

Ecclesiastes Chapter Two

Solomon's Pursuit of Pleasure (vv. 1-11)

VERSE 1 I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy

yourself (אָמַרְתִּי אֲנִי בְלִבִּי לְכֹה־נָא אֲנִסְכָּה בְשִׂמְחָה וּרְאֵה בְטוֹב) [*Qal perf.1s. amar say + pro.1s. ani I + prep beth in + noun m.s.coonstr.w/1s.suff. leb heart; "to my self" + part na now + piel imperf.1s. w/2m.s.suff. nasah test; put to the test + prep beth w/noun f.s.abs. shimchah pleasure, mirth; also at 2:2, 10, 26; 5:19; 7:4; 8:15; 9:7; occurs 94x; based on the root shamach rejoice + waw w/Qal imper.m.s. ra-ah see; "So" + prep beth w/noun m.s.abs. tobh good; adj. and noun; "enjoy"]).*

And behold, it too was futility (וְהִנֵּה גַם־הוּא הֶבֶל) [*waw w/interj. hinneh + conj gam also + pro.3m.s. hu it + noun m.s. chebel vanity, futility*]).

VERSE 2 I said of laughter, "It is madness," and of pleasure, "What does it

accomplish (לְשִׂחֹק אָמַרְתִּי מִהוֹלָל וּלְשִׂמְחָה מִה־זֶה עֲשֵׂה) [*prep lamed w/Qal infin.constr. tsachaq to laugh + Qal perf.1s. amar say + pual part.m.s.abs. halal to praise; boast in piel, pual and hithpael; "madness"; cf. 7:7 + waw w/prep lamed w/noun f.s.abs. shamechah mirth; "of pleasure" + interrog mah what? + adj.f.s.abs. zeh such, this, it + Qal part.f.s.abs. ashah to; "accomplish"])?*

VERSE 3 I explored with my mind how to stimulate my body with wine while my

mind was guiding me wisely (תַּרְתִּי בְלִבִּי לְמִשׁוֹךְ בֵּינָן אֶת־בְּשָׂרִי וְלִבִּי נִהְגַּ בְּחָכְמָה)

[Qal perf.1s. tur search out; cf. 1:13; 7:25 + prep beth w/noun m.s.constr.w/1s.suff. leb “with my mind” + prep lamed w/Qal infin.constr. mashak drag, draw; “to stimulate” + d.a.w/prep beth w/noun m.s. yayin wine + d.o.marker + noun m.s.constr.w/1s.suff. bashar flesh; “mind” + waw w/noun m.s.constr.w/1s.suff. leb “my mind” + Qal part.m.s.abs. nahag guide + d.a/w/prep beth w/noun f.s.abs. chokmah wisdom], **and how to take hold of folly** [וְלֶאֱחֹז בְּסִכְלוֹת]

[waw w/prep lamed w/Qal infin.constr. achaz take hold of + prep beth w/noun f.s.abs. sikluth folly; at 1:17; 2:12; 7:25; 10:1, 13], **until I could see what good there is for the sons of**

men to do under heaven the few years of their lives (תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם מִסְפַּר יָמֵי חַיֵּיהֶם)

[part adh until + rel.pro. asher + Qal impf.1s. ra-ah see + part ay where, what + adj.m.s.abs. zeh this + noun m.s.abs. tob good + prep lamed w/noun m.p.constr. ben son + d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. adam man + rel.pro. asher who + Qal impf.3m.s. ashah do + part tachath under + d.a.w/noun m.p.abs. shamayim heaven + noun m.s.constr. mispar number; “few” + noun m.s.abs.kol all + noun m.p.constr. yom day; “years” + noun m.p.constr.w/3m.p.suff. chayyim life] .

