

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

“This World Is Unfair, Confusing & Dangerous”

(Ecclesiastes 7:15-29)

Ecclesiastes 7:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ *It is good that you grasp this, And also not remove your hand from the other; For he who fears God will escape them all.*

"The Words of The Preacher"

ECCLESIASTES

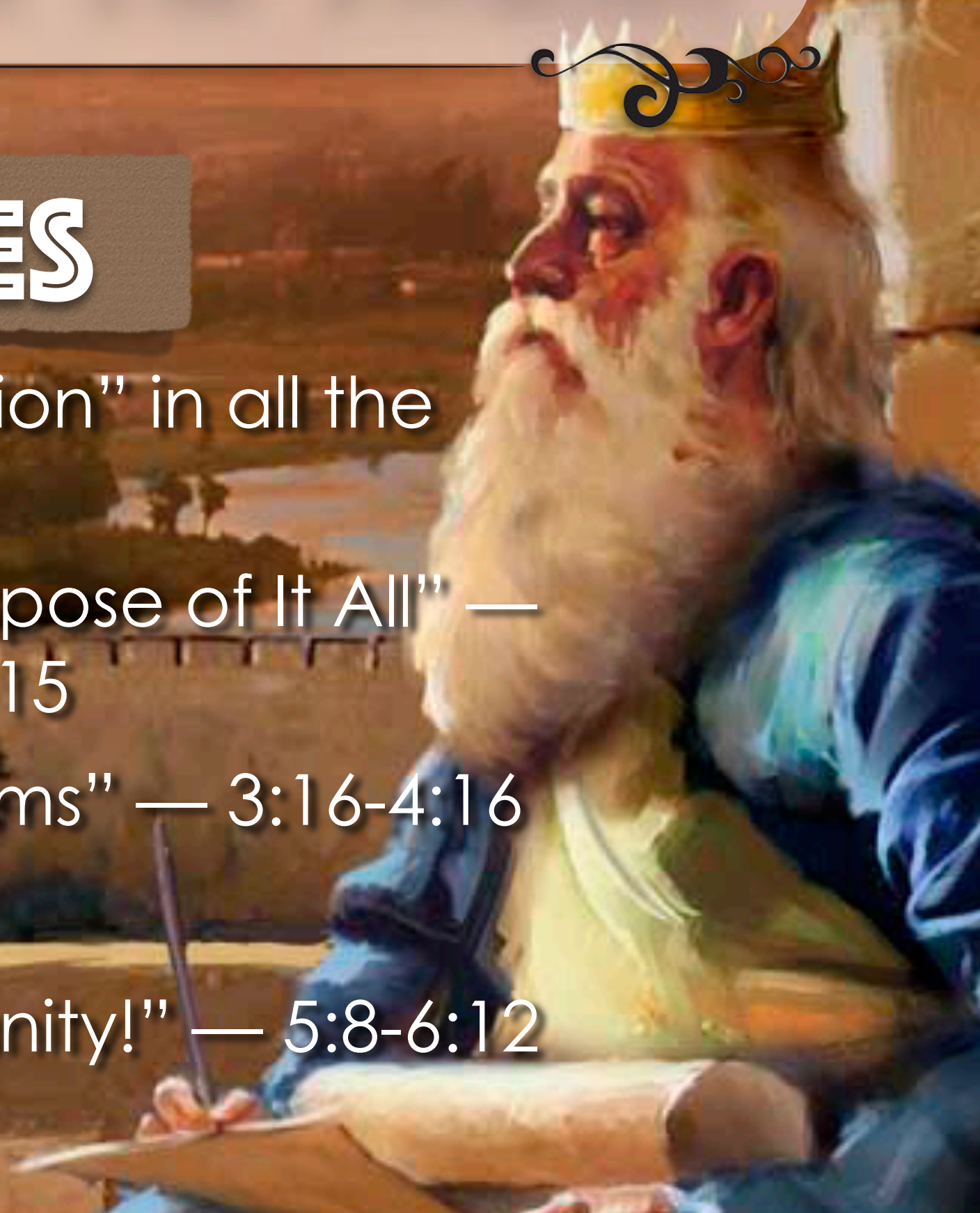
- The main focus of the book is the VANITY of of material, earthly things — 1:1-11:9
- The main point of the book is the importance of serving God throughout life — cf. 11:9-12:1, 13-14



