

UNDER THE SUN

Joy, Sorrow, Vanity, and What Really Matters in Life

Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. -Ecclesiastes 12:13

“The Quest For Understanding”

Ecclesiastes 1:12-18

Ecclesiastes 1:13 (NKJV)

¹³ And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised.

Ecclesiastes 1:12–18 (NKJV)

¹² I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. ¹³ And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised. ¹⁴ I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all *is* vanity and grasping for the wind.

Ecclesiastes 1:12–18 (NKJV)

¹⁵ *What is crooked cannot be made straight, And what is lacking cannot be numbered.* ¹⁶ I communed with my heart, saying, “Look, I have attained greatness, and have gained more wisdom than all who were before me in Jerusalem. My heart has understood great wisdom and knowledge.”

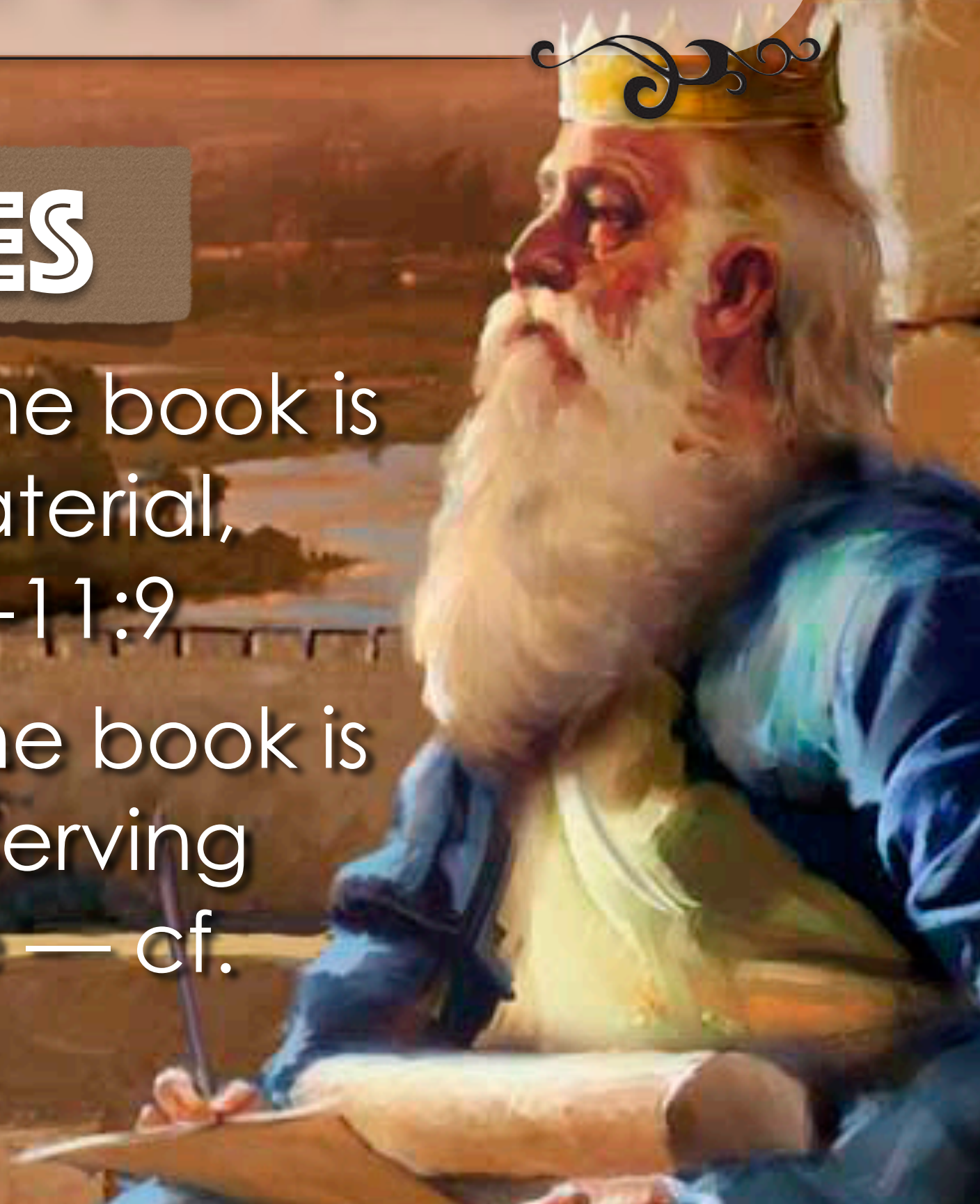
Ecclesiastes 1:12–18 (NKJV)

