 3–5 hours a day studying and writing; and I suspect that pastors who have come out of Berachah probably do about the same. How Bob was able to put in 8+ hour days of studying still amazes me.

For the average believer, I think about an hour a day of Bible study, taught by a well-qualified pastor-teacher, is about right. For the rest of that day, you will be faced with human viewpoint and the philosophy of the cosmic system coming from every direction (be it newspapers, television, interaction with co-workers, whatever). An hour a day of accurate Bible teaching gives you enough information to be able to live in a fallen world, but not be sucked into the **cosmic vortex**.

Satan's strategy is to influence your thinking so that you think like he thinks. We are bombarded with human viewpoint and Satanic thinking almost for the entire day. The accurate teaching of doctrine keeps us from succumbing to worldly wisdom.

*The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Thus the First Act of the Drama closes with a negative. The moral problem is as far from being solved as at the outset. All we have learned is that one or two avenues along which we urge the quest will not lead us to the end we seek. As yet the Preacher has only the ad interim conclusion to offer us, that both Wisdom and Mirth are good, though neither, nor both combined, is the supreme Good; that we are therefore to acquire wisdom and knowledge, and to blend pleasure with our toils; that we are to believe pleasure and wisdom to be the gifts of God, to believe also that they are bestowed, not in caprice, but according to a law which deals out good to the good and evil to the evil. We shall have other opportunities of weighing and appraising his counsel—it is often repeated—and of seeing how it works into and forms part of Coheleth's final solution of the painful riddle of the earth, the baffling mystery of life.*⁸⁵⁸

The College Press Bible Study ties chapter 2 directly to the next chapter: *The division of chapter three at this particular verse is unfortunate. The same theme is under consideration in all twenty-two verses. In Eccles. 3:9 the basic question is asked once again: "What profit is there to the worker from that in which he toils?" The entire chapter is an amplification of chapter two. How can man discover a profit from his labor? First, by submitting to the fact that God does things appropriately in His own time. Second, eat, drink, work, and do good in one's lifetime. Third, do not be discouraged by the similar fate (death) of both man and beast as man does not have the knowledge to see his future, and thus he should be happy in his activities day-by-day. The profit is limited but it is there. Joy is his*

⁸⁵⁸ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:24–26.

reward. Solomon states it clearly: “Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy one-self in all one’s labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward” (Eccles. 5:18).⁸⁵⁹

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www.kukis.org	Exegetical Studies in Ecclesiastes	

A Set of Summary Doctrines and Commentary

When I study a chapter of the Bible, one of the questions which I nearly always have is, *why is this chapter in the Word of God?*

Why Ecclesiastes 2 is in the Word of God

1. Fundamentally, we learn that there is no happiness or contentment to be found in stimulation, possessions or in leaving some sort of a legacy (in Solomon’s case, buildings).
2. No one in human history has greater ability to fulfill all his desires than Solomon. We can trust the experiments the Solomon has tried in this book.
3. True happiness cannot be found by means of self-indulgence.
4. Solomon produced buildings, gardens, orchards and ponds used to water his gardens. None of this gave him soul-fulfillment.
5. Solomon became the ultimate consumer; but this did not make him happy.
6. We learn that temporary stimulation does not equal long-term happiness.
7. We ask the interesting question, *is there really superiority in wisdom over foolishness?*
8. The true temporal nature of life is examined. This is naturally contrasted with those things which are permanent.
9. We find that Solomon had no idea that his writings would be studied thousands of years later.
10. Despite a life of productive building, Solomon has come to hate his life on earth. This is a man who has virtually everything that the world has to offer.
11. We see that despite his life and accomplishments, Solomon could not even get a restful sleep.

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When studying a chapter in the Bible, there are a number of topics which that study leads to.

What We Learn from Ecclesiastes 2

1. We learn about various hedonistic approaches and that what Solomon does will not bring him happiness. Furthermore, if we can think of other things to do, we will not be happy either.
2. We will all have contact with God’s justice, whether we believe in God or not. Jesus is either our Savior or He is our Judge.
3. We are in opposition to God; that is in our basic DNA to rebel against Him.

⁸⁵⁹ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:24–26 (comment).

