



Ecclesiastes

Enigma of Enigmas,
Everything is an Enigma

Ecclesiastes 1:1-3

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

“Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher,
“Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.”

“What advantage does man have in all his work
Which he does under the sun?”

Main Point

Life in this broken world is a confusing mess that cannot be understood or controlled by human wisdom, but by faith we can learn to be joyfully content with our portion in it and to use what we are given for worship.



Ecclesiastes

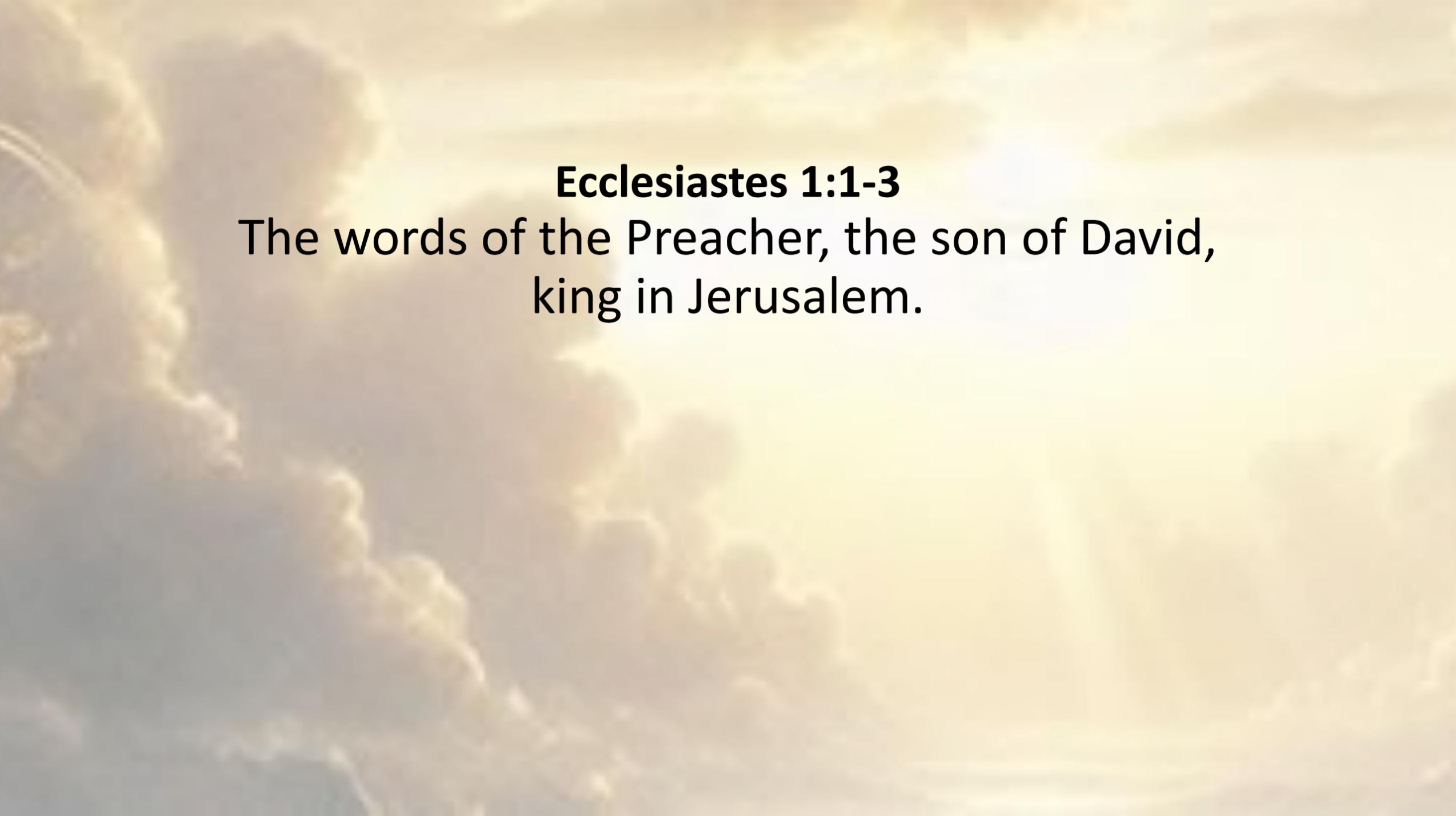
Everything Is an Enigma

Background

Background

Authorship and Setting





Ecclesiastes 1:1-3

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



Ecclesiastes 1:1-3

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Ecclesiastes 1:1-3

The words of *Qoheleth*, the son of David,
king in Jerusalem.

