

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 Satisfaction”

Ecclesiastes 2:1-17

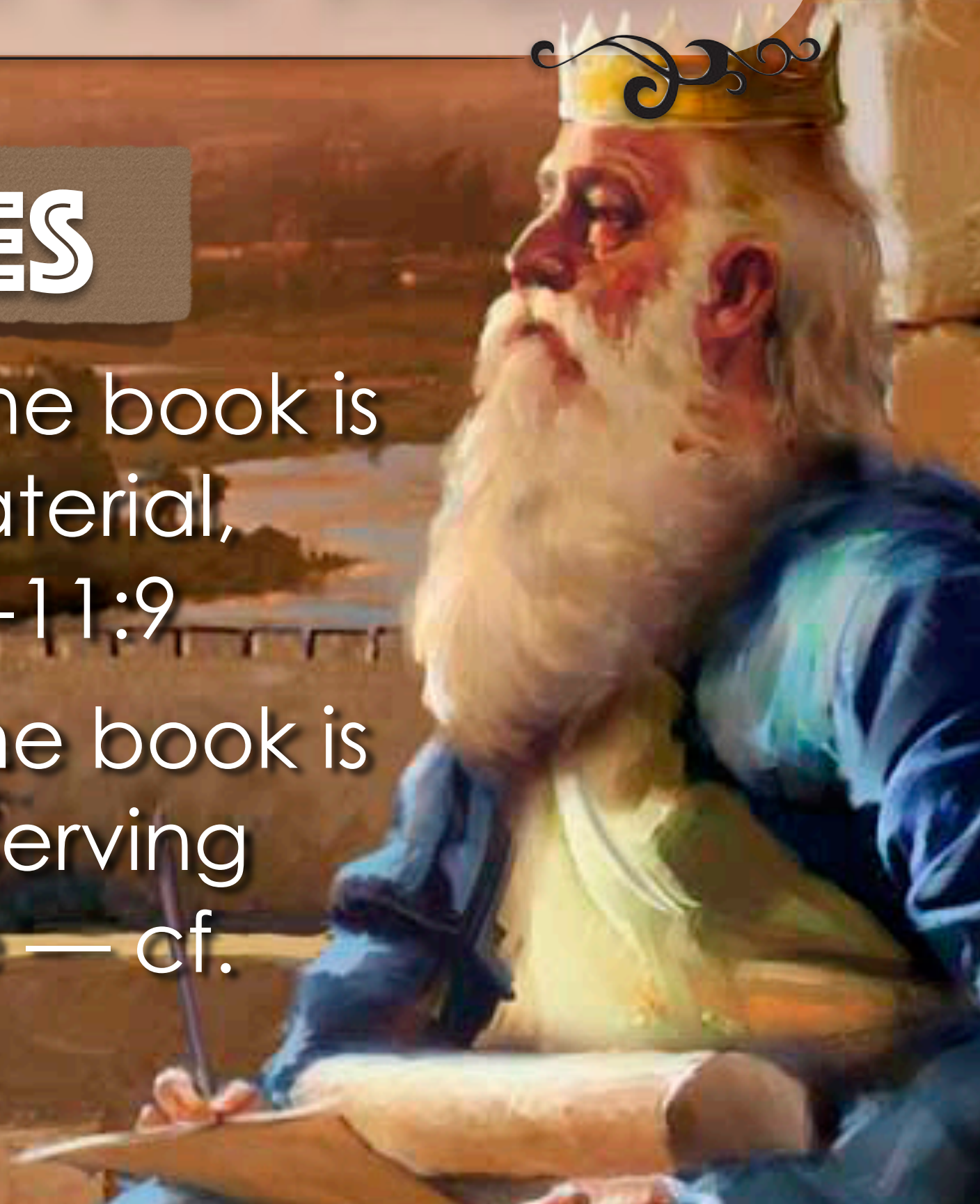
Ecclesiastes 2:3 (NKJV)

³ I searched in my heart *how* to gratify my flesh 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.

"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!
- Our last lesson: THE **VANITY** OF STRIVING AFTER **EARTHLY WISDOM ...**

A painting of a bearded king in a crown, looking out over a landscape. The king is wearing a blue robe and a yellow crown. He is holding a scroll in his left hand. The background shows a landscape with trees and a body of water.