What We Learn from Ecclesiastes 2

4. We do find out that Solomon does appear to have a passion in life, which is building.
5. We studied psychotropic drugs and suicide in the United States.
6. We thought about the crass consumerism in the United States, and the attempts to find happiness through retail therapy.
7. We studied a little about ancient slavery.
8. We studied how the wives and mistresses of Solomon and David were analogous to welfare mothers today. Welfare mothers today attempt to bypass divine institutions #2-4.
9. We studied labor or work, the second divine institution.
10. I worked for years in the classroom, and have come to the realization that, after a time, all of those words will be long gone and forgotten.
11. Entertainers who committed suicide need to study Solomon.
12. We study the concept of contentment and happiness and the believer in Jesus Christ. The believer who has not advanced toward a life of contentment or happiness is doing it wrong.
13. We draw some comparisons between Solomon the builder and Donald Trump the builder.
14. We studied how two people with virtually the exact same circumstances of life where one is happy and the other is not.
15. Solomon is older, has produced more, and yet, he is unhappy.
16. We also contrasted Solomon the father to Donald Trump the father.
17. We studied Solomon's words, to see if he was promoting hedonism or not.
18. We see how Solomon has seemed to have a deist view of God at this time. We briefly study Solomon's view of God in the book of Ecclesiastes.
19. We see that the Christian way of life is not asceticism.
20. We studied some about how to choose the best text when there is a discrepancy.
21. We study what the minimal requirements are for the Church Age believer.

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Many chapters of the Bible look forward to Jesus Christ in some way or another. A person or situation might foreshadow the Lord or His work on the cross (or His reign over Israel in the Millennium). The chapter may contain a prophecy about the Lord or it may, in some way, lead us toward the Lord (for instance, by means of genealogy).

Jesus Christ in Ecclesiastes 2

Jesus Christ is much harder to find in the book of Ecclesiastes. Solomon is searching for happiness and contentment apart from the LORD, so that even his references to God are often superficial and lacking in doctrinal depth.

Solomon recognizes the very temporal nature of his life and all his works, which is the opposite of what we are offered in Christ. Solomon was a very productive man, but even he recognized that he would be soon forgotten.

Solomon had human viewpoint wisdom. He could look around and evaluate life around himself, but he was unable to attain happiness and contentment.

Solomon's view of God appeared to be similar to the deist; and his view of life was sullen and without contentment. Again, far separated from the life of God which is in Christ Jesus.

There were several occasions where we were able to, in this study of Ecclesiastes 2, do some tangential studies of the believer in Jesus Christ and how his light ought not be marked with unhappiness and frustration.

Jesus Christ in Ecclesiastes 2

It is Solomon's inability to relate to God as He truly is which led to a portion of his life being marked by frustration, sleeplessness, and unhappiness. Therefore, what particularly stands out in Ecclesiastes 2 is the absence of Jesus Christ in the life of Solomon at this time.

As an aside, Solomon had believed in the Revealed God and was eternally saved. But, he entered into reversionism and lost virtually all of his spiritual growth.

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Watkinson has an interesting take and division of this chapter of Ecclesiastes:

The Threefold View of Human Life (from W. L. Watkinson)

Three views of human life are given in this remarkable chapter.