Ecclesiastes 1:1-3

The words of Qoheleth, **the son of David,**
king in Jerusalem.

Ecclesiastes 1:12

“I, Qoheleth, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.”

Ecclesiastes 12:9

In addition to being a wise man, Qoheleth
also taught the people knowledge; and he pondered,
searched out and arranged many proverbs.

However...

Ecclesiastes 1:16

“I said to myself,
‘Behold, I have magnified and increased wisdom
more than **all who were over Jerusalem before me...**”

Ecclesiastes 2:9

“Then I became great and increased **more than
all who preceded me in Jerusalem.**”

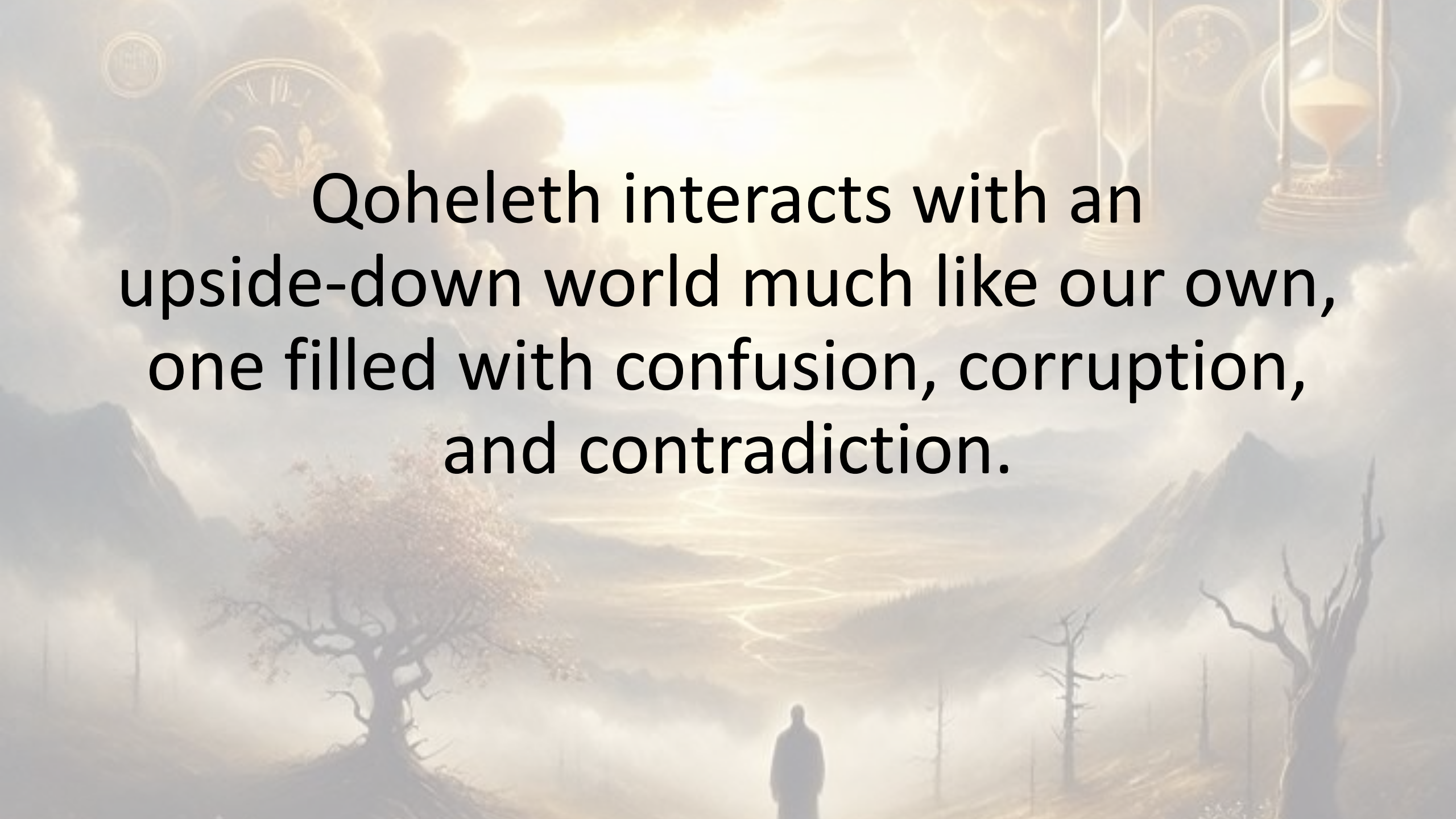
Historic and Social Setting

Ecclesiastes 5:8

If you see oppression of the poor and denial of justice and righteousness in the province, do not be shocked at the sight; for one official watches over another official, and there are higher officials over them.

Ecclesiastes 10:5-7

There is an evil I have seen under the sun,
like an error which goes forth from the ruler — folly is set
in many exalted places while rich men sit in humble places.
I have seen slaves riding on horses
and princes walking like slaves on the land.