"The Words of The Preacher"

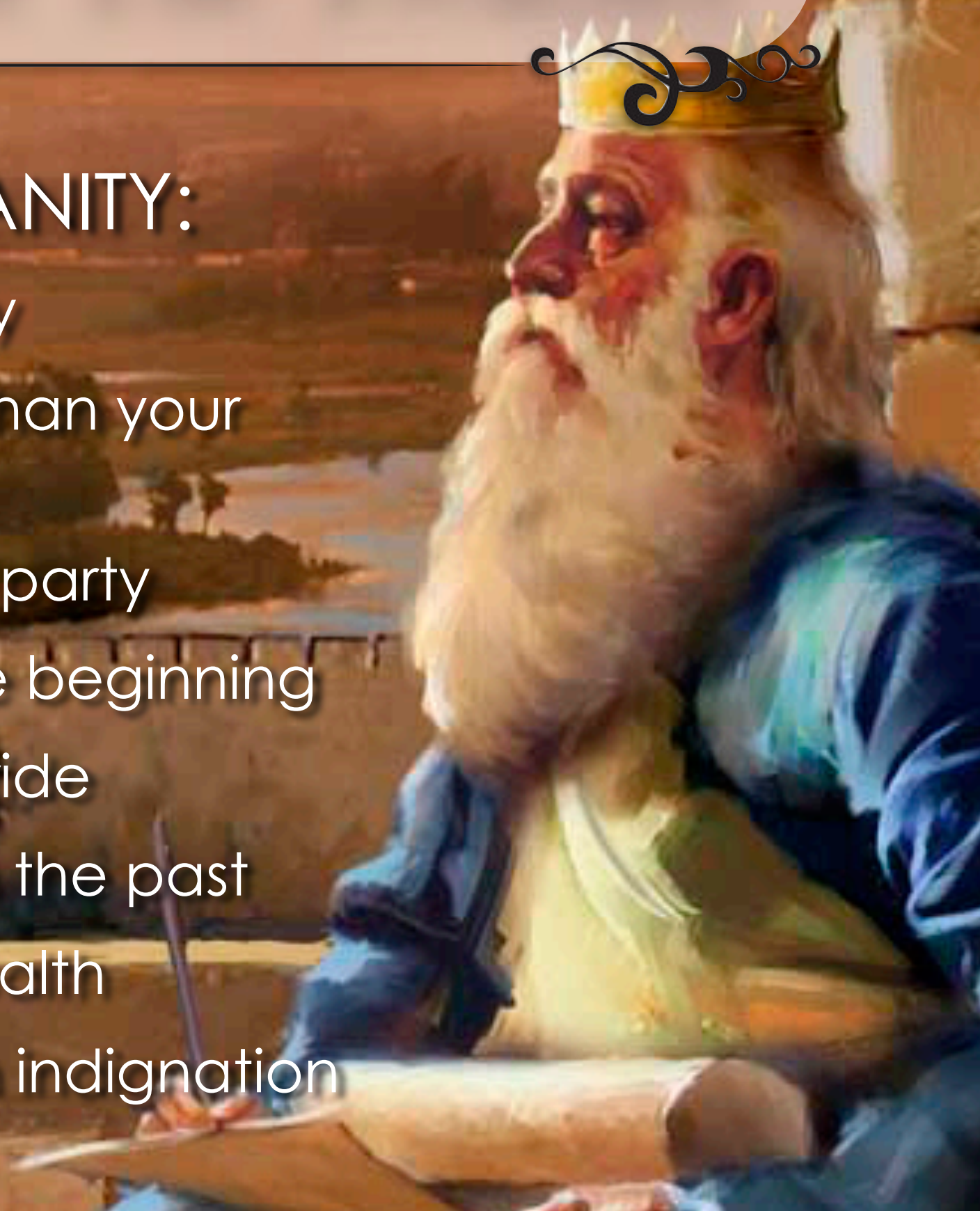
ECCLESIASTES

- "The Quest for satisfaction" in all the wrong places — 2:1-16
- "To Understand The Purpose of It All" — God is in control — 3:1-15
- "The Problem of Problems" — 3:16-4:16
- "Fear God" — 5:1-7
- "Everything Really Is Vanity!" — 5:8-6:12