- I. The theatrical view of life (Eccles. 2:1–11). The writer seeks to prove his heart with mirth and laughter; he treats his flesh with wine; he gathers peculiar treasure; he is enamoured of greatness, magnificence, and abundance; he delights in architecture, scenery, literature, music, song. Everything is spectacular, dazzling, wonderful. This is a very misleading idea of the world in which we find ourselves.
 1. It is partial. Nothing whatever is said here of the problems which challenge us—of duty, enterprise, discipline, work, sacrifice, suffering; nothing about character or conduct. It really leaves out two-thirds of life, and the noblest two-thirds.
 2. It is exaggerated. It contemplates great works, great possessions, and great fame. Life is largely made up of commonplace tasks, homely faces, uneventful days, monotonous experiences.
 3. It is selfish. You see throughout how prominent the individual is. It is all "I." The writer never thinks of other people except as they may enhance his pleasure, or be spectators of his glory.
 4. It is superficial. There is not a word about conscience, righteousness, responsibility. Now beware of the theatrical view of life—of the great, the gaudy, the glistening. True life, as a rule, is simple, sober, and severe. Beware of companions who would represent life to you in a gay and voluptuous light. Beware also of your reading, and see that it does not give a false and delusive idea of the life that awaits you. The world is not a theatre, not a magician's cave, not a carnival; it is a temple where all things are serious and sacred.
- II. The sepulchral view of life (Eccles. 2:12–23). Men usually start with the rosy ideal of life, and then finding its falsity—that there are tears as well as laughter—they sink into vexation and despair, and paint all things black as night. But the world is not emptiness; it is a cup deep and large, delightful and overflowing. Fulness, not emptiness, is the sign of the world. There is the fulness of nature—of intellectual life—of society—of practical life—the manifold and enduring unfolding of the interests and movements and fortunes of humanity. There is the fulness of religious life. A true man never feels the world to be limited, meagre, shallow. God is no mockery, and He will not mock us.
- III. The religious view of life (Eccles. 2:24–26).
 1. The purification and strengthening of the soul will secure to us all the brightness and sweetness of life.
 2. And as the Spirit of Christ leads to the realization of the bright side of the world, so shall it fortify you against the dark side. Carry the Spirit of Christ into this dark side, and you shall rejoice in tribulation also. In one of the illustrated magazines I noticed a picture of the flower-market of Madrid in a snowstorm. The golden and purple glories were mixed with the winter's snow. And in a true Christian life sorrow is strangely mingled with joy. Winter in Siberia is one thing, winter in the flower-market of the South is another thing; and so the power of sorrow is broken and softened in the Christian life by great convictions, consolations, and hopes. Do not accept the theatrical view of life; life is not all beer and skittles, operas, banquets, galas, and burlesques. Do not accept the sepulchral theory of life; it is absolutely false. Toqueville said to Sumner, "Life is neither a pain nor a pleasure, but serious business, which it is our duty to carry through and conclude with honour." This is a true and noble conception of life, and it can be fulfilled only as Christ renews and

The Threefold View of Human Life (from W. L. Watkinson)

strengthens us.

The Biblical Illustrator; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Eccles. 2:1–26.

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Addendum

This organization comes from Dr. Thomas Constable. I have used the ESV; capitalized below.

Solomon's Investigations and His Conclusions

Investigation

Conclusion/Evaluation

Eccles. 1:12–15 I the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven. It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind. What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted.

Eccles. 1:16–18 I said in my heart, "I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge." And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind. For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

Solomon's Investigations and His Conclusions

Investigation	Conclusion/Evaluation
<p>Eccles. 2:1–11 I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself." But behold, this also was vanity. I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?" I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine—my heart still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life. I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the sons of man. So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.</p>	<p>Eccles. 2:12–17 So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly. For what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done. Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in light than in darkness. The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them. Then I said in my heart, "What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?" And I said in my heart that this also is vanity. For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool! So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind.</p>

Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:12–2:17 (expanded with the text from Scripture).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Rehoboam Succeeds Solomon

Scripture	Text/Commentary
<p>1Ki 12:1 Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king.</p> <p>1Ki 12:2 And as soon as Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard of it (for he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), then Jeroboam returned from Egypt.</p>	

Rehoboam Succeeds Solomon

Scripture

Text/Commentary

1Ki 12:3 And they sent and called him, and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and said to Rehoboam,

1Ki 12:4 "Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke on us, and we will serve you."

1Ki 12:5 He said to them, "Go away for three days, then come again to me." So the people went away.

1Ki 12:6 Then King Rehoboam took counsel with the old men, who had stood before Solomon his father while he was yet alive, saying, "How do you advise me to answer this people?"

1Ki 12:7 And they said to him, "If you will be a servant to this people today and serve them, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever."

1Ki 12:8 But he abandoned the counsel that the old men gave him and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and stood before him.

1Ki 12:9 And he said to them, "What do you advise that we answer this people who have said to me, 'Lighten the yoke that your father put on us?'"

1Ki 12:10 And the young men who had grown up with him said to him, "Thus shall you speak to this people who said to you, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you lighten it for us,' thus shall you say to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's thighs.

1Ki 12:11 And now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions."

1Ki 12:12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king said, "Come to me again the third day."

1Ki 12:13 And the king answered the people harshly, and forsaking the counsel that the old men had given him,

1Ki 12:14 he spoke to them according to the counsel of the young men, saying, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions."

1Ki 12:15 So the king did not listen to the people, for it was a turn of affairs brought about by the LORD that he might fulfill his word, which the LORD spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

1Ki 12:16 And when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, "What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Look now to your own house, David." So Israel

Rehoboam Succeeds Solomon

Scripture

Text/Commentary

went to their tents.

1Ki 12:17 But Rehoboam reigned over the people of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah.