¹⁷ And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind. ¹⁸ For in much wisdom *is* much grief, And he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

"The Words of The Preacher"

ECCLESIASTES

- The main focus of the book is the VANITY of of material, earthly things — 1:1-11:9
- The main point of the book is the importance of serving God throughout life — cf. 11:9-12:1, 13-14



“The Quest For Understanding”

ECCLESIASTES

- Very IMPORTANT to keep the object and theme of the book in mind when analyzing its particular statements!
- In this lesson: THE **VANITY** OF **STRIVING AFTER EARTHLY WISDOM**



“The Quest For Understanding”



► The true **VALUE** of **MATERIAL THINGS**

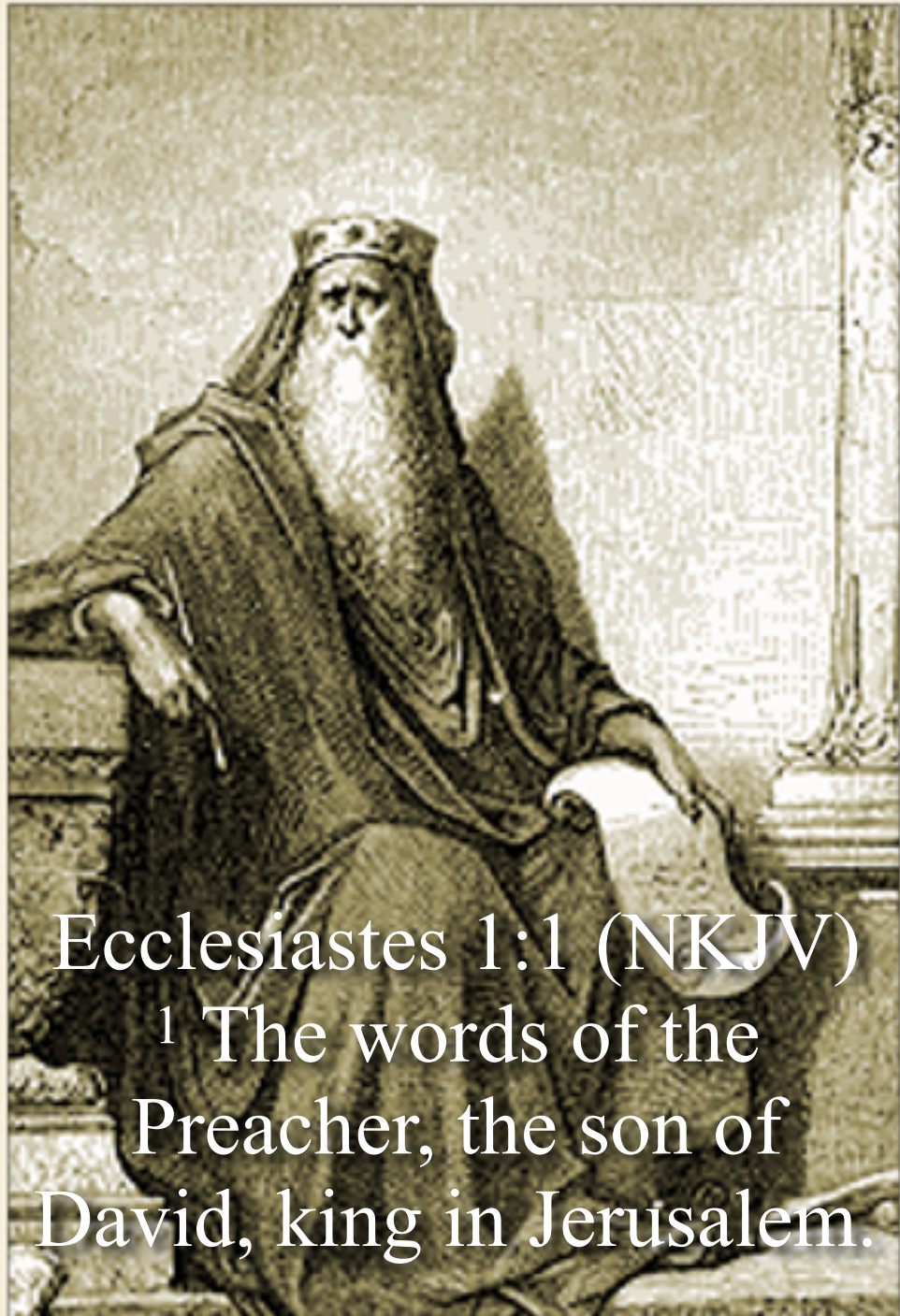
- The book illustrates the vanity of life when looked at solely from an earthly perspective