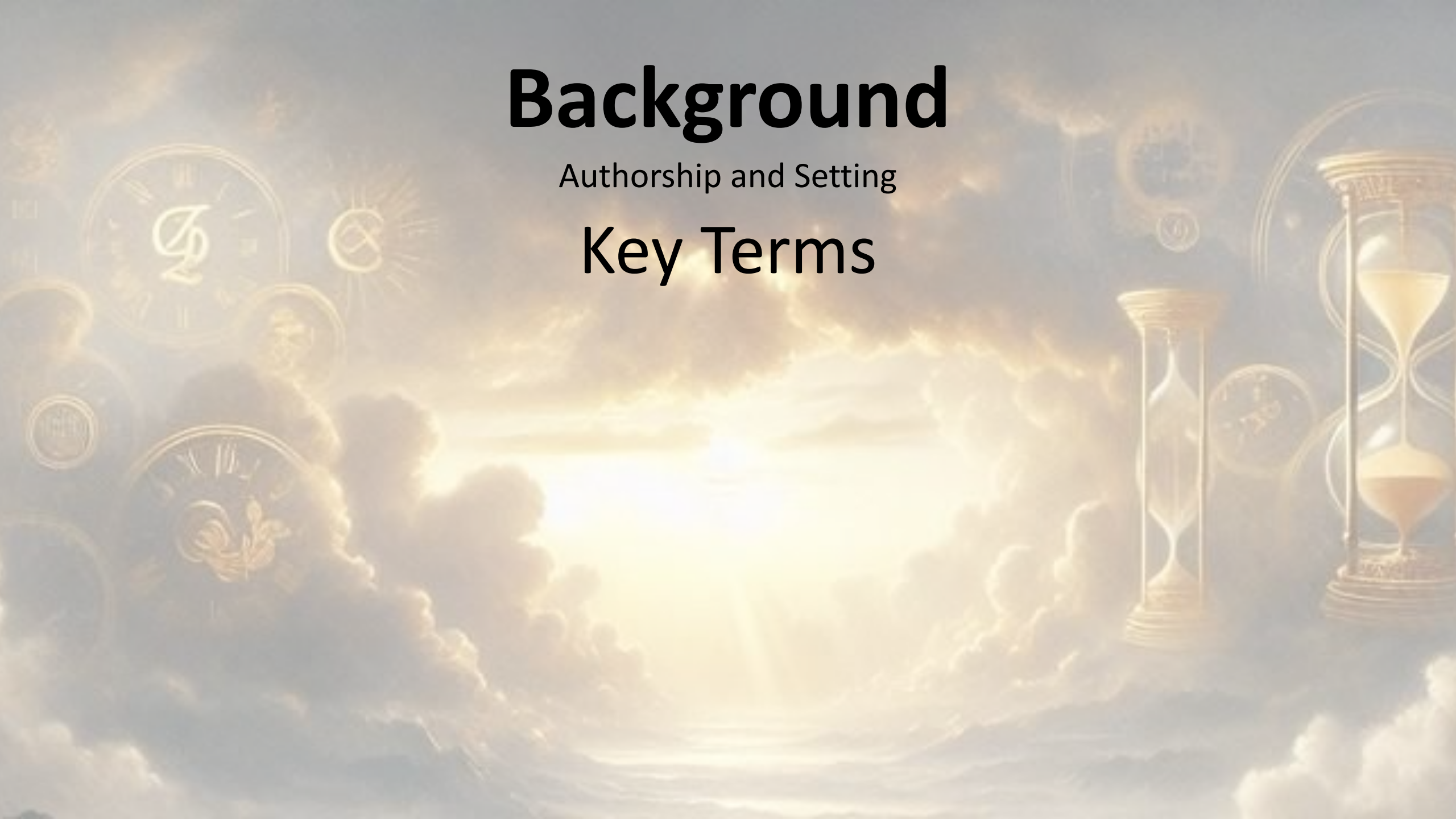


Qoheleth interacts with an
upside-down world much like our own,
one filled with confusion, corruption,
and contradiction.

Background

Authorship and Setting

Key Terms



Ecclesiastes 1:1-3

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king in Jerusalem.

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The words of Qoheleth, the son of David,
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“Enigma of enigmas,” says Qoheleth,

“Enigma of enigmas! All is an enigma.”

“What advantage does man have in all his work
Which he does under the sun?”

Confirmation of Meaning

Ecclesiastes 1:14-15

I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun,
and behold, all is an enigma and striving after wind.

What is crooked cannot be straightened
and what is lacking cannot be counted.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

He has made everything appropriate in its time.

He has also set eternity in their heart,
yet so that man will not find out the work
which God has done from the beginning even to the end.

Ecclesiastes 1:1-3

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The words of Qoheleth, the son of David,
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“***What lasting benefit*** does man have in all his work
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Key Terms

Theme and Program



The Key Theme

Ecclesiastes 1:1-3

The words of Qoheleth, the son of David,
king in Jerusalem.

“Enigma of enigmas,” says Qoheleth,