1Ki 12:18 Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was taskmaster over the forced labor, and all Israel stoned him to death with stones. And King Rehoboam hurried to mount his chariot to flee to Jerusalem.

1Ki 12:19 So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.

1Ki 12:20 And when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. There was none that followed the house of David but the tribe of Judah only.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Solomon's Sons and Enemies (College Press Bible Study)

Did Solomon have cause to worry? One has sufficient evidence to recite the history of Israel following Solomon's death, and he discovers not one but two men who ascended to his throne. The kingdom did divide. In Solomon's closing years, his foreign wives turned away his heart from the Lord (1Kings 11:1-8). The author of Chronicles is silent on his closing years, but in I Kings we read that he loved "many foreign women" (1Kings 11:1). Solomon also had many adversaries. Among them were Hadad the Edomite and Rezon of Damascus (1Kings 11:9-25). However, the most dangerous of his foes had to be Jeroboam. Jeroboam had been appointed to a prominent position in Solomon's kingdom. In addition to his own personal designs on the throne, he had the encouragement of the prophet Ahijah. The aggression and zeal of Jeroboam were manifested throughout the kingdom, and when Solomon suspected him he fled to Egypt for his life (1Kings 11:26-40). It is thought by some that the "lad" who comes out of prison to take the place of the king (Eccles. 4:14) is a direct reference to Jeroboam. It is true that upon Solomon's death, Jeroboam did return from Egypt to assume the leadership of the ten tribes. Rehoboam, Solomon's son, was proclaimed king in Jerusalem.

Perhaps there is a prophetic sense in which the words of Solomon predict the historical situation of his day. However, this interpretation is not vital to understanding the message of the book. One may readily see that Solomon's despair is based on two entirely different premises: (1) he will not be remembered for all his great works, and (2) he is uncertain who will inherit his fortune. It could easily be a person who has little regard for wisdom and much regard for silliness and jest.

Either way, Solomon will lose control over all the "fruit" of his labor. This is the inevitable result of laboring "under the sun." How different is the picture for the Christian who one day shall rest from his labor with the sweet peace that his works will follow after him (Rev. 14:13)!

The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 2:18-23 (comments).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

The Value of Wisdom (Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary)

- I. That it possesses high Absolute Value. Of all earthly treasures, wisdom has the greatest worth. This is a truth at once evident to every reflecting mind. The perception of it is quick as vision. "Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly," &c. Such wisdom may be compared to the light.
 1. Like light, wisdom is a revealing power. Without light, our knowledge of nature would be scanty. We could only have knowledge of near objects. The distant glories of the universe are completely veiled to the blind. But light reveals them—makes all things manifest. So wisdom reveals to man the true state of things around him—his position in the world—the conditions of earthly happiness. He is thus able to form the most sagacious plans, and to use expedients for the maintenance of his life, for avoiding dangers, and varying his pleasures. In physical endowments, man is inferior to the lower animals, but he obtains supremacy over them by that wisdom which reveals to him more of that world in which he lives.
 2. Like light, wisdom is a guiding power. "The wise man's eyes are in his head." The eyes of the wise man are where they ought to be—the lofty windows of the palace of the soul, through which she takes a large survey of the outward world, and the scene of man. The eyes of the mind, like those of the body, serve both to inform and direct. Every truth of nature or of man, that we discover, becomes for us a rule of action or duty. The facts revealed to the understanding guide us in our way through the world. He who walks in darkness runs the risk of stumbling. All nature is against the fool.
 3. Like light, wisdom is a vitalising power. Light is absolutely necessary to the growth and preservation of all kinds of life. The light of the day not only warms, but fertilises. The sun is a source of energy, performing all the work of this lower world. So practical wisdom is the real strength of man's life here. Folly is darkness—a dull negation—unproductive of vitality or beauty—generates fear. The ignorant are the victims of unnecessary fears, as we see from the history of superstition. Wisdom is a light to quicken all things necessary for man as an inhabitant of this world. It supplies that vital energy by which we do our work. By the life-giving power of wisdom, man conquers nature, by directing her forces to serve his own uses. The dull existence of the fool is not worthy of the name of life. We learn of this practical wisdom—
- II. That it is complicated with certain facts giving rise to painful doubts and questionings. The superiority of wisdom to folly is beyond dispute. It is at once apparent. Like the light, this truth is its own evidence. But there are attendant facts which lead to painful doubts and questionings as to whether wisdom, on the whole, has such a superior advantage; or whether, in the upshot of things, the wise man is better off than the fool.
 1. We are not sure that posterity will preserve the fruits of our work and wisdom. Men labour that they may increase their earthly joys, amass wealth, and accomplish some wise designs; but how often are the fruits of their anxious toil spoiled and wasted by those who come after! As the custom of the world is folly, the Royal Preacher could only expect that his successor would be a foolish man—according to the general type. Every worker upon merely human principles, no matter how accomplished, must say at last, "I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought." The fact, that what we have gathered with such labour and pains may thus be wasted and dissipated by others, is enough to make the wisest serious and sad. The speech acquires a painful hue of reflectiveness, and the contemplation of life becomes a distress.
 2. All our diligence and wisdom cannot avail to save us from oblivion. "There is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever." It is not intended to deny all posthumous fame. Some names will live through the whole range of time, names like Moses—the earliest in literature, and sounding through the endless songs of heaven. But the great bulk of mankind are not remembered by posterity—the wise and the fool alike are soon forgotten: "One Cæsar lives, a thousand are forgot." Even if we live in fame ever so long, and are at last forgotten; when compared with eternity, this is equivalent to oblivion.
 3. All our wisdom cannot save us from the common doom of the race. "One event happeneth to all." Our wisdom and skill cannot save us from accidents, pains, and from that sum of all fears and