VERSE 4 I enlarged my works: I built houses for myself, I planted vineyards for

myself (הִגְדַּלְתִּי מַעֲשָׂי בְּנִיתִי לִי בְּתֵיִם נִטְעַמְתִּי לִי כְרָמִים) [Hiphil perf.1s. gadal increase

+ noun m.p.constr./1s.suff. ma-asheh works + Qal perf.1s. banah build + prep lamed for + noun m.p.abs. bayith house + Qal perf.1s. nata plant +prep lamed + noun m.p.abs. kerem vineyard]);

VERSE 5 I made gardens and parks for myself and I planted in them all kinds of

fruit trees עָשִׂיתִי לִי גַנּוֹת וּפְרָדֵסִים וְנִטְעַתִּי בָהֶם עֵץ כָּל־פְּרִי [Qal perf.1s. ashah

“made” + prep lamed + noun f.p.abs. gan garden + waw/w noun m.p.abs. pardes park; enclosed garden + waw w/Qal perf.1s. neta plant + prep beth + noun m.s.constr. ets tree + noun m.s.constr. kol all + noun m.s.abs. peri fruit]);

VERSE 6 I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of

growing trees עָשִׂיתִי לִי בְּרִכּוֹת מַיִם לְהַשְׁקוֹת מֵהֶם יַעַר צוֹמֵחַ עֵצִים [Qal perf.1s.

ashah + prep lamed + noun f.p.abs. berekah pond + noun m.p.abs. mayim water + prep lamed w/hiphil infin.constr. shaqah drink; “to irrigate” + prep min w/3f.psuff. from them + noun m.s.abs. ya-ar forest + Qal part.m.s.abs. samach sprout; “growing” + non m.p.abs. ets tree]).

VERSE 7 I bought male and female slaves and I had homeborn slaves הָיָה לִי

קָנִיתִי עֲבָדִים וְשִׁפְחֹת וּבְנֵי־בַיִת [Qal perf.1s. qanah acquire + noun m.p.abs. ebed slave,

servant; “male” + waw w/noun f.p.abs. shiphechah maid servant + waw w/noun m.p.constr. ben son + noun m.s.abs. bath daughter + Qal perf.3m.s. hayah be, “born” + prep lamed].

Also I possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem

גַּם מִקְנֵה בָקָר וְצֹאן הָרְבִיחַ הָיָה לִי מִכֹּל שֶׁהָיוּ לְפָנַי בִּירוּשָׁלַם [conj gam also + noun

m.s.abs. miqneh purchase + noun m.s.abs. baqar cattle; “herds” + waw w/noun both s.abs.tson sheep, flocks + Hiphil infin.abs. rabah much; “larger” + prep lamed + part min w/noun m.s.abs. kol all + prep lamed w/1s.suff. paneh “before me” + prep beth w/proper noun Jerusalem]).

VERSE 8 Also, I collected for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and

provinces (כַּנְסִיתִי לִי גַם־כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב וּסְגֻלַּת מְלָכִים וְהַמְדִינֹת) [*Qal perf.1s. kanas collect*

+ *prep lamed + conj. gam also + noun m.s.abs. keseph silver + waw w/noun m.s.abs. zahab gold*

+ *waw w/noun f.s.constr. seguillah property, possession; special treasures + noun m.p.abs.*

melek king + waw w/d.a.w/noun f.p.abs. medinah province]).

I provided for myself male and female singers and the pleasures of men -- many

concubines (עָשִׂיתִי לִי שָׁרִים וְשִׁרֹת וְתַעֲנוּגַת בְּנֵי הָאָדָם שָׂדָה וְשִׁדֹּת) [*Qal perf.1s.*

ashah “provided” + prep lamed + Qal part.m.p.abs. shir sing; “male singers” + waw w/Qal

part.f.p.abs. shir “female singers” + waw w/noun m.p.constr. ta-anug luxury; pleasant; also at

Prov. 19:10; SOS. 7:7; Mic. 1:16; 2:9; “pleasures” + noun m.p.constr. ben son “of men” +

d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. adam + noun f.s.abs. shaddah only here; harem?t + waw w/noun f.p.abs.

shaddaht; “—many concubines” (?)).