“Enigma of enigmas! All is an enigma.”

The Key Theme

Ecclesiastes 1:1-3

The words of Qoheleth, the son of David,
king in Jerusalem.

“Enigma of enigmas,” says Qoheleth,

“Enigma of enigmas! **All is an enigma.**”

Enigma (*Hebel*) occurs **38 times!**

The Programmatic Question

Ecclesiastes 1:3

“What lasting benefit does man have in all his work
which he does under the sun?”

Some form of this question occurs repeatedly
throughout the book and represents the key
inquiry that Qoheleth wants us to explore.

The Programmatic Question

Ecclesiastes 2:22

For what does a man get in all his labor and in his striving
with which he labors under the sun?

Ecclesiastes 3:9

What lasting benefit is there to the worker
from that in which he toils?

Ecclesiastes 6:8

For what lasting benefit does the wise man have over
the fool? What lasting benefit does the poor man have,
knowing how to walk before the living?"

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Ecclesiastes

Everything Is an Enigma

Background

Purpose

Purpose

To explore the gaps between sincere faith
and real-world experience.



A Call to Sincere Faith

Ecclesiastes 8:12

Although a sinner does evil a hundred times
and may lengthen his life, still I know that it will be well
for those who fear God, who fear Him openly.

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Although a sinner does evil a hundred times
and may lengthen his life, still I know that it will be well

for those who fear God, **who fear Him openly.**

But there are real-world gaps!