"The Words of The Preacher"

- Things Better Than VANITY:
 - ✓ Honor is better than luxury
 - ✓ Your deathday is better than your birthday
 - ✓ A funeral is better than a party
 - ✓ The end is better than the beginning
 - ✓ Patience is better than pride
 - ✓ The present is better than the past
 - ✓ Wisdom is better than wealth
 - ✓ Resignation is better than indignation



“This World Is Unfair, Confusing & Dangerous”

- Koheleth introduces the next unit with another reference to his own search for meaning in life: “I have seen everything in my days of vanity:”
 - ✓ Verse 15-29 of chapter 7 presents some challenging statements - Should be understood in context ...
 - ✓ The theme appears to be Solomon’s counsel against extremism ...



Ecclesiastes 7:15–29 (NKJV)

¹⁵ I have seen everything in my days of vanity: There is a just *man* who perishes in his righteousness, And there is a wicked *man* who prolongs *life* in his wickedness. ¹⁶ Do not be overly righteous, Nor be overly wise: Why should you destroy yourself? ¹⁷ Do not be overly wicked, Nor be foolish: Why should you die before your time? ¹⁸ *It is good* that you grasp this, And also not remove your hand from the other; For he who fears God will escape them all.

Ecclesiastes 7:15–29 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Wisdom strengthens the wise More than
ten rulers of the city. ²⁰ For *there is* not a
just man on earth who does good And does
not sin. ²¹ Also do not take to heart
everything people say, Lest you hear your
servant cursing you. ²² For many times,
also, your own heart has known That even
you have cursed others. ²³ All this I have
proved by wisdom. I said, “I will be wise”;
But it *was* far from me.

Ecclesiastes 7:15–29 (NKJV)

²⁴ As for that which is far off and exceedingly deep, Who can find it out? ²⁵ I applied my heart to know, To search and seek out wisdom and the reason *of things*, To know the wickedness of folly, Even of foolishness *and* madness. ²⁶ And I find more bitter than death The woman whose heart *is* snares and nets, Whose hands *are* fetters. He who pleases God shall escape from her, But the sinner shall be trapped by her.

Ecclesiastes 7:15–29 (NKJV)

²⁷ “Here is what I have found,” says the Preacher, “*Adding* one thing to the other to find out the reason, ²⁸ Which my soul still seeks but I cannot find: One man among a thousand I have found, But a woman among all these I have not found. ²⁹ Truly, this only I have found: That God made man upright, But they have sought out many schemes.

“This World Is Unfair, Confusing & Dangerous”

“THE WORLD IS NOT FAIR” — (7:15)

Ecclesiastes 7:15
(NKJV)

15 I have seen
everything in my days
of vanity: There is a
just *man* who perishes
in his righteousness,
And there is a wicked
man who prolongs *life*
in his wickedness.



Solomon points out perhaps the most egregious of injustices – (15)

- Many think the righteous never suffer, only the wicked do - cf. Job 4:7-8; 21:7-9
- The Preacher knew such was not the case - it rains on the just and the unjust - Mat. 5:45; (cf. 8:10–14 where this is discussed again).
- Solomon, like Job, knew the end of the wicked — Job 21:30

“This World Is Unfair, Confusing & Dangerous”

THE DANGER OF EXTREMES — (7:16-18)