“The Quest For Satisfaction”

ECCLESIASTES

- Cannot be found in “amusements and delights?” — 2:1,2
- Cannot be found in wine — 2:3
- Cannot be found in work 2:4-6
- Cannot be found in wealth — 2:7-8a
- Cannot be found in women — 2:8b
- Cannot be found in wisdom — 2:13-16

Ecclesiastes 2:1–17 (NKJV)

¹ I said in my heart, “Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure”; but surely, this also *was* vanity. ² I said of laughter —“Madness!”; and of mirth, “What does it accomplish?” ³ I searched in my heart *how* to gratify my flesh 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. ⁴ I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards.

Ecclesiastes 2:1–17 (NKJV)

⁵ I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all *kinds* of fruit trees in them. ⁶ I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove. ⁷ I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me. ⁸ I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, *and* musical instruments of all kinds.

Ecclesiastes 2:1–17 (NKJV)

⁹ So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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.

Ecclesiastes 2:1–17 (NKJV)

¹² 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. ¹³

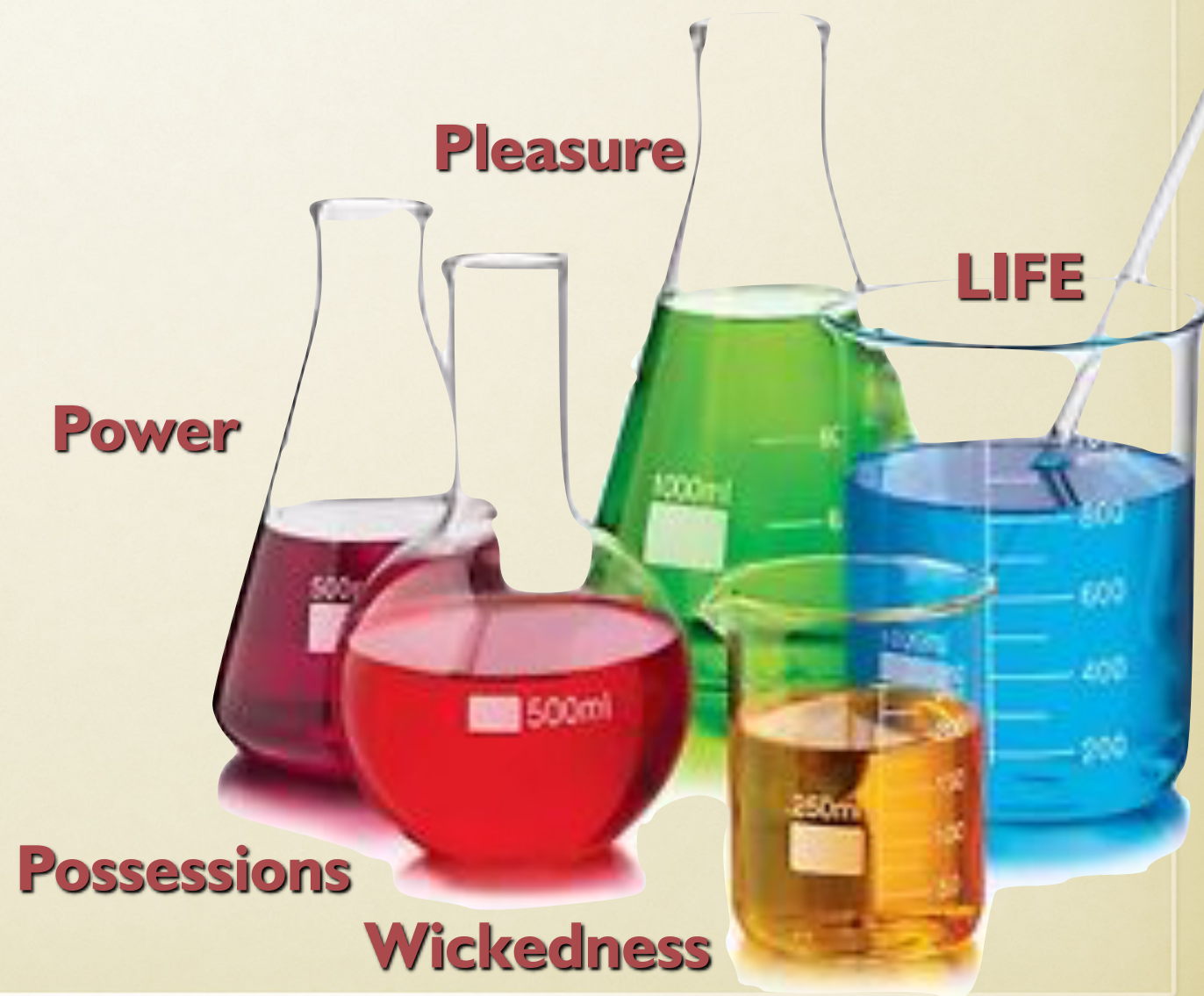
Then I saw that wisdom excels folly As light excels darkness. ¹⁴ The wise man's eyes *are* in his head, But the fool walks in darkness. Yet I myself perceived That the same event happens to them all.