► The **Author**:

- The words of the “**preacher**” - in Hebrew, קהלת Qoheleth (875a); the teacher, leader of an assembly ... **Solomon**

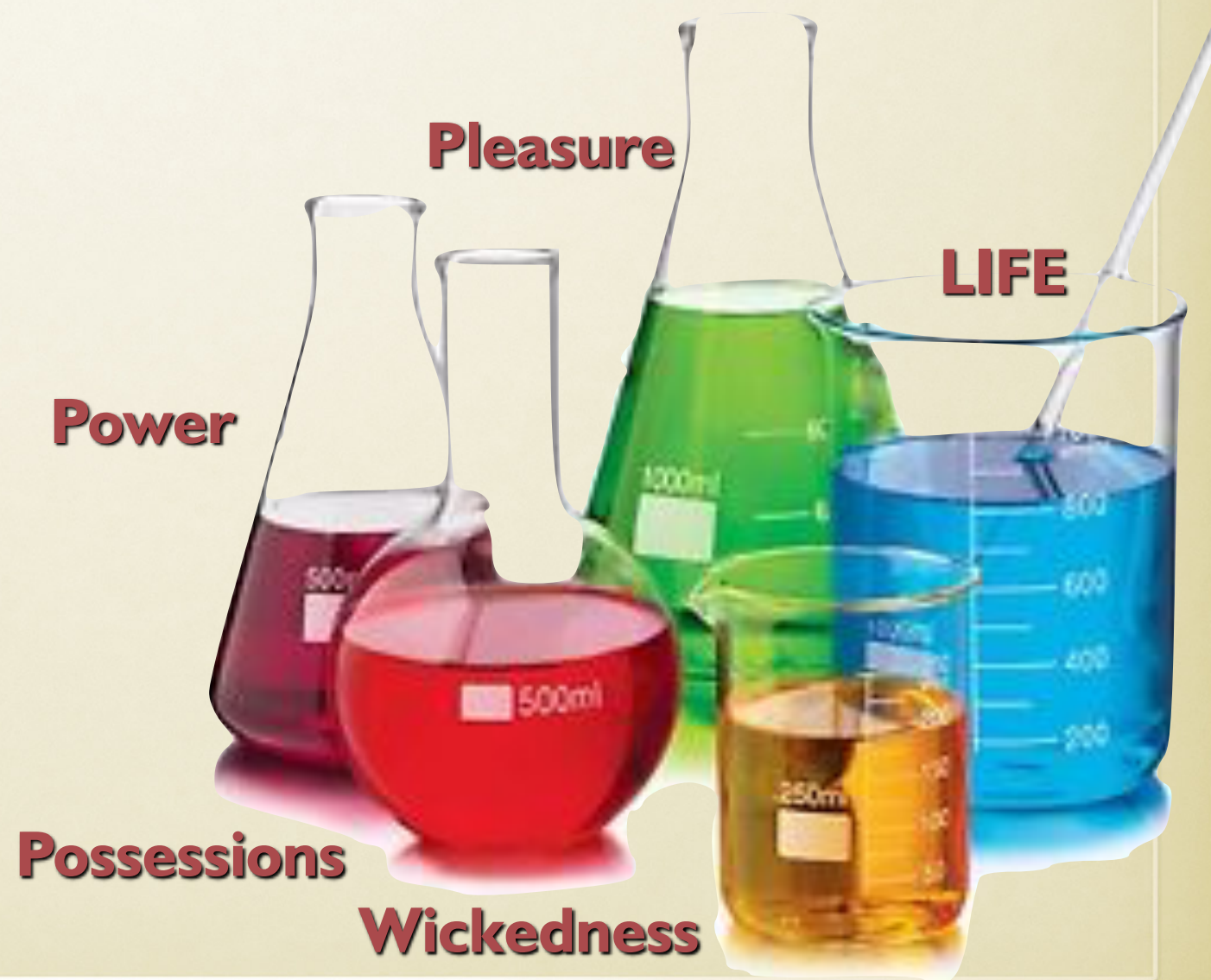
“The Quest For Understanding”