**Ecclesiastes 7:16–17
(NKJV)**

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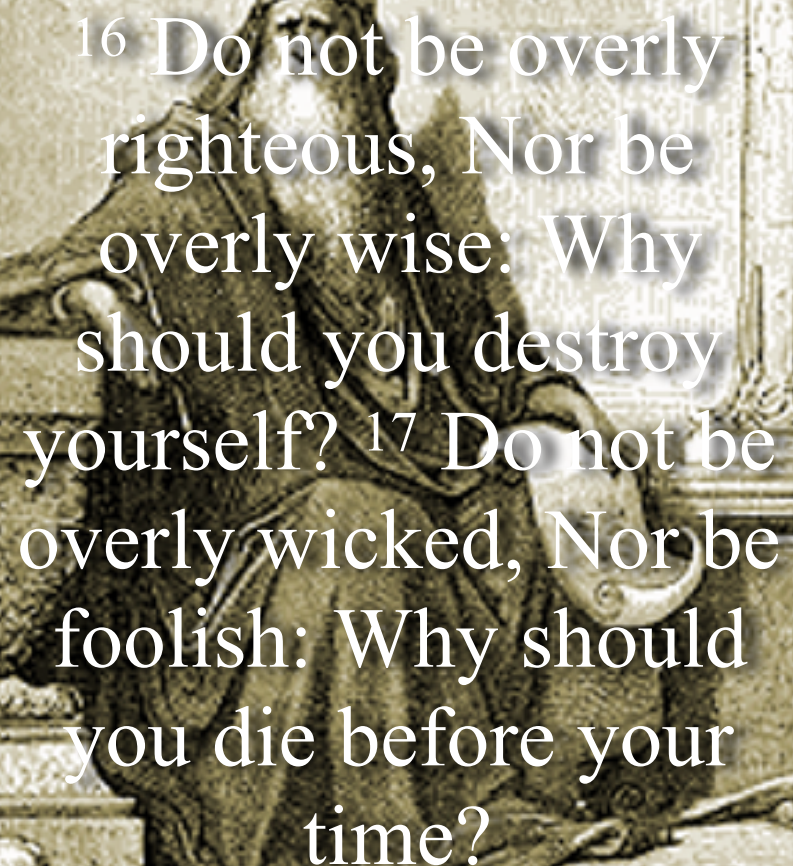
► Do not be overly righteous – (16a)

- Absolute righteousness is impractical for all have sinned — (v. 20; Rom. 3:23)
- The wise man IS NOT recommending half hearted service or a “middle of the road” mentality between heaven and the world — (Mat. 6:19-24; Col. 3:1,2; 1 John 2:15-17)

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"Is Koheleth advising that one not be too scrupulous in the observation of religious ritual? Is he suggesting that one can be so caught up in heavenly things that he is good for nothing on earth? Is it the judgmental Pharisaical spirit which is being condemned? Probably it is some incipient asceticism which Koheleth is condemning—that attitude that equates righteousness with a rigid and rigorous lifestyle. Such religion makes piety offensive, and really does not promote true righteousness."

Smith, J. E. (1996). *The wisdom literature and Psalms*.
Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co.

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► Do not be overly righteous – (16a)

- Jesus NEVER condemned anyone for being scrupulous about doing what is right — Mat 23:23,24
- It is possible to be so focussed on religion & what is right that we drive people away - MUST be TEMPERED w/ LOVE! - Ep 4:15
- There is also the idea of self preservation — Mat 7:6; 10:16,17

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Do not be overly wicked – (16a)

- The fact that God did not punish in some cases (cf. v. 15b) should not be taken as a license to sin (do not be overwicked, v. 17);
- It is good to follow both warnings and by recommending that one who fears God (cf. Ecc. 3:14; 5:7; 8:12; 12:13) should avoid all (or better, “both”) extremes (7:18).

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THE DANGER OF OVER-REACTING — (7:19-22)

Ecclesiastes 7:19–20
(NKJV)

¹⁹ Wisdom strengthens
the wise More than ten
rulers of the city. ²⁰
For *there* is not a just
man on earth who
does good And does
not sin.



Wisdom better than might – (19)

- Solomon affirmed that wisdom does give more protection than military strength:
- Wisdom makes one wise man more powerful than 10 rulers in a city. (See an example of this in 9:13–18; cf. Prov. 21:22.)

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► Wisdom knows no one is PERFECT – (20-22)

- To DEMAND perfection in others is unwise and unreasonable —
- The wrong others do, especially to us, is much easier seen than our own sins — (vs. 21; Mat. 7:1-4; Rom. 2:1, 12-23; 1 Jn 1:8,9)
- Therefore we all NEED the guidance of godly wisdom and MERCY - (7:20; Jam 2:10-14).

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WISDOM ALONE NOT THE ANSWER (7:23-29)



Ecclesiastes 7:23–24
(NKJV)

²³ All this I have proved by wisdom. I said, “I will be wise”; But it *was* far from me. ²⁴ As for that which is far off and exceedingly deep, Who can find it out?