Ecclesiastes 2:1–17 (NKJV)

¹⁵ So I said in my heart, “As it happens to the fool, It also happens to me, And why was I then more wise?” Then I said in my heart, “This also *is* vanity.” ¹⁶ 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! ¹⁷ 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.

“The Quest For Satisfaction”

► The true **VALUE** of
MATERIAL THINGS



“The Quest For Satisfaction”

The Vanity of Pleasure – 2:1-11



- ▶ He resolves to experiment with a series of activities which delight the human senses.
- ▶ All turns out to be “VANITY,” (vs. 1), ... “all was vanity and grasping for the wind.” (vs. 11)

“The Quest For Satisfaction”

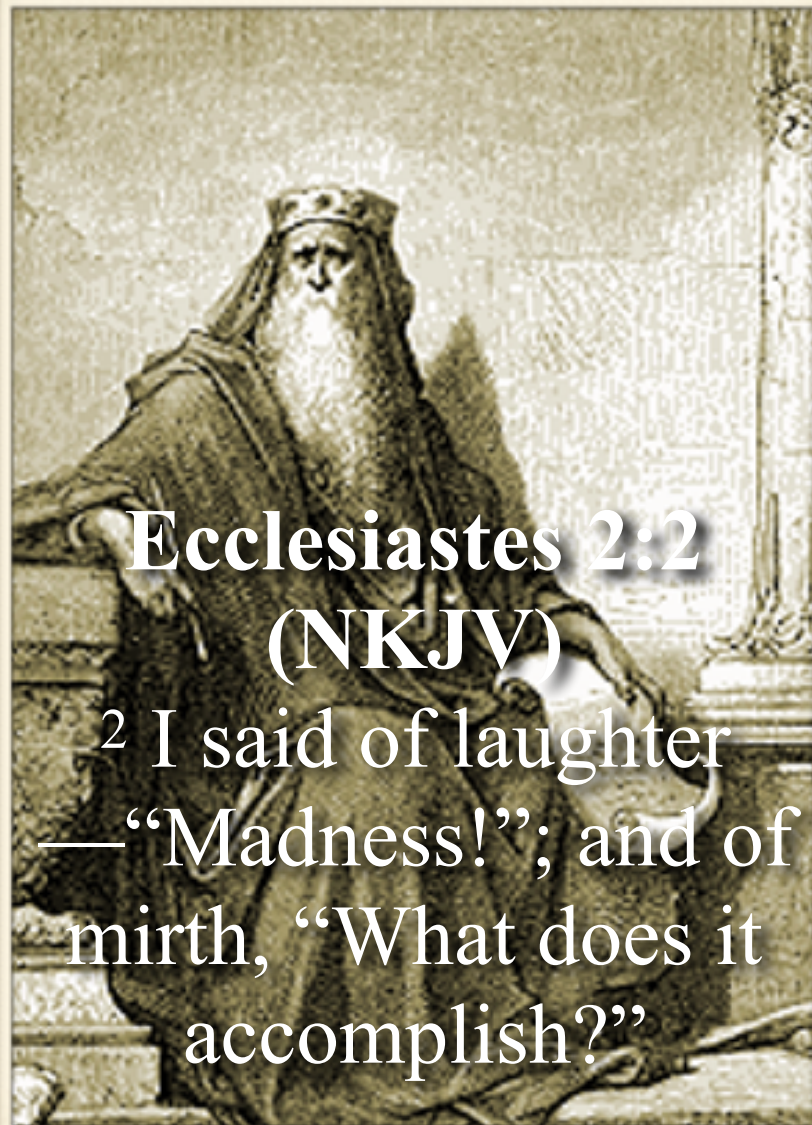
The Vanity of Pleasure – 2:1-11



- ▶ “I said in my heart.” language similar to that used by the rich fool in Jesus’ parable (Lk 12:20).
- ▶ He purposefully set his course upon sensual pleasure, i.e., that which delights the senses without being necessarily sinful. (**mirth** (*simchah*) = *harmless amusements and delights*).
- ▶ Finding pleasure in these things turned out to be a fruitless endeavor - a waste of time

“The Quest For Satisfaction”

The Vanity of Pleasure – 2:1-11



**Ecclesiastes 2:2
(NKJV)**

² I said of laughter
—“Madness!”; and of
mirth, “What does it
accomplish?”

- ▶ Koheleth evaluated “**laughter**” as “mad,” i.e., as totally irrational.
- ▶ He said, “What does “**mirth**” do? Does it contribute toward the goal of real happiness & satisfaction?
 - Does it fill the void in one’s soul?
 - Does it give lasting satisfaction?
- ▶ Israel’s wise men were quite aware of the fact that a jolly exterior can mask a heavy heart (cf. Prov 14:13 “even in laughter the heart may sorrow, and the end of mirth may be grief”).

“The Quest For Satisfaction”

The Vanity of Pleasure – 2:1-11



Ecclesiastes 2:3
(NKJV)

³ I searched in my heart *how* to gratify my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom,

- ▶ “I searched in my heart “ — He investigated, he made another experiment with **wine** — 2:3
- ▶ "while guiding my heart with wisdom, “ — Deliberately and with restraint, not blindly or in uncontrolled excess (cf. v. 9b)—