VERSE 9 Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in

Jerusalem (וְגִדְלֹתַי וְהוֹסַפְתִּי מִכָּל שֶׁהָיָה לְפָנַי בִּירוּשָׁלַם) [*waw w/Qal perf.1s. gadal*

increase + waw w/Hiphil impf.1s. yasah do again, add + prep min w/noun m.s.abs .kol all +

rel.pro. asher w/Qal perf.3s. hayah + prep lamed w/nounm.p.constr.w/1s.suff. paneh face + prep

w/proper noun]).

My wisdom also stood by me (אֵף חִכְמָתִי עָמְדָה לִי) [*part aph yes + noun*

f.s.constr.w/1s.suff chokmah wisdom + Qal perf.3s. amad stand + prep lamed]).

VERSE 10 All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them (עֵינַי לֹא אֲצַלְתִּי מֵהֶם)

וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר שָׁאֲלוּ [waw w/noun m.s.abs.kol all + rel.pro.asher that + Qal perf.3p. sha-al ask; inquire; “desired” + noun f. dual constr.w/1s. ayin eye + neg lo + Qal perf.1s. atsal lay aside; “refuse” + prep min w/3p.suff.].

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 (וְזֶה-הָיָה חֶלְקִי מִכָּל-עֲמָלִי)

לֹא-מִנַּעַתִּי אֶת-לִבִּי מִכָּל-שִׂמְחָה כִּי-לִבִּי שָׂמַח מִכָּל-עֲמָלִי [neg lo + Qal perf.1s. mana withhold + d.o. marker + noun m.s.constr.w/1s.suff. leb heart + prep min from w/noun mm.s.constr. kol all + noun f.s.abs. shimbah mirth, pleasure + part ki for + noun m.s.constr.w/1s.suff. leb heart + adj.m.s.abs. shameach joyful + prep min from, because + noun m.s.constr. kol + noun m.s.constr.w/1s.suff. amal labor + waw w/adj.m.s.abs. zeh this + Qal perf.3m.s. hayah “was” + noun m.s.constr.w/1s.suff. chalaq share; “reward” + prep min w/noun m.s.constr. kol all + noun m.s.constr.w/1s.suff.f amal labor].

VERSE 11 Thus I considered all my activities [projects] which my hands had

done and the labor which I had exerted (מִמַּעֲשֵׂי שְׁעָשׂוּ יָדַי וּבְעֵמָל שְׁעַמְלָתִי לַעֲשׂוֹת)

וּפְנִיתִי אֲנִי בְּכֹל [waw w/Qal perf.1s. panah turn; “considered” + pro.1s. ani I + prep beth w/noun m.s.constr. kol all + noun m.p.constr.w/1s.suff. ma-asheh work; “activities” + noun f. dual constr. w/1s.suff. yad hand + waw w/prep beth w/d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. amal labor + rel.pro. asher w/Qal perf.1s. amal to labor; “which I exerted” + prep lamed w/Qal infin.constr. ashah to do]),

and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under

the sun [וְהִנֵּה הַכֹּל הֶבֶל וְרֵעוּת רוּחַ וְאֵין יִתְרוֹן תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ] [waw w/interj. hinneh +

d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. kol + noun m.s.abs. hebel “vanity” + waw w/noun f.s.constr. re-uth striving

+ noun both s.abs. ruah wind + waw w/neg. adv. ayin no + noun m.s.abs. yitron profit + part

tachath under + d.a.w/noun both s.abs. shemesh sun]).