► The Difficulty of the Search (7:23–24)

- Wisdom has its limitations. – (23) — Though he himself had applied all his great wisdom (1:16) and though he was determined to be wise (v. 23), he acknowledged true wisdom was far beyond him.
- He also noted that “Whatever has happened lies beyond our grasp, deep down, deeper than man can fathom” — (24)

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WISDOM ALONE NOT THE ANSWER (7:23-29)

Ecclesiastes 7:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ I applied my heart
to know, To search and
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To know the
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Even of foolishness
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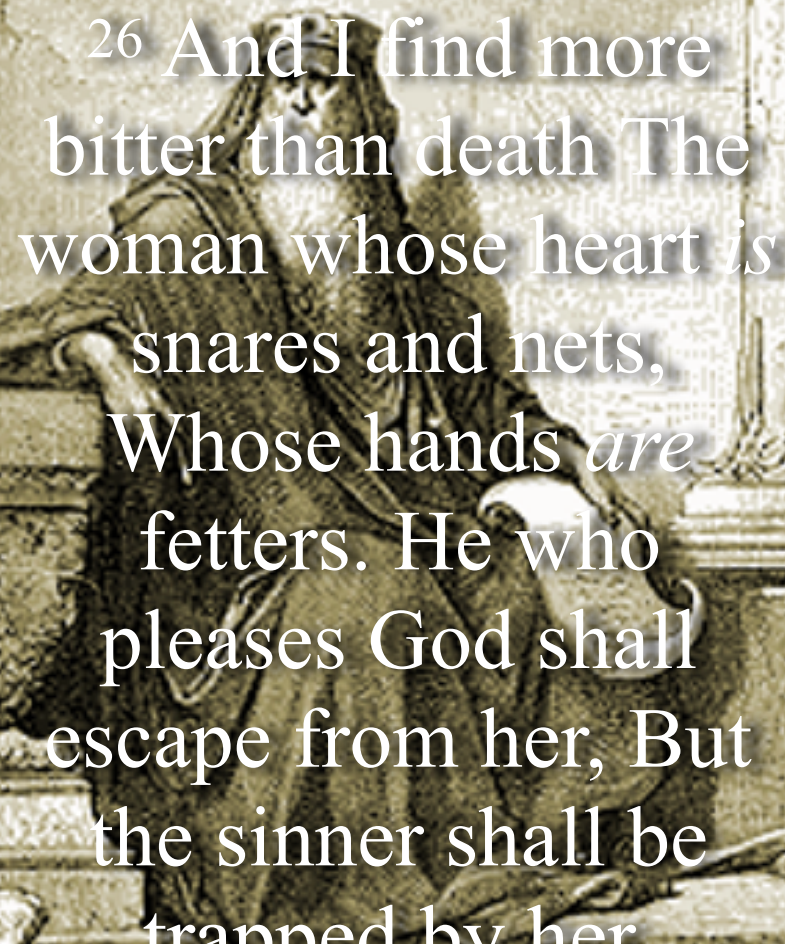
► The Goal of the Search (7:25)

- Instead of pursuing what he could not learn - he Solomon redirects his search — (25a)
- Koheleth's inquiry is centered on knowing “wickedness as folly, and foolishness as madness.”
- His investigation led him to conclude all violations of God's laws are a willful desertion of right reason, i.e., folly. In the final analysis, “wickedness”

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WISDOM ALONE NOT THE ANSWER (7:23-29)

Ecclesiastes 7:26
(NKJV)