- ▶ He was playing w/ fire - Many have thought they could “drink responsibly” to only have “drink” be their ruin! — (Pr. 20:1; 23:29–35.)

“The Quest For Satisfaction”

The Vanity of Pleasure – 2:1-11



**Ecclesiastes 2:3
(NKJV)**

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.

- ▶ Koheleth determined to “lay hold on folly (sikhloth).” - includes all kinds of enjoyable nonsense.
- ▶ His purpose was to discover by personal experience 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.
- ▶ The enjoyment from wine and other forms of folly is short-lived & profits nothing worthwhile.

“The Quest For Satisfaction”

The Vanity of Pleasure – 2:1-11

**Ecclesiastes 2:4–5
(NKJV)**

⁴ I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. ⁵ I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all *kinds* of fruit trees in them.

- ▶ "I made my works great," — “for myself” indicates that these projects were not humanitarian but rather for the personal satisfaction of the builder.
- ▶ He was 13 years in building his own palace. He also built many other impressive buildings, houses, fortresses; store-cities; chariot-cities; and cities in distant lands such as Tadmor in the wilderness (1 Kgs 7; 9; 2 Chron 8).

“The Quest For Satisfaction”

The Vanity of Pleasure – 2:1-11

Ecclesiastes 2:4–8 (NKJV)

⁴ I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. ⁵ I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all *kinds* of fruit trees in them.

- ▶ **Vineyards** (Ecc. 2:4; cf. 1 Kings 7:1–11), luxuriant gardens and parks (Ecc. 2:5) filled with trees (**2:5–6**),
- ▶ A great retinue of **slaves** (**2:7**; cf. 1 Kings 10:5) to serve him,
- ▶ **Musicians** to meet his aesthetic needs, a large **harem** (**2:8**; cf. 1 Kg 11:1–3) to satisfy his physical desires.
- ▶ **Herds & flocks** (Ecc. 2:7)
- ▶ His great **treasures** of **silver** and **gold** (v. 8; cf. 1 Kings 10:14–15, 27)

“The Quest For Satisfaction”

The Vanity of Pleasure – 2:1-11



**Ecclesiastes 2:9-11
(NKJV)**

⁹ So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me.