ANALYSIS: VERSES 1-11

1. Solomon shifts from his pursuit the acquisition of human knowledge to that of pleasure.
2. He found the former unfulfilling and frustrating.
3. Here as in the preceding pursuit his quest began with an internal monologue.
4. “I said to myself” (or “my heart/mind”) introduces his self-imposed experiment to find ultimate meaning in an all-out pursuit of those things humans normally associate with the good life.
5. In his case he possessed the resources to engage in this endeavor on a scale that few could imagine.
6. Solomon of all people should have known that this pursuit would not end well, but he chose to set aside his previous orientation to divine wisdom and engaged in this over-the-top quest.
7. It is as though he had to see from personal experience if lasting fulfillment would be the result.
8. He speaks to himself as if rallying an outsider as per “Come now (e.g. heart) I will test you with pleasure.”
9. The words “So enjoy yourself” is literally “See/seek good” or we would say ‘seek the good life.’
10. Before and after he details the things he engaged in, he tells the reader that his self-seeking ended in failure in the last sentence of v. 11.
11. Again, this endeavor was counter to finding joy and pleasure in serving God and adhering to divine wisdom.
12. So his endeavor in pursuing hedonistic pursuit ended badly.
13. In v. 12 he continues to reflect on this period in his life when he was enjoying the good times.
14. He engaged in “laughter” as someone who was really enjoying carnal pleasure.
15. “Madness” is his final verdict on his celebrations related to stimulation of the flesh.
16. His laughter was not based on living the life of the righteous, but more of the fool who laughs down the road to destruction (cf. Prov. 10:23; 26:19; 29:9).
17. As for “pleasure” derived from pandering to the STA his verdict “What does it accomplish?” signifies the answer “Nothing.”
18. At the end of the day a life consumed with pleasurable activities achieves anything lasting.
19. In vv. 1-2 Solomon looks back on that period of his life when he pursued the high life.
20. His account of the things he pursued follows in vv. 3-8; and his findings is seen in vv. 9-11.
21. In v. 3 Solomon informs us as to the procedure he adopted in his exploration of pleasure.
22. V. 3 is difficult to interpret.

23. The first question is how did drinking wine play into his exploration of pleasurable activities?
24. He used it as a stimulant but not in an grossly abusive way.
25. Wine dulls inhibitions and as he says he used its chemical influence over his central nervous system to stimulate his thought processes.
26. His internal investigation reflected in the words “while my mind was guiding me” is how he arrived at the kinds of projects he would engage in.
27. There is a rational component to his investigation so that he will engage in things that would not destroy him.
28. One is taken aback by how he could engage in activities that could be seen as “folly” while at the same time having “wisdom” as a guide in the process!
29. “Wisdom” refers to his methodology, but he does not exclude “folly” from his conclusions as to what and how he will proceed.
30. How different this is from the book of Proverbs where the two opposing ways of the wise man and the fool are set in stark relief.
31. But here he was willing to examine folly if he thought it useful.
32. His vain quest to discover as he says “what good there is for the sons of men to do under heaven the few years of their lives” draws attention to the fact that there is nothing new and there is nothing that can bring lasting fulfillment to those who are self deceived.
33. He engaged in this folly to see for himself what he otherwise knew from divine wisdom and observation.
34. His resume as a great king with unlimited financial recourse follows in vv. 4-8.
35. Kings were renowned for their building projects.
36. “I enlarged my works” introduces a period of phenomenal expansion of public works.
37. The building of “houses” is described in 1Kgs. 7:1-12, where there is a description of the extravagance that went into these homes.
38. The homes referred to here are homes he built for himself as if he needed more homes as he had a central palace.
39. He expanded the wine production by planting vineyards for himself.
40. He commission “gardens and parks” filling them with “all kinds of fruit trees.”
41. One thing requires another as in v. 6 he had to make sure that all these plants had adequate water, hence an elaborate irrigation systems based on “ponds of waters.”
42. One thing leads to another as all this required a large labor force to sustain and maintain (v. 7a).
43. All these people have to be cared for.
44. He greatly increased his livestock holdings (v. 7b).
45. All of this was to outdo his predecessors.
46. So in all this is a pursuit of a legacy of “great achievements” and that is folly.
47. Not content with immense wealth, Solomon went on a gold and silver binge.
48. See 1 Kgs. 10:5 for Solomon’s table and 10:14-27 for his wealth.
49. “The treasure of kings and provinces” refers to exotic and hard to come by wealth of the surrounding nations.
50. We are not told how he went about this.
51. Finally, he mentions entertainment in v. 8b.
52. For “male and female singers” see 1Kgs. 10:12.