The Value of Wisdom (Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary)

distresses—death. The terrible necessity of death awaits alike the foolish and the wise. We take pains to gather knowledge, and the maxims of wisdom; death comes, and our fancied superiority over others vanishes. If there be no future, the most sagacious of men may mournfully ask at the close of life, "Why was I then more wise?" The wise and foolish appear to go out of life in the same manner. All differences are lost in the darkness of the tomb. Let us learn—that heavenly wisdom is complicated with no painful facts to fill us with doubts and misgivings. Nothing can arise to dull the pure splendour of this Divine gift. The glory of it only increases as all that is precious in life is fading away. We can only be saved from the fate of oblivion when we seek the "honour that cometh from God only," when we are "confessed before the angels," and our names inscribed in the Book of Life. All who are truly wise shall be fixed in the regions of immortality—shall "shine as the stars for ever and ever."

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:12–16.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:12–2:26 (Bridgeway Bible Commentary)

Writing as Solomon, the author now looks back and describes the experiences of a truly wise and wealthy man who searched for a meaning to life. First he tried the study of wisdom, but it led only to misery and frustration. Some things could not be made to fit any sort of consistent pattern; others, which in theory may have solved some problems, in practice did not exist (12-15). His learning and experience enabled him to tell the difference between wisdom and folly, but they were unable to help him find a meaning to life. His greater wisdom only increased his frustration and bitterness (16-18).

Continuing his search, the great king turned to pleasures of various kinds, but they did not provide the answer (2:1-3). He used his knowledge and resources in extravagant building programs and agricultural projects, and his household had everything he needed for a life of luxury and pleasure (4-8). All his achievements brought him a certain amount of satisfaction. But as he looks back he confesses that they brought him no nearer to solving the mystery of life's purpose (9-11).

Kings can build for themselves huge fortunes and accomplish impressive works, but even the wealthiest and most ambitious of kings found that all this did not bring satisfaction. What chance, then, does anyone else have? The frustrated searcher turned therefore to consider the subject of wisdom again (12). He reminded himself of the obvious truth that wisdom is better than folly (13), but he recalled also that the wise person dies the same as the fool, and both alike are soon forgotten (14-17).

Not only has wisdom no advantage over folly; diligence has no advantage over idleness. A person uses all his knowledge and skill in his work, spending long days labouring and sleepless nights worrying, but when he dies all that he has built up is left to someone else. Not only that, but the person who inherits all this did not work for it and may even foolishly waste it (18-23).

The writer now reaches one positive conclusion concerning the purpose of life. God intends people to enjoy the good things of life and to find enjoyment in their work. This is God's gift. Those who accept this gift please God. To them God gives the wisdom and ability to enjoy his gift. Those who do not accept this gracious gift from God, but who spend their energies trying to achieve happiness by their own wisdom and efforts, find that all they build up for themselves will be lost. In despair they cry out again that life is useless (24-26).

Don Fleming, *Bridgeway Bible Commentary*; ©1988, 1994, 2005; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:12–2:26.