- ▶ Koheleth **summarizes** the results of the **five experiments** (2:9–11)
 - “I became great” - i.e., he went beyond greatness. The various accomplishments enumerated excelled all who were before him in Jerusalem (cf. 1:16; 2:7).
 - The writer reiterates (cf. 2:3) that his wisdom remained - he retained control of himself during his exploration - wisdom = earthly prudence and self-restraint (2:9).

“The Quest For Satisfaction”

The Vanity of Pleasure – 2:1-11



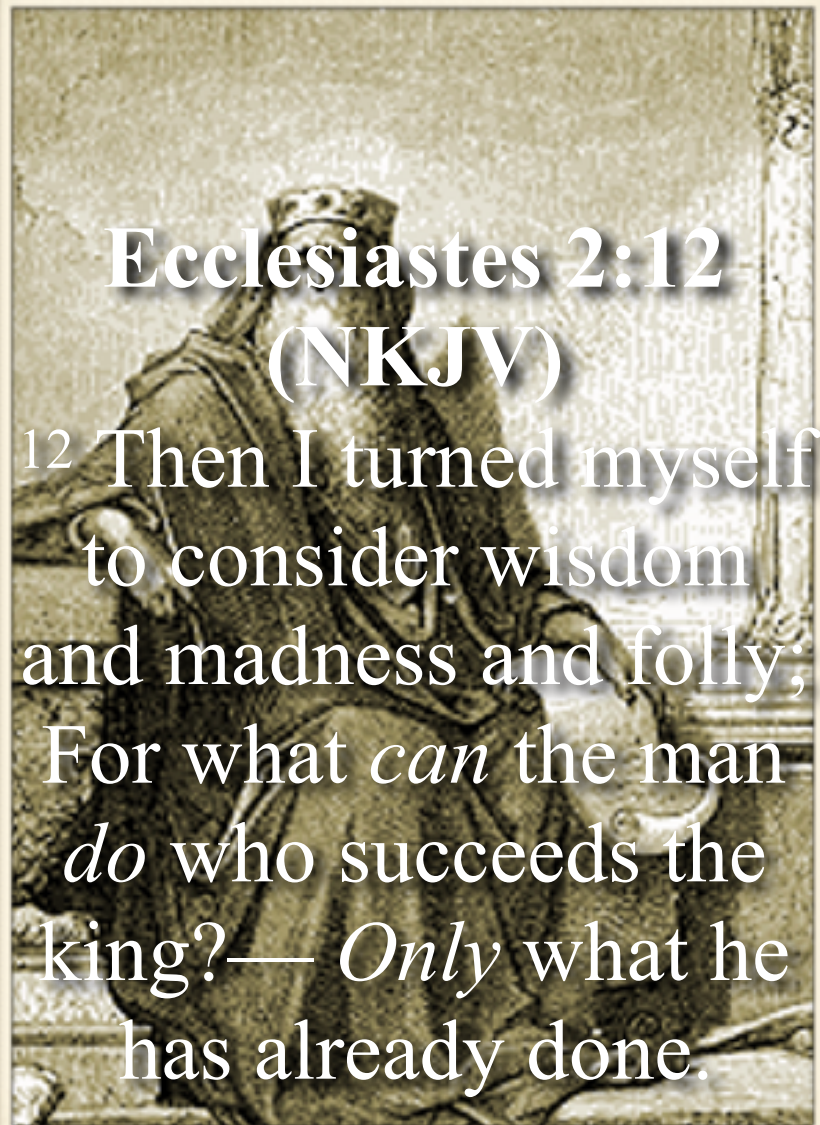
**Ecclesiastes 2:9-11
(NKJV)**

⁹ So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me.

- ▶ Koheleth **summarizes** the results of the **five experiments** (2:9–11)
 - His various experiments had contributed nothing to his anxious inquiry for man's real good. Again - “**all was vanity, a grasping after wind.**”
 - In all the pursuits and labors there was no real profit, no lasting happiness, nothing to satisfy “under the sun,” (2:11).