53. Last is pleasure through sexual objects as the debatable translation “and the pleasures of the sons of man—many concubines.
54. The term “pleasures” (*ta-anug* from ‘to be soft/delicate’) has a sexual connotation as seen in Song of Solomon (7:7).
55. Associated with the noun meaning “breast” (*shad*) which occurs in the singular followed by the plural this seems best to refer to Solomon’s harem (cf. 1 Kgs. 11:3).
56. Solomon’s summary observation on his crazy pursuit of pleasure is vv. 9-11.
57. In an almost boastful tone, Solomon characterizes his quest as a total success in v. 9.
58. Clearly, Solomon during this period of his life as a believer and as a king was in violation of Numbers 117:15-16.
59. His quest under the permissive will of God was unprecedented and unrestrained.
60. No one could match his achievement of self-indulgence!
61. His approach was based on a type of wisdom that many have followed to great material success.
62. “My wisdom stood by me” is a reference to the particular approach he took (cf. v. 3).
63. He did not use wine to the extent that he fell into mindless stupor.
64. He remained in control of his faculties, but he lived outside the directive will of God.
65. He continues in v. 10 with his summation.
66. First, he says that nothing he set his eyes on that appealed to his flesh he refused to pursue (v. 10a).
67. He repeats this affirmation telling the reader that he “did not withhold [his] heart from any pleasure.”
68. That indicates the foolish aspect of his endeavor based on a kind of wisdom that brought him success.
69. Furthermore, he honestly says that his pursuit brought him pleasure or satisfaction (“for my heart was pleased because of all my labor).
70. That he says was what he had to show for it all as per “and this was my reward for all my labor.”
71. Enjoyment during the pursuit and enjoyment associated with its attainment is very limited and ephemeral.
72. All Solomon accomplished falls under the heading of senseless (Heb. *hebel*).
73. All of it is grossly inadequate in the face of final judgment and eternal reward.
74. In v. 11 Solomon sums it all up as “vanity and a striving after the wind” as none of it commended him to God and none of it is of benefit when life ends.
75. Solomon put extreme labor into his pursuit of the best of the best.

The Wise Man and the Fool Share the Same Fate (vv. 12-17)

VERSE 12 So I turned to consider wisdom, madness and folly (וְהוֹלִלּוּת וְסִכְלֻת)

וּפְנִיתִי אֲנִי לְרֵאוֹת חֲכָמָה [waw w/Qal perf.1s. panah turn + por.1s. ani I + prep lamed w/Qal infin.constr. ra-ah see; “consider” + noun f.s.abs. chokmah wisdom + waw w/noun holeluth madness; from vb. chalal to be insane + waw w/noun f.s.abs. sikluth folly; from vb. sakal be foolish]; **for what will the man do who will come after the king except what has already been done** [conj. ki for + interrog. mah what? + d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. adam man + pref. asher w/Qal impf.3m.s. bo come + adv. achare after + d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. melek king + d.o. marker + rel.pro. asher what + adv. kebar already + Qal perf.3m.s.w/3m.s.suff. ashah do]?)

VERSE 13 And I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness (מִן־הַחֹשֶׁךְ)

וְרָאִיתִי אֲנִי שֵׁשׁ יִתְרוֹן לְחֲכָמָה מִן־הַסִּכְלֻת פִּיתְרוֹן הָאוֹר [waw w/Qal perf.1s. ra-ah see + pro.1s. ani I + rel.pro. asher w/adv yesh exist; “excels” + noun m.s.abs. yitron advantage + prep lamed w/d.a.w/noun f.s.abs. chokmah + prep min more than, from + d.a.w/noun f.s.abs. sikluth folly + prep ki w/noun m.s.abs. noun m.s.abs. yitron “excels” + d.a.w/noun both s.abs. or light + prep min more than + noun m.s.abs. choshek darkness].

VERSE 14 The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness

(וְהַחֲכָם עֵינָיו בְּרֹאשׁוֹ וְהַכֹּסִיל בְּחֹשֶׁךְ הוֹלֵךְ) [d.a.w/adj.m.s.abs. chakam wise + noun f. dual constr.w/3m.s.suff. ayin eye + prep beth w/noun m.s.constr.w/3m.s.suff. rosh head + waw w/d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. kisil fool + prep beth w/d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. choshek darkness + Qal part.m.s.abs. halak walk].