Proper Enjoyment of Life's Blessings (Preacher's Complete Homiletical Com.)

- I. A proper enjoyment of the blessings of life. The good things of this world can never bring us true and lasting happiness if we live for them alone. But we must not despair of finding external happiness even in these, if we use them aright. There must be some lawful means of enjoying the world's good. The Creator, in His works, has provided both for ornament and delight. We must not be as sulky children, refusing to enjoy ourselves when He invites us. To condemn all that the world offers to cheer the spirit of man, without showing how it may be properly enjoyed, or substituting some other pleasures, would either drive the soul to despair, or plunge it more deeply into unlawful pleasures. The state of our souls determines what is good or bad in pleasure. We project our nature upon the external world. "To the pure, all things are pure." How are we to enjoy the blessings of this life?
 1. They should be subordinated to our higher wants. As long as we remember that they only minister to our lower wants, we preserve the true dignity of our soul. He who has the highest good can rightly and well enjoy the lowest. When pleasure is made the end of life, the soul becomes debased, and unfit for the vision of God. The pure light of heaven in the soul can transfigure all things in life. Christ used the world, but He had superior meat, drink, and joy than He could find here. To Him, the world was a place of duty and trial; but He tasted the world's pleasures as a "Brook by the way."
 2. They should be used with moderation of desire. "Enjoy good in his labour." There is a happiness naturally arising out of the things of life. What we force out of them beyond their natural yield will only prove a bitter portion. The path of the wise is ever traced between dangerous extremes.
 3. Superior power and facility of enjoyment must not tempt us to abuse them. (Ecc_2:25.) Solomon had riches and position—means to procure enjoyments. He had the skill to devise exquisite pleasures, and to secure an agreeable variety. But he found that all must be under the control of some exalted purpose. The best gifts of heaven may be abused; but while reason and conscience govern, we are safe.
- II. A recognition of the Divine source of the blessings of life. (Eccles. 2:24.)
 1. The blessings of this life are the gift of God. They are His provisions for the creature whom He has made. A remembrance of the great source of all our good makes life sacred. To abuse this present world is to take an unfair advantage of infinite kindness. To worship God's gifts instead of Himself is idolatry. We must use God's creatures for the same end for which He made them—His glory.
 2. The power to enjoy them comes from God. If we can enjoy His gifts with contentment and cheerfulness, this power comes from Him. How soon God may destroy our happiness, by either removing His gifts, or depriving us of the power of enjoying them!
 3. Their true value and use can only be known by Divine teaching. If we can taste with grateful cheerfulness what is provided for us here on our way to our superior home, the idea is divinely imparted to us. When we realize the true idea of life, we can best enjoy the world. The repose of mind, and peace of conscience thence arising, are favourable to the truest enjoyment.
- III. A conviction that there are Divine provisions for the good. There is an apparent indifference on the part of God to moral distinctions in the human character. Yet there are, even in this life, indications of retributive justice. God will make abundant provision for the man who is "good in His sight."
 1. He will be supplied with the true guiding principle of life. "Wisdom and knowledge." For lack of these, many leave the best pleasures of life untasted. They are the dupes of imagination and fancy. When our earthly enjoyments are not held in check by a superior guiding power, they turn to vexation and misery. A careful observance of the facts of life, and the wisdom to employ them for the highest ends, will secure for us the purest enjoyments.
 2. He will have the rational comforts of life. To him "joy" shall be given; and this depends upon the state of the heart. "A man's life" (not the sustenance of his life, but the life by which he lives) "consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Existence is the gift of God's goodness to all men, but the life of life, the joy and real soul of it, is a mark of His favour.

Proper Enjoyment of Life’s Blessings (Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Com.)

IV. A conviction that the impious use of the Creator’s gifts is ruinous. (Eccles. 2:26.) The sinner, as he riots in pleasure, may appear to have the best of the world, but he is only laying up a store of misery. The justice of heaven is not a wild passion of revenge, but is calm and dignified; and though the sword of God is not in haste to smite, yet, if not averted by repentance, it will descend with fearful destruction upon the sinner. A wrong use of this world must end in utter ruin.

We may or may not agree with all of this, but this is not really representative of where Solomon’s thinking was. The Preacher’s Commentary takes a more accurate understanding of God here than Solomon does.

The Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Commentary; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 2:24–26.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

It may be helpful to see this chapter as a contiguous whole:

A Complete Translation of Ecclesiastes 2

A Reasonably Literal Translation

A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase

The communicator fills his life with fun and laughter

I said to myself [lit., *in my heart*], “Come now, I will test you with mirth [or, *pleasure*] and see [if that is not] [lit., *in, with*] good.” But, observe, that also [was] empty.

I said to myself, “Let’s approach this in a different way. I will give my heart to joy and pleasure and see if that is any good. But, in the end, even that seemed to be empty and meaningless.

I said, regarding laughter, [it] is mad; and regarding mirth [or, *pleasure*], what does it do?

Regarding laughter, I have said it is too often irrational; and what does pleasure really accomplish?

I have searched my heart to lure my body with wine and my heart is bringing in the wisdom. Also [I seek] to take a hold of folly. As far as I can see, this [is] pleasant to the sons of man, who do [whatever they can] under the heavens [in whatever] number of days [allotted to] their lives.

Soon after, I decided to regularly drink alcohol, and yet retain wisdom in my thinking. Why not enjoy a bit of fun? From what I have observed, this approach to life is pleasant to the sons of man, who do whatever they can during the days God has given them to enjoy life.

The communicator fills his life with accomplishments

I have magnified my works; I have built buildings for myself [and] I have planted vineyards [and gardens] for myself.

I have magnified my great works. I have built great buildings and planted marvelous gardens, all for myself.

I planted gardens and parks for myself and I planted in them a forest [of trees], [of] every [kind of] fruit.

I planted personal gardens and parks, and in them I planted a variety of trees, including fruit trees.

I [also] constructed pools of water to irrigate from them the forest [I planted, with] trees springing up.

I also constructed irrigation pools to water this great forest which I designed, where trees and all manner of plants would just spring up from the ground.

The communicator fills his life with expensive acquisitions

A Complete Translation of Ecclesiastes 2

A Reasonably Literal Translation	A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase
[Over time,] I acquired male and female servants, and [their] children [who are born] in [my] palace [also belong] to me. Furthermore, [I have acquired] livestock—herds and flocks—[and their] increase [also belongs] to me, [so that my wealth is] greater than all before me in Jerusalem.	Over time, I acquired both male and female servants, along with children born to them in my household. Furthermore, I have acquired livestock—great herds and flocks—which continue to increase in great numbers—more than all who came before me in Jerusalem.
I collected for myself silver and gold and [various other] treasures from kings and from [other] provinces.	I collected just for myself a great amount of gold and silver, as well as various other treasures taken from other kings and various provinces.
I acquired [and produced] male and female singers, as well as the delights of men [lit., <i>delights of the sons of man</i>], [both] wives and mistresses.	I acquired and also produced great musical productions involving male and female singers; and I acquired that which men most desire—beautiful women who became my wives and mistresses.
I became great and I increased more than all who were in Jerusalem before me. Furthermore, my wisdom remained with me.	I became great and I increased more than all who were in Jerusalem before me. And yet, still my wisdom remained with me.
Whatever my eyes desired, [that] I did not withhold from them; I did not keep my heart back from any joy, in fact, my heart [also] found pleasure from all my labor. Therefore, this was my reward for all my labor.	I did not keep my heart from anything I desired or from any joy or happiness which caught my eye. Despite this hedonism, my heart still found great pleasure from all my labor. In fact, I viewed all of this as my appropriate reward based upon all the work that I did.
Yet, with all of these acquisitions and enjoyment, I was not content	
And I, even I, looked back on all of my works which my hands had done and at the toil I had toiled [lit., <i>toiled to do</i>]—and behold, [it is] all breath and chasing after wind; [there is] no gain [to be found] under the sun!	Then I critically looked back on all of the works which my hands had done, and upon all of the great toil which I did—and, quite frankly, it is all just breath and chasing after the wind. In fact, there is no gain or profit to be found in anything I tried to enjoy under the sun.
Does the wise man have any real advantage over the fool?	
And I looked back to see wisdom, madness and folly, for what [of] the man who comes after the king? They [those who came before him] had done it already.	Then I looked back to consider wisdom, madness and folly; and I thought, what about the man who comes along after me? What sort of person is he? And he steps into a world where it has all been done already.
I observed that there [is] an advantage to wisdom over folly, just as [there is] an advantage of light over darkness. [Certainly,] the wise [man] has his eyes where they belong [lit., <i>in his head</i>], while the fool walks in darkness.	I observed that wisdom is superior to folly, just as light is better than darkness. The wise man can see where he is going, but the fool is stumbling about in darkness.
And yet I know that one fate befalls both [lit., <i>all</i>] of them. And I said—[even] I—within my heart, as the fate of the fool, so also [to] me—it happens [to] me [as well]. So why then was I more wise?	Nevertheless, I know that the same fate befalls both men. I said to myself, the very end of the fool, will that not happen to me as well? So, how exactly am I smarter than the fool?