“The Quest For Satisfaction”

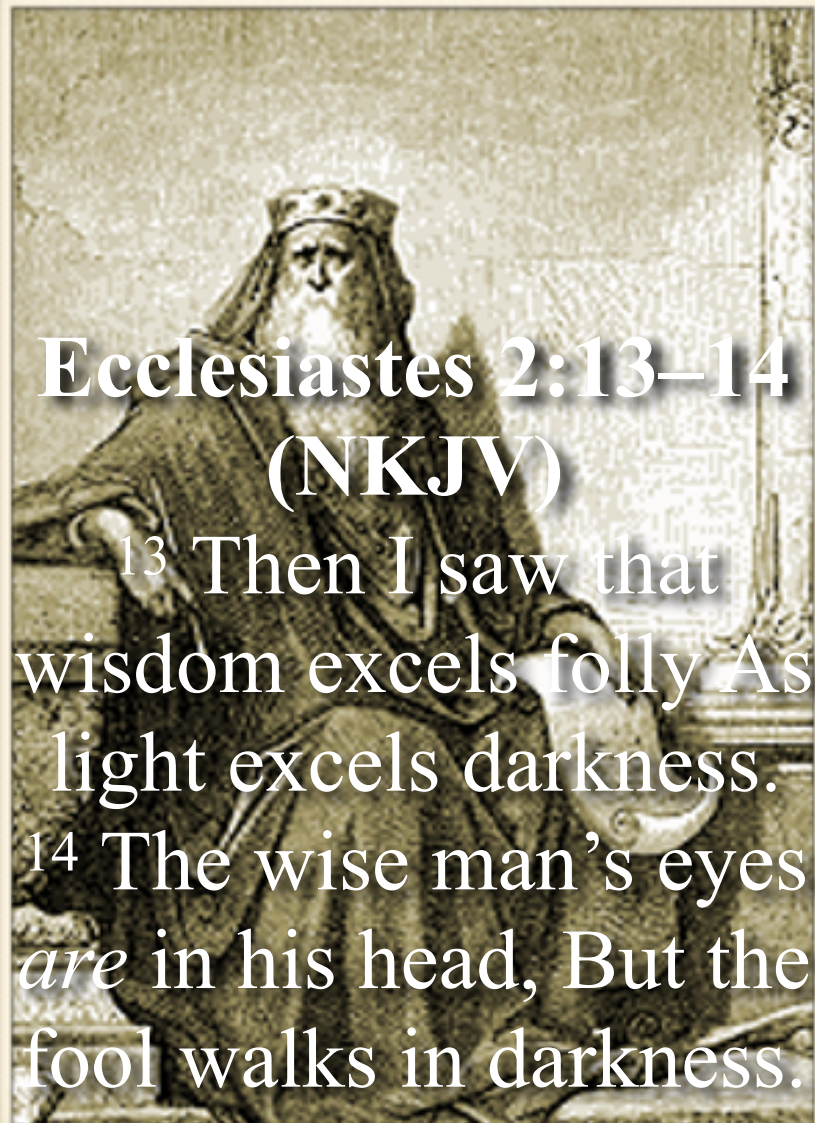
Superiority & Inferiority of Wisdom – 2:12-17



- ▶ Koheleth now turned his attention to “wisdom, madness, and folly” (cf. 1:17).
- On one side of the scale he set “wisdom,” in the other, those actions and habits which he rightly calls “madness and folly.”
- He weighs the benefits of these two lifestyles - his conclusions are conclusive - all who examine his experiment will reach the same conclusion (2:12).

“The Quest For Satisfaction”

Superiority & Inferiority of Wisdom – 2:12-17



**Ecclesiastes 2:13–14
(NKJV)**

¹³ Then I saw that wisdom excels folly As light excels darkness.

¹⁴ The wise man's eyes *are* in his head, But the fool walks in darkness.

► **Wisdom Superior to Folly (2:13–14a)**

- The person who possesses wisdom has the eyes of his heart or understanding enlightened; he looks into the nature of things; he focuses on what is most important; he sees where to go, considers the consequences ...
- The fool, on the other hand, walks on still in darkness, stumbling as he goes, knowing not where his road will take him.