And yet I know that one fate befalls them both (אֲנִי שִׁמְקֶרֶה אֶחָד יִקְרֶה אֶת־כֻּלָּם)

וַיֵּדַעְתִּי גַם [waw w/Qal perf.1s. yada know + part. gam alike; “yet” + pro.1s. ani + perf.pro. asher + noun m.s.abs. miqreh happening; “fate” + adj.m.s.abs. echad one + Qal impf.3s. qara befall, happen + d.o. marker + noun m.s.constr.w/3m.p.suff. kol all; “both”].

VERSE 15 Then I said to myself, "As is the fate of the fool, it will also befall me

וְאִמַּרְתִּי אֲנִי בְלִבִּי כְּמִקְרֶה הַכְּסִיל גַּם־אֲנִי יִקְרַנִּי) [waw w/Qal perf.1s. amar say + pro.1s. ani + prep beth w/noun m.s.constr.w/1s.suff. leb heart; “to myself” + prep ki w/noun m.s.constr. miqreh fate + d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. ksil fool + conj gam also + pro.1s. ani me + Qal impf.3m.s.w/1s.suff. qarah befall].

Why then have I been extremely wise (וְלָמָּה חֲכַמְתִּי אֲנִי אִזּוֹ יוֹתֵר) [waw w/interrog.

mah “why?” + Qal perf.1s. chakam be wise + pro.1s. ani + part az then, so + noun m.s.abs. yother better; “extremely”].)?”

So I said to myself, "This too is vanity (וְדַבַּרְתִּי בְלִבִּי שֶׁגַּם־זֶה הֶבֶל) [waw w/Piel

perf.1s. dabar speak; “said” + prep beth w/noun m.s.constr.w/1s.suff. leb heart + pro.rel. asher w/conj gam too + adj.m.s.abs. zeh this + noun m.s.abs. hebel vanity].”

VERSE 16 For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise man as with the fool

כִּי אֵין זְכוֹרֹן לְחָכָם עִם־הַכְּסִיל לְעוֹלָם בְּשֹׁכֶרֶת) [part ki for + neg.adv. ayin no + noun m.s.constr. zikkraon remembrance + prep lamed w/d.a.w/adj.m.s.abs. chakam wise + prep im with + d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. kesil fool + noun m.s.abs. olam “lasting”],

inasmuch as in the coming days all will be forgotten [נִשְׁכַּח הַכֹּל הַיָּמִים הַבָּאִים] *[prep beth w/rel.pro.w/adv. kesar already; “inasmuch” + d.a.w/noun m.p.abs. yom day + d.a.w/Qal part.m.p.abs. bo “coming” + d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. kol all + Niphal perf.3m.s. shakach forget]*).

And how the wise man and the fool alike die [וְאֵיךְ יָמוּת הַחָכָם עִם־הַכְּסִיל] *[waw w/interj. ek how? + Qal impf.3m.s. muth die + d.a.w/adj.m.s.abs. chakam wise + part im with + d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. kesil fool]*!

VERSE 17 So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me [וְשָׂנְאתִי אֶת־הַחַיִּים כִּי רַע עָלַי הַמַּעֲשֶׂה שֶׁנַּעֲשָׂה תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ] *[waw w/Qal perf.1s. shana hate + d.o. + d.a.w/noun m.p.abs. chayyim life + part. ki for + adj.m.s.abs. ra evil, bad; “grievous” + prep al above + d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. ma-aseh work + rel.suff.w/Niphal perf.3m.s. ashah do \ part tachath under + d.a.w/noun both s.abs. shemesh sun]*); **because everything is futility and striving after wind** [הַכֹּל הֶבֶל וְרֵעוּת רוּחַ] *[part. ki for + d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. kol all + noun m.s.abs. hebel vanity + waw w/noun f.s.constr. re-uth striving or chasing + noun both s.abs. ruach wind]*).