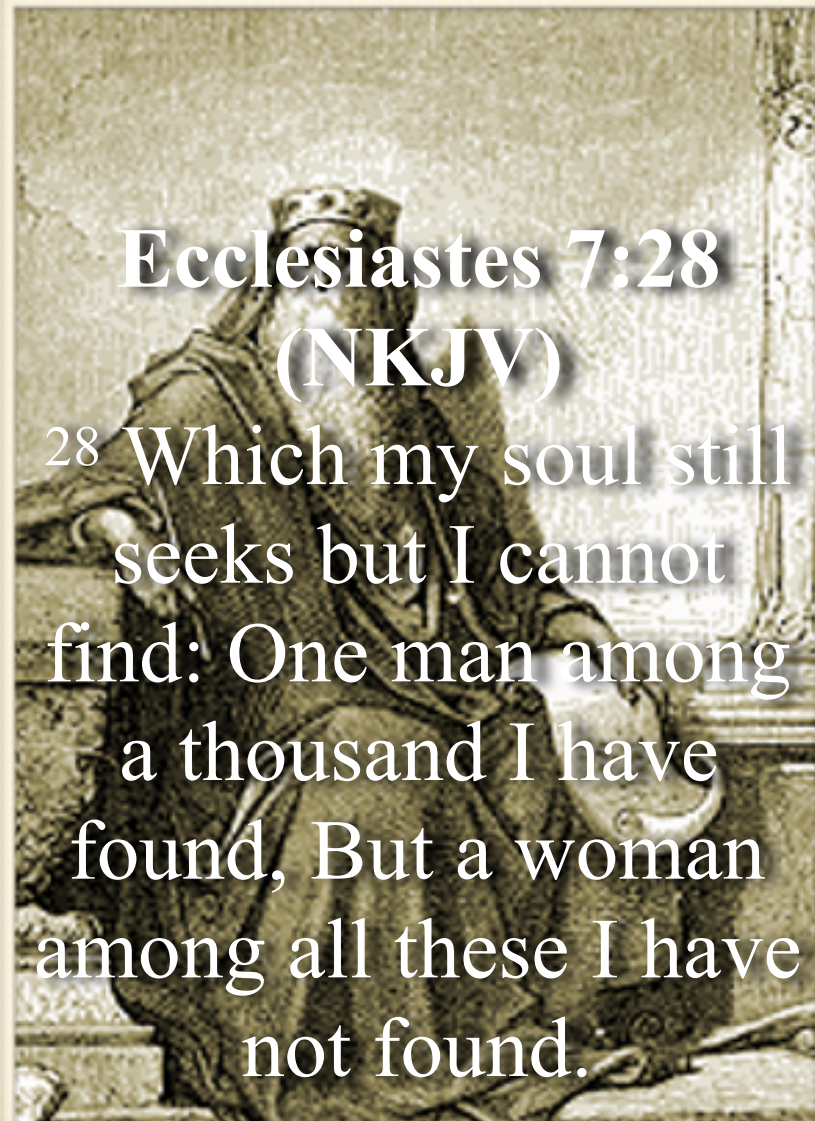
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► The Result of the Search (7:26–27)

- One of the most common sources of a man's downfall is a woman — (cf. Prov. 5:3,4)
- She **is a snare** and **a trap**, whose ways confine a person like **chains** (cf. Prov. 2:18–19; 5:3–6; 7:24–26).
- He discovered that only **the man who pleases God** (cf. Ecc. 2:26) can **escape her**.

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WISDOM ALONE NOT THE ANSWER (7:23-29)



► The Disappointment in the Search (7:28–29)

- Universal corruption was what he found throughout the land.
- This was not the fault of God, for He had created both man and woman “upright” - Gen 2,3
- The blame for not living an upright life is placed squarely on man’s doorstep. — Mat 13:15; Romans 3:9-23

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WISDOM ALONE NOT THE ANSWER (7:23-29)



Ecclesiastes 7:29
(NKJV)

²⁹ Truly, this only I
have found: That
God made man
upright, But they
have sought out
many schemes.”

► The Disappointment in the Search (7:28–29)

- *That which he found (7:28a). Koheleth found “one man among a thousand”*
- *That which he did not find (7:28b). The situation with women was even worse: “but a woman among all those have I not found.”*



“This World Is Unfair, Confusing & Dangerous”

- ❖ Be WISE - Ovoid Extremes -
- ❖ Do not be over demanding -
- ❖ We all need mercy - for we have all sinned -
- ❖ The answer to our SIN dilemma is Jesus - Romans 3:24

Romans 3:24–25 (NKJV)

²⁴ being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

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(Ecclesiastes 7:15-29)

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1 Peter 4:12–19 (NKJV)

¹² Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³ but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. ¹⁴ If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters.

1 Peter 4:12–19 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Yet if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. ¹⁷ For the time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what will *be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ Now “If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?” ¹⁹ Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls *to Him* in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.