Ecclesiastes 7:15

I have seen everything during my life of enigma;
there is a righteous man
who perishes in his righteousness
and there is a wicked man
who prolongs his life in his wickedness.

Ecclesiastes 8:10

So then, I have seen the wicked buried,
those who used to go in and out from the holy place,
and they are soon forgotten in the city where they did thus.
This too is an enigma.

But there are real-world gaps!

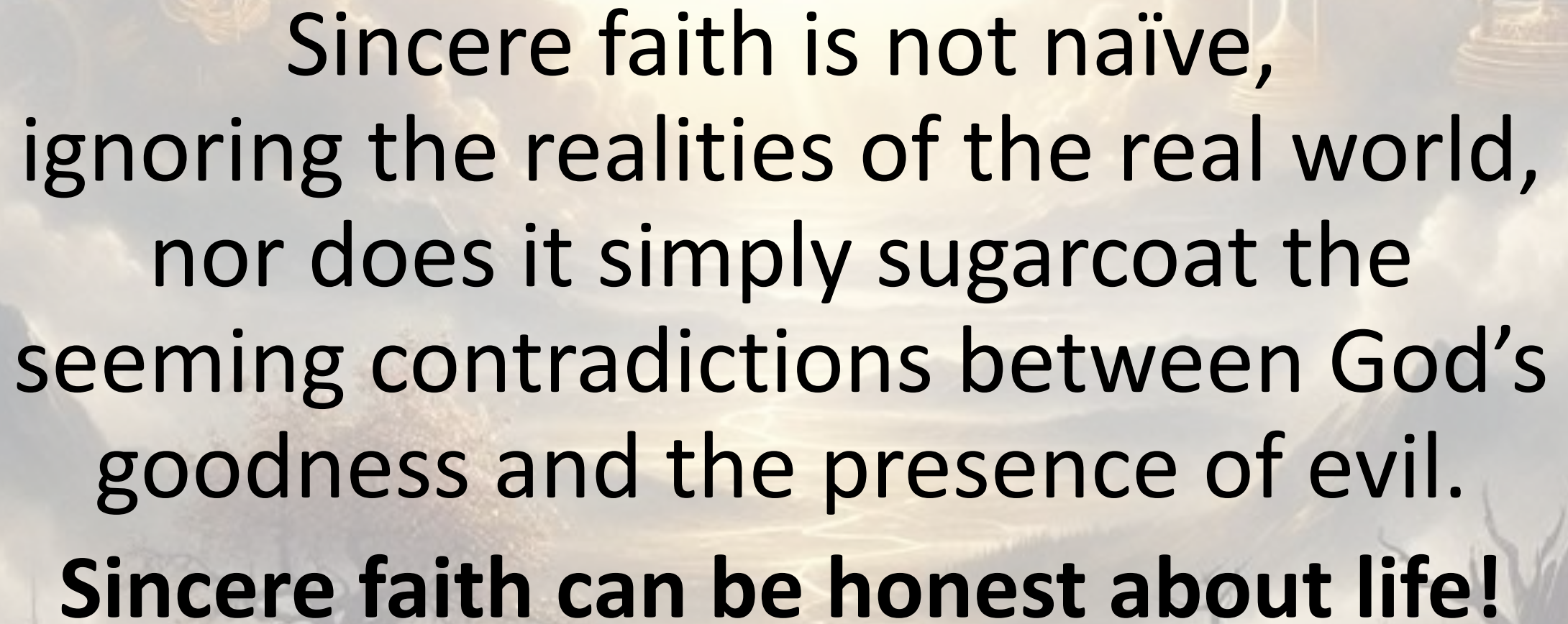
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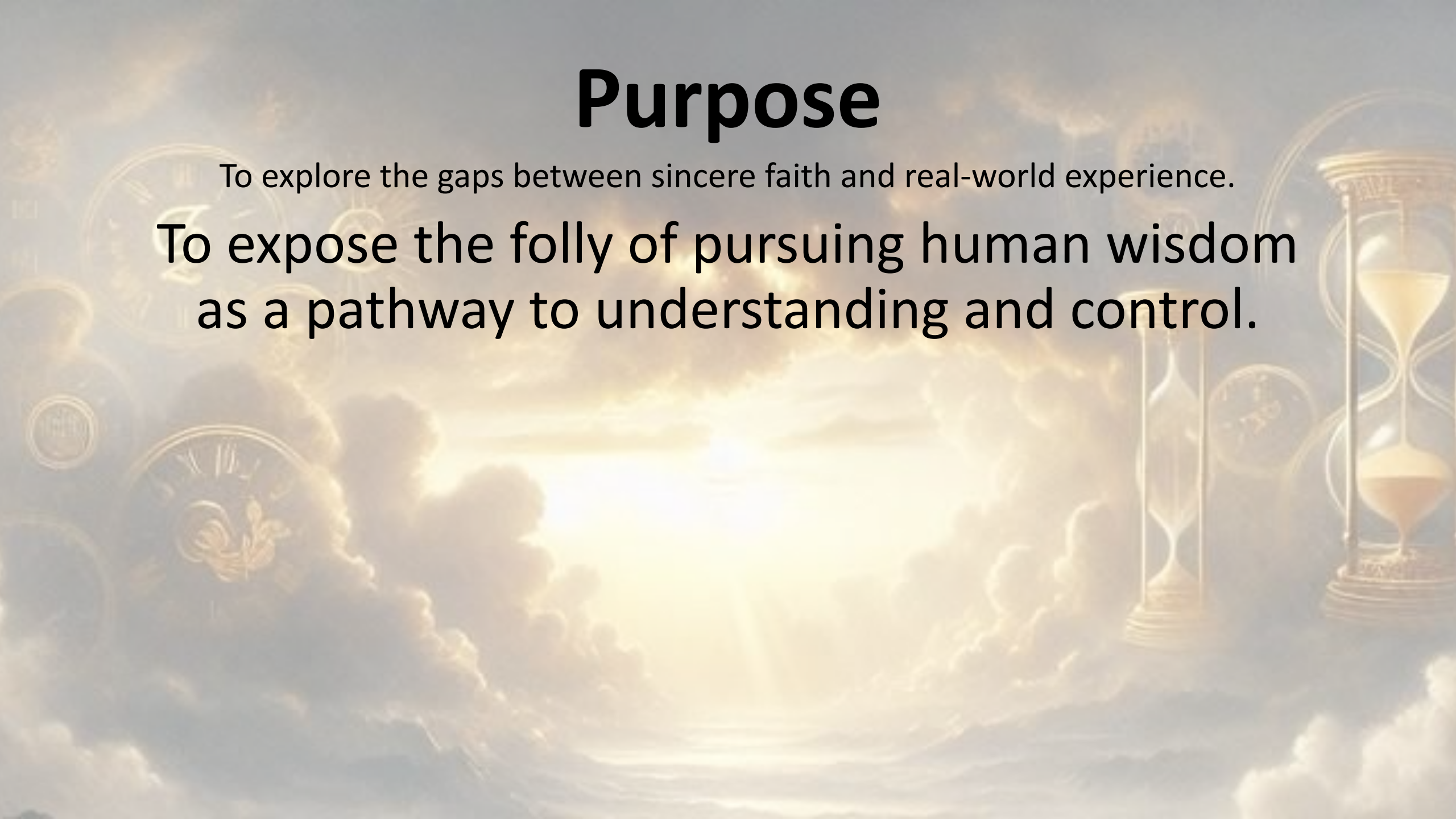
The background is a composite image. It features a sunset or sunrise over a misty, hazy landscape. In the foreground, a lone, dark silhouette of a person stands on a path, looking towards the horizon. To the right, there is a large, ornate hourglass with a golden frame and a yellowish-brown liquid inside. On the left, a circular clock face is visible, showing Roman numerals and a decorative floral design. The overall color palette is warm, with yellows, oranges, and soft blues, creating a contemplative and somewhat somber atmosphere.