ANALYSIS: VERSES 12-17

1. In this section the author reflects on the merits of wisdom as opposed to folly.
2. Here Solomon addresses the question as to whether wisdom has any advantage over folly.
3. Folly is a lack of good sense, prudence and foresight on the part of individuals who refuse to live by the rules that bring success to those who conduct their lives otherwise.
4. Wisdom in this context refers to conduct that is generally accepted as bringing success to those who act responsibly.
5. It does not refer to the wisdom set forth in Proverbs.
6. That wisdom involves living life according to the dictates of Bible doctrine.
7. The wisdom that Solomon adhered to in his quest for earthly pleasures is the wisdom that lead to material and physical enjoyment.
8. That wisdom he affirms in v. 9 did not disappoint him (“My wisdom stood by me.”).

9. It enabled him to achieve all that he set his hands to accomplish.
10. The wisdom that guides humans to achieve their goals has a short-coming (v. 12b).
11. In v. 12b Solomon relates it to himself and those who were to come after him sharing the same royal niche.
12. What the wisdom that guides humans down the path to success can never achieve anything that “has not already been done.”
13. This harks back to: “there is nothing new under the sun.”
14. Solomon’s grandiose achievements did not break new ground.
15. He makes an observation with respect to this wisdom that brought him success in vv. 13-14a.
16. Wisdom clearly has an advantage over folly.
17. And that advantage is the difference between light and darkness (v. 13).
18. The term for ‘advantage’ occurs in 1:3 and 2:11, for ‘profit’ (*yitron*).
19. Folly yields no such advantage.
20. In v. 14a Solomon goes on to explain “that the wise man’s eyes are in his head” indicating that such an individual knows where he is going.
21. But the fool on the other hand goes through life walking in darkness.
22. Wise people can ‘get on’ in the world but the fool keeps stumbling over obstacle.
23. This is illustrated by Prov. 22:3, “The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple-minded go on and is punished for it.”
24. The first half of v. 15 is a rather bland affirmation of the benefit of wisdom over folly.
25. But in v. 14b he goes on and asserts that the absolute contrast between wisdom and folly, ultimately breaks down.
26. The fact is that “the same fate befalls them both.”
27. That ‘fate’ is not made explicit until v. 16.
28. The word ‘fate’ (*miqreh*) describes what happens to a person as opposed to what he does to himself (cf. Ruth 2:3; 1Sam. 6:9; 20:26; Eccl. 2:14, 15; 3:19; 9:2, 3).
29. Someone might say, “By chance I came across an old acquaintance.”
30. From the human perspective it appears that something happens by chance, but that does not rule out divine intervention.
31. That ‘fate’ is death
32. In v. 15 he acknowledges that the ‘fate’ that overtakes the fool “will also befall [him].”
33. This fact is unsettling to him as his inner dialogue resumes in v. 15.
34. The hard reality for him was his that the principle stated in v. 14 casts a dark shadow over the whole wisdom enterprise.
35. Facing the brutal fact that he will not escape the fate of the fool he calls into question his efforts to be “extremely wise.”
36. Remember that this was Solomon’s conclusion while he was coming out of his state to reversionism.
37. “Why then have I been extremely wise” represents his jaundiced view of this foolish quest for wisdom and what it brought him temporally.
38. He labels his time as a seeker for wisdom, fame and pleasure as “vanity.”
39. In v. 16 he laments that not only is it death that torments him, but that his very memory “will be forgotten” with the passage of time.
40. He will be forgotten along with his achievements, like all others who pursue worldly advantages with no regard for what follows death.

41. Contrast this verse dealing with remembrance with Prov. 10:7 “The memory of the righteous is blessed. But the name of the wicked will not.”
42. Finally, at the end of v. 16 he makes explicit what that awful ‘fate’ is.
43. The key to all this is the fact that there was a transition between his STA driven approach to life during those years he was in reversionism.
44. The great man Solomon who started his career (Ph 2) with such a tremendous orientation to God and his place in God’s plan got himself in such a dark place.
45. In this transition he makes the startling statement “So I hated life.”
46. Furthermore, that which had brought Solomon much pleasure and success “was grievous to [him].”
47. It is amazing that he got himself in a place where he exhibited no hope beyond this life.