► An **EXAMINATION / STUDY** of life "under the sun"



Ecclesiastes 1:1 (NKJV)

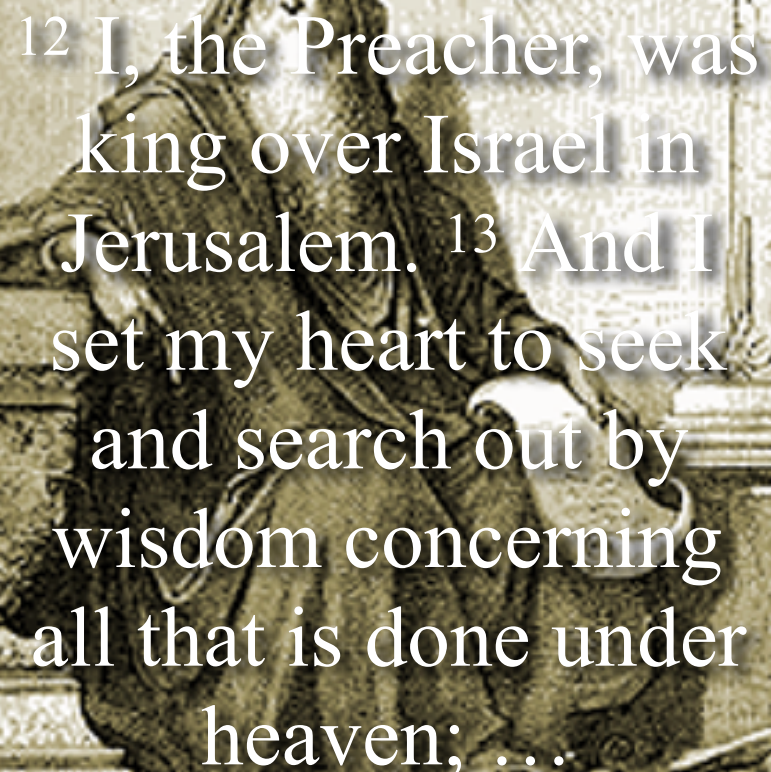
¹ The words of the
Preacher, the son of
David, king in Jerusalem.