“The Quest For Satisfaction”

Superiority & Inferiority of Wisdom – 2:12-17

**Ecclesiastes 2:14–15
(NKJV)**

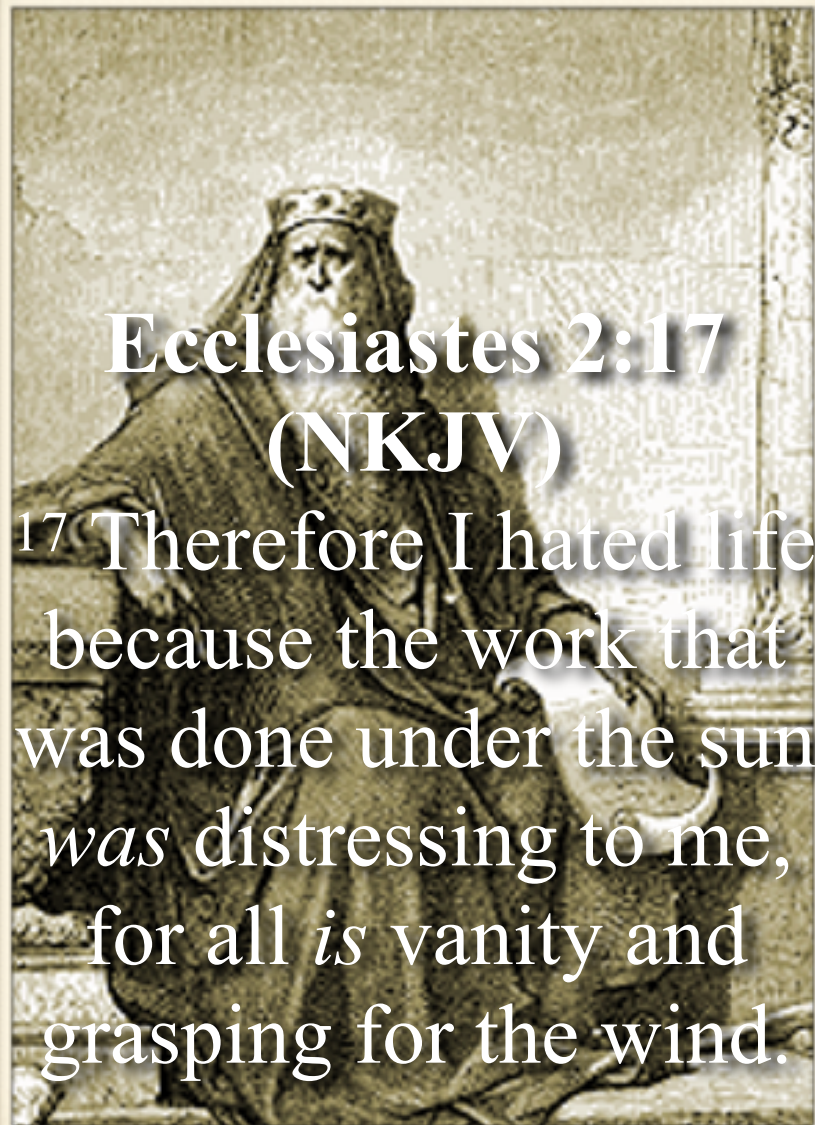
¹⁴ ... Yet I myself perceived That the same event happens to them all. ¹⁵ So I said in my heart, “As it happens to the fool, It also happens to me,

► **Though wisdom is superior to folly in life, in at least two respects the wise and the foolish are equal. (2:14b–16)**

- Both the wise and the foolish are doomed to death (2:14b–15; 2 Sam. 3:33; Psalm 49:10. Heb. 9:27).
- Both the wise and the foolish are forgotten (2:16; Ex. 1:6, 8; Ps. 103:16).

“The Quest For Satisfaction”

