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The Search Goes On Ecclesiastes 7: 23-29

The search goes on DIG: What are Solomon's goals? What is meant by "the scheme of things?" How are both men and women responsible for "the scheme of things?" What is the result?

REFLECT: Are you ignorant of "the scheme of things" or all too aware? In what positive ways can you increase wisdom in your life? Are you a snare to others, or upright? How so?

Sense futility was not the first word about our world, it doesn't have to be the last.



The honest admission of failure to find **wisdom** – of watching it, in fact, recede with every step one takes, discovering that none of our investigations ever gets to the bottom of things – this is, if not the beginning of **wisdom**, a good path to that beginning. After the ambitious quest of **Chapter 2 (to see link click [Cd](#) - The Search for Satisfaction)**, the search has moved to less exotic areas, delving into common experience, pausing at times to see what can be made of life from day-to-day, whatever its ultimate secrets. At this level the findings may have been shrewd enough, even too shrewd. But **tested by wisdom**, they have not given even a hint of a reply.²⁹⁷

Inaccessible wisdom: All this I tested by wisdom and I said, “I am determined to be wise” - but this was beyond me. Whatever exists is far off and most profound - who can discover it (7:23-24)? Solomon realized that **wisdom** cannot answer the ultimate questions, especially about **death**. This confession has a devastating finality. It could be the epitaph of every philosopher, and set on their mantle like an urn full of ashes.

The search goes on: So I turned my mind to understand, to investigate and to search out wisdom and the scheme of things and to understand the stupidity of wickedness and the madness of folly. Solomon, in **his** search into the nature and reason of things had been miserably duped. **I find more bitter than death, the woman who is a snare, whose heart is a trap and whose hands are chains. The man who pleases God will escape her, but the sinner she will ensnare.** Here **the Teacher** speaks with godly sorrow. **He** now discovered, more than ever, the **evil** of the great **sin** of which **he** had been guilty, the loving of many foreign **women**. “Look,” says **the Teacher**, “**this is what I have discovered: Adding one thing to another to discover the scheme of things - while I was still searching but not finding - I found one upright man** (Hebrew: *adam*) **among a thousand, but not one upright woman among them all**” (7:25-28).

Like any unanswered question, this riddle about life had been a stimulus at first. The series of verbs, **to understand . . . to investigate . . . to search out**, conveys the eagerness of the quest. But it is part of **man’s** condition that though **he** may try and pursue **wisdom** in a kind of detached inquiry - trying to get **his** mind around it while still being aware of evil as folly and madness - **he** must also turn to human relationships in **his** search for the world’s meaning, yet see them through the distorted lens of **sin**.²⁹⁸ Using hyperbole, therefore, **Solomon** said that such **upright men** are extremely rare, hence, **one in a thousand**.

Then **the Teacher** added that **not one** such **woman** may be found. This does not mean that one out of every **thousand men** are **pleasing to God** and that **no women** at all **please Him**. Such a point hardly fits **Solomon’s** argument. Instead, in the last line of **7:28**, **Solomon** used (a) a kind of complementary parallelism in which the generic term for **man** (Hebrew: *adam*) is explained as also including the feminine gender in the sense of *mankind*, and (b) a kind of graded numerical sequence in which the second of two terms gives the climax or point, such as in **Proverbs 30:15, 18, and 21**. In this parallelism and numerical sequence **his** purpose was to say that **upright people** - both **men** and **women** - are not only scarce, but are nonexistent; there is **not one among them all**. This is also supported by the fact that the Hebrew word for **they** is used in **7:29**.²⁹⁹

In the last verse of **Chapter 7 Solomon** gives us a more concrete conclusion on human

nature than **he** could reach solely by **his** experience. **Only this have I found: God created mankind upright, but they** (both **men** and **women**) **have gone in search of many schemes (7:29).** He turns to what has been revealed in the Torah, drawing on **Genesis Chapters 1-3**, although the vocabulary is different. For instance as **God** completed **His** acts of creation, including **man** and **woman**, **He** pronounced the results were **very good**. There were no problems with the work of **His** hands. This relates to **the Teacher's** statement that **humanity** was created **upright**, in a moral and not an intellectual sense.

However, while **ADONAI** created **humanity** without any moral blemishes, **men** and **women** **have gone in search of many schemes.** When we hear this phrase it reminds us of **Genesis 6:5** when **ADONAI** saw **how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.** The word for **schemes** in **Ecclesiastes** is related to the word **thoughts** in **Genesis**, in that both are words formed from the verbal root *hsb*, meaning *to think or to calculate*. There is an obvious contrast with the word **upright**, which determines the morally negative tone of *hsb*.³⁰⁰ But sense futility was not the first word about our world in **Genesis**, so it doesn't have to be the last (see [Cy - The Conclusion of the Matter](#)).

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that all wisdom is in **Messiah**. In **Him** all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden (Colossians 2:3). When we do not know what to do, we can run to **Yeshua** who has promised to give us wisdom. But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all without hesitation and without reproach; and it will be given to him (James 1:5).*

*Real wisdom is listening to **You, God**, and walking in a holy fear of **You**. The fear of **ADONAI** is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline (Proverbs 1:7). It is wise to honor **You** as our **Lord** and to believe in **Messiah's** death and resurrection. For if you confess with your mouth that **Yeshua** is **Lord**, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart it is believed for righteousness, and with the mouth it is confessed for salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever trusts in Him will not be put to shame" (Romans 10:9-11).*

*Thank **You** that in **Your** omniscience wisdom **You** knew what a great and costly sacrifice it would be for **You** to redeem people, but **You** chose to be the **Lamb of God (John 1:29)**, paying for our punishment (**Second Corinthians 5:21**). We worship **You**! Wisdom tells us to trust in **You** even when this world laughs at us, mocks us, or martyrs those who love **You**. Loving **You** is well worth whatever it costs. For I consider the sufferings of this present*



*time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18). An eternal home in heaven (John 14:3, 6) awaits all who believe in **Your Name**. Thank **You** for being so wise and so loving. In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*