“The Quest For Understanding”

The Initial Quest (1:12-13)

Ecclesiastes 1:12–13 (NKJV)

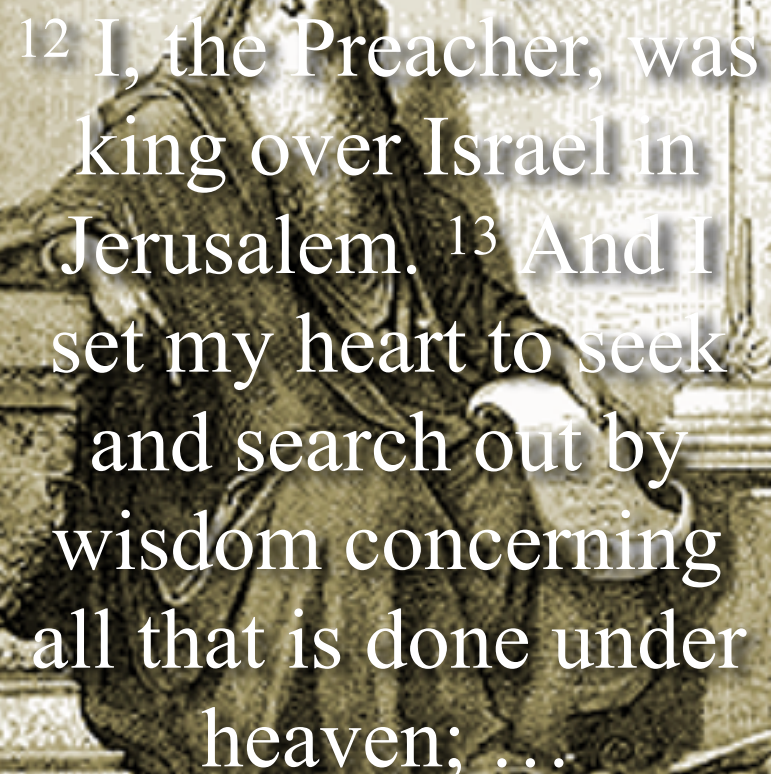
12 I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. 13 And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; ...

- ▶ Koheleth was determined in his quest for wisdom. He “set” or fixed his “heart.”
- ▶ The heart is the seat, not only of affections, but of the understanding and intellectual faculties generally. — Equivalent to setting the mind to the task

“The Quest For Understanding”

The Initial Quest (1:12-13)

Ecclesiastes 1:12–13 (NKJV)



¹² I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. ¹³ And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; ...

- ▶ “**To seek**” (darash- implies penetrating into the depth of an object) and “**to search out**” (tur-taking a comprehensive survey) the mysteries of life.
- ▶ The instrument by which these researches would be conducted was “**wisdom.**”
- ▶ He wished to investigate the causes and conditions of things of the world - “**under the sun**”

“The Quest For Understanding”

The Initial Quest (1:12-13)

**Ecclesiastes 1:12–13
(NKJV)**

¹² I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. ¹³ And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; ...

- ▶ **We determine values, priorities, goals, & focus!** – Mat. 6:19-21, 33; Rom 12:1,2; Col 3:1,2
- ▶ **Wisdom** – Application of knowledge & Seeing the end of a thing ...
 - Focus is the result of conduct & the earthly consequences ...
 - Two kinds of wisdom, Human & divine - (James 3:15-17) - results in VERY DIFFERENT perspectives!

“The Quest For Understanding”

The Initial Quest (1:12-13)

Ecclesiastes 1:12–13
(NKJV)

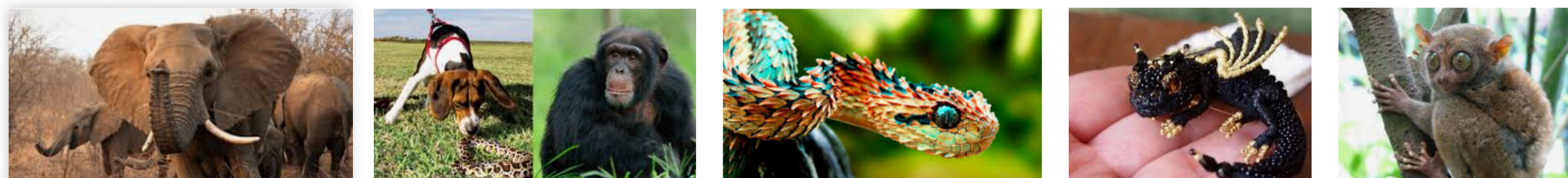
13 ... this
burdensome task
God has given to
the sons of man,
by which they
may be exercised.