A Complete Translation of Ecclesiastes 2

A Reasonably Literal Translation

A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase

I said within my heart that this also [is] empty [or, *breath*]. For [there is] no remembrance for the wise [man] with the fool forever, in that long ago, the days [which are] coming, all [is] forgotten. And how does the wise [man] die compared to [lit., *with, by*] the fool?

I admitted to myself that wisdom itself is empty, like a breath. For no one remembers the wise man any more than they remember the fool, which fact is true forever. In the coming days, everything is forgotten. So how do we really compare the death of the wise man with the fool?

I hated this life [lit., *the lives*], for all the work which was done under the sun was grievous to me, for [it is] all breath and chasing after wind.

I decided that I hated this life—all the work which I had done under the sun was grievous to me, for it is all just a series of breaths and trying to catch the wind.

What about the man who succeeds Solomon?

And I hated—[even] I—all of the work which I have done under the sun, which [work] I leave to the man who is after me. Who knows [if] he will be a wise [man] or a fool? Yet he will have power over all my labor which I have labored [doing], and [over all] which I was wise under the sun.

I came to the point where I hated all of the work which I had accomplished under the sun; because all of that work will be left behind to the man who comes after me. Who knows if the man to follow me will be wise or just a fool? Yet, regardless, he will have control over all of the work which I have done and over all that required my wisdom under the sun.

This also [is just] a breath. I—[even] I—turned around to make my heart despair over all the work which I have done under the sun.

This also is just a breath that will disappear. Instead of appreciating my many accomplishments, I despaired over all of the work that I have done under the sun.

For there [is] a man whose work is with wisdom and with knowledge and with skill, but for a man who did not work in it. The man who did all of the work [lit., *he*] will give him [the one who didn't] his allotment.

One man has produced a great deal using wisdom, knowledge and skill; but this will go to a man who did not work at all. The man who did all of the work will give the one who didn't his allotment.

This also is a breath and a greatly wrong.

This is empty and a really very wrong.

Man enjoys no contentment with even a productive life

For what belongs to the man in all his work and in the striving [possibly, *desires*] of his heart, which he works hard under the sun? For all of his days [are] painful and his work [is] frustrating. Furthermore, his heart does not rest at night.

When all is said and done, what belongs to the man for all of his work and the execution of all his plans and ideas, working so hard as he has under the sun? For all of his days are difficult, and his work is frustrating; so that, even at night, his mind won't stop.

This also [is just] a breath [to] him.

This is also empty and without substance to him.

What is truly left to the man who works?

[There is] nothing better [in life] for a man who eats and drinks and [that] his soul has been caused to see the good in his labor. This I also observed, that it [was] from the hand of God. For who can eat and enjoy life [possibly, *the outdoors*] apart from Him? [alternate reading: *more than me*]

In life, is it not good for a man, than to eat and drink, and for his soul to be caused to see the good from his labor. This I also observed as coming from the hand of God. For who can eat and enjoy life apart from God? [alternate reading: *more than me*]

A Complete Translation of Ecclesiastes 2

A Reasonably Literal Translation	A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase
For to the man who pleases Him, He gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner, He gives [him excessive] labor—to gather and to heap up—to give to the [one who is] pleasing before Elohim.	God gives wisdom, knowledge and joy to the man who pleases Him; but to the sinner, God gives him all of the labor—the gathering and the heaping up—so that he can give the benefits to the one who pleases God.
This also [is just] breath and chasing after wind.	That also is just empty and chasing the wind.
Chapter Outline	Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

The following Psalms would be appropriately studied at this time: Psalm 73

R. B. Thieme, Jr. covered this chapter in these **series**: 1969 Basics Series #40 (Eccles. 2:1, 26 are covered); 1981 Revelation #310 (Eccles. 1–3 are covered); and 1966 Ecclesiastes #1–2 (Eccles. 1:1–3:9 covered in those lessons).