Superiority & Inferiority of Wisdom – 2:12-17



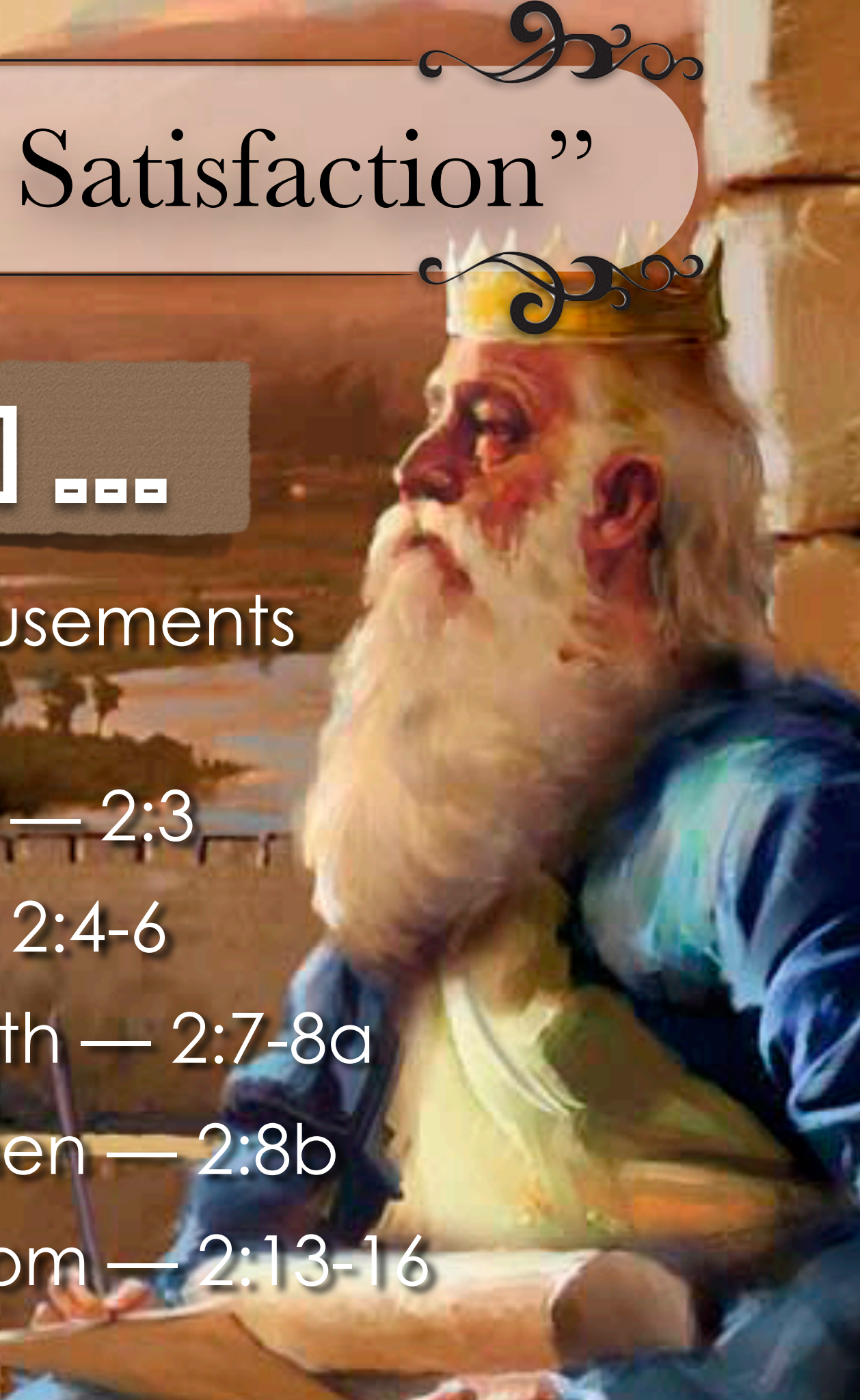
► **Conclusion (2:17)**

- Koheleth hated life, because the work ... was grievous to him. (The word trans. “distressing” [rā‘] is the antonym of the word trans. “good” or “worthwhile” in vs 1, 3)
- If there is nothing ultimately worthwhile to do, then all of life and all its accomplishments are futile or meaningless, a chasing after the wind (cf. 1:14, 17; 2:11, 17, 26; 4:6, 16; 6:9).

“The Quest For Satisfaction”

SATISFACTION ...

- ❖ Cannot be found in “amusements and delights?” — 2:1,2
- ❖ Cannot be found in wine — 2:3
- ❖ Cannot be found in work 2:4-6
- ❖ Cannot be found in wealth — 2:7-8a
- ❖ Cannot be found in women — 2:8b
- ❖ Cannot be found in wisdom — 2:13-16





“The Quest For Satisfaction”

SATISFACTION ...

- Can ONLY Be found
IN CHRIST —
Colossians 1:13-21;
Matthew 11:28-30;
Ephesians 1:3-16

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 Satisfaction”

Ecclesiastes 2:1-17

Charts by Don McClain

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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

Philippians 3:17–21 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. ¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹ whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is their* belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. ²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.