► “This burdensome task” —

- (‘inyan). occurs often in this book, but nowhere else in the Old Testament. - It implies distracting business, engrossing occupation.
- Men feel a compulsion to undertake this laborious investigation, yet the result is most unsatisfactory, as the following verses explain.

“The Quest For Understanding”

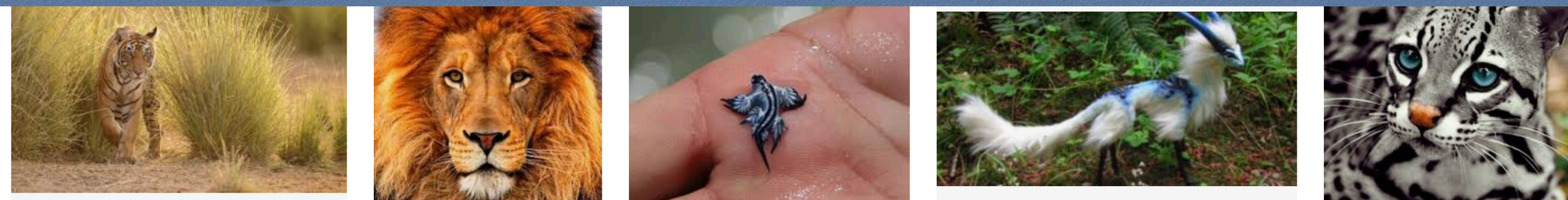
The Initial Quest (1:12-13)



The Quest To Understand IS ENDLESS



The Quest To Understand IS MEANINGLESS



“The Quest For Understanding”

The Initial Quest (1:12-13)

Ecclesiastes 1:12–13
(NKJV)

13 . . . this
burdensome task
God has given to
the sons of man,
by which they
may be exercised.

► “This burdensome task” —

- **Young’s Literal Translation:**
– . . . “It [is] a sad travail God hath given to the sons of man to be humbled by it.”
- Part of that which distinguishes humans from animals is the desire to know origin, destiny and purpose; to understand the why and how of all things.

“The Quest For Understanding”

The Initial Quest (1:12-13)

Ecclesiastes 1:12–13
(NKJV)

13 ... this
burdensome task
God has given to
the sons of man,
by which they
may be exercised.

► “This burdensome task” —

- The sons of men - not just God's covenant people - tirelessly seek the answers to millions and millions of questions ...
- Though this compulsion to know is God-given, the effort to know is full of frustration. - HUMBLING!

“The Quest For Understanding”

Preliminary Conclusions (1:14-16)

Ecclesiastes 1:14
(NKJV)

14 I have seen all
the works that are
done under the
sun; and indeed,
all *is* vanity and
grasping for the
wind.

► “An exhaustive study” —

- His shocking (“INDEED!”) discovery was that “all is vanity and striving after wind.”
- All human endeavor is unsubstantial and ultimately unsatisfying.
- No matter how thoroughly a person investigates, how broad the area is that is taken in hand, it is found to be a rather fruitless endeavor (1:14).

“The Quest For Understanding”

Preliminary Conclusions (1:14-16)

Ecclesiastes 1:15

(NKJV)

15 *What is
crooked cannot be
made straight,
And what is
lacking cannot be
numbered.*

► “**An unavoidable conclusion**”
— Eccl 7:13; Mat 6:27

- Life presents many problems which the keenest intellect cannot explain nor rectify.
- The greatest mathematician cannot add figures which do not exist. So the wisdom of man cannot supply the defects which come to notice when he examines life (1:15)..

“The Quest For Understanding”

Preliminary Conclusions (1:14-16)

Ecclesiastes 1:15
(NKJV)

*15 What is
crooked cannot be
made straight,
And what is
lacking cannot be
numbered.*

► **“An unavoidable conclusion”**
— Eccl 7:13; Mat 6:27

- There will always be problems
- There will always be wars —
- There will always be disease —
- There will always be natural disasters —
- There will always be poor — John 12:8
- There will always be unanswerable questions —

“The Quest For Understanding”

Preliminary Conclusions (1:14-16)

Ecclesiastes 1:15
(NKJV)

*15 What is
crooked cannot be
made straight,
And what is
lacking cannot be
numbered.*

► We CANNOT change what God has decreed ...

- We have His word - His will - His way - His judgments — Is. 40:8; 1 Peter 1:22-25; Gal 1:6-9
- We can choose - but, we do not have the option to NOT choose! — Rom 6:16,17
- We will die — Heb 9:27
- We will be accountable before Him for how we live our lives! — Eccl. 12:13,14; 2 Cor. 5:10

“The Quest For Understanding”

Preliminary Conclusions (1:14-16)

Ecclesiastes 1:16
(NKJV)

¹⁶ I communed with my heart, saying, “Look, I have attained greatness, and have gained more wisdom than all who were before me in Jerusalem. My heart has understood great wisdom and knowledge.”

► **Solomon knew of himself**

- He had found great success in material things – 1 Kings 10:7,23; Luke 12:16-21
- He had gained great wisdom and knowledge - 1 Kings 4:30; 2:Chr. 9:22,23
- He had done the utmost to acquire wisdom, yet he was still unable to explain the anomalies of life (1:16).

“The Quest For Understanding”

The Intensified Quest (1:17-18)

Ecclesiastes

1:17-18 (NKJV)

¹⁷ And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind. ¹⁸ For in much wisdom is much grief, And he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

► Solomon's experiment experienced it all

- He left no stone unturned. He even explored the opposite of wisdom ...
- He learned **madnesses** (holeloth- confusion of thought) and “**folly**” (sikhloth - vice and wickedness).
- Produced nothing of lasting value - Chasing the wind!

“The Quest For Understanding”

The Intensified Quest (1:17-18)

Ecclesiastes

1:17-18 (NKJV)

¹⁷ And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind. ¹⁸ For in much wisdom is much grief, And he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.



Increased wisdom & knowledge is frustrating.

- Leads one to find out many disturbing things producing “**vexation**” or irritation (ka‘as),
- “Sorrow” grows out of getting more knowledge, many things are hopelessly bent to evil.
- Becomes ever more conscious of his ignorance & impotence, against the great evils which he is powerless to remedy.

“The Quest For Understanding”

The Intensified Quest (1:17-18)

Ecclesiastes

1:17–18 (NKJV)

¹⁷ And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind. ¹⁸ For in much wisdom is much grief, And he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

- **Increased wisdom & knowledge is frustrating.**
- More responsibility —
 - More burdens to bear —
 - More conscious of
 - Reality . . .
 - Limitations . . .
 - Dangers of ignorance

“The Quest For Understanding”

ECCLESIASTES

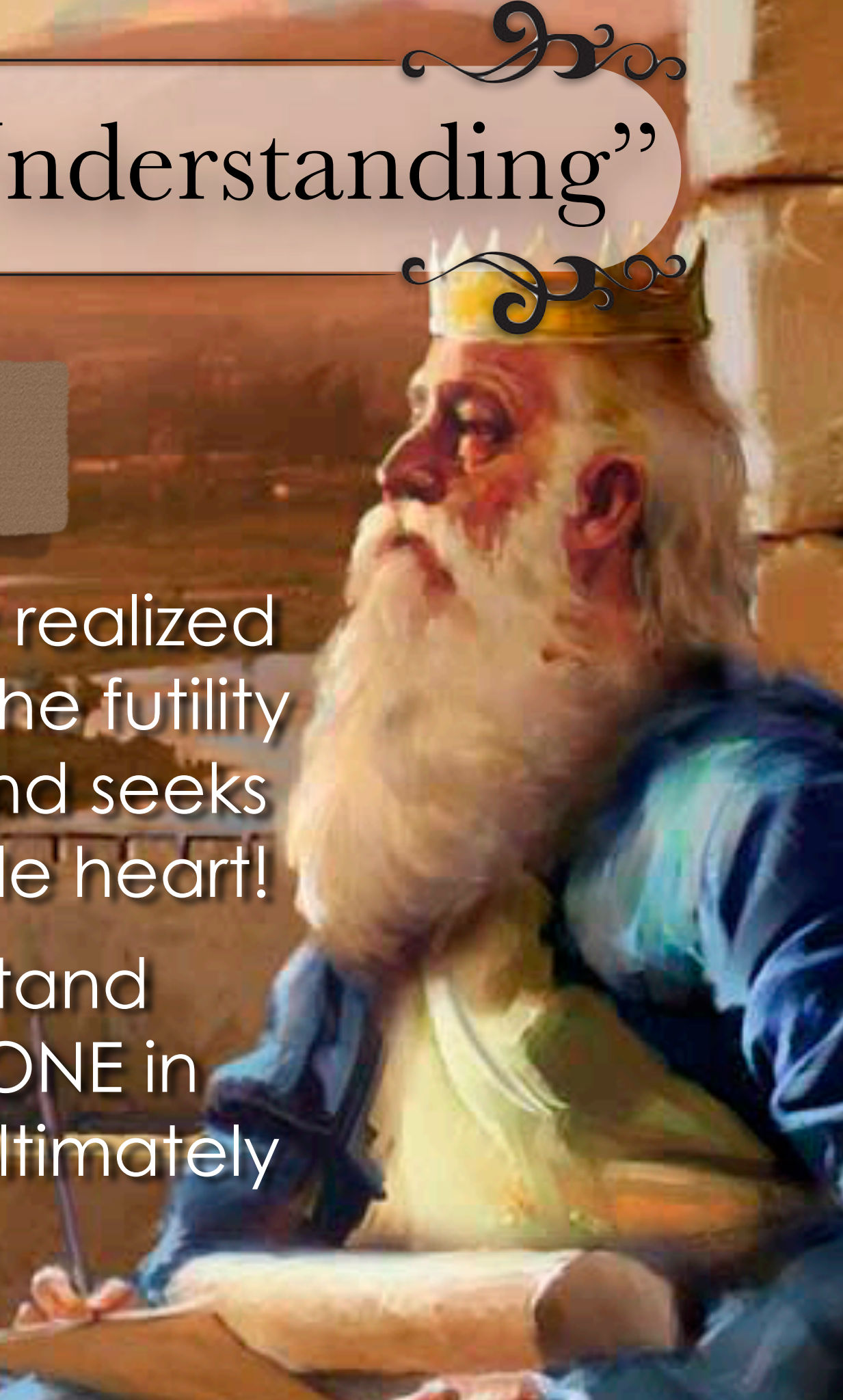
- There are areas where human effort is futile - (14,15) We CANNOT change or control things beyond our grasp.
- The search for human wisdom has its problems - (16-18) / Not easily gained / Brings about grief / Increases sorrow -



“The Quest For Understanding”

ECCLESIASTES

- One's quality of life is only realized when he/she recognizes the futility of chasing the wind . . . And seeks to serve God with his whole heart!
- We do not have to understand everything, because the ONE in whom I trust does and is ultimately in control of it all!!





“The Quest For Understanding”

ECCLESIASTES

- WE HAVE ALL WE
NEED IN CHRIST —
Colossians 1:13-21;
Matthew 11:28-30

UNDER THE SUN

Joy, Sorrow, Vanity, and What Really Matters in Life

Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. -Ecclesiastes 12:13

“The Quest For Understanding”

Ecclesiastes 1:12-18

Charts by Don McClain

Preached February 10, 2019

West 65th Street church of Christ/ P.O. Box 190062 / Little Rock AR 72219 / 501-568-1062

Prepared using Keynote

Email – donmcclain@sbcglobal.net

Our Website: w65stchurchofchrist.com

Genesis 3:17–24 (NKJV)

¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. ¹⁹ 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.” ²⁰ And Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

Genesis 3:17–24 (NKJV)

²¹ Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them. ²² Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”—²³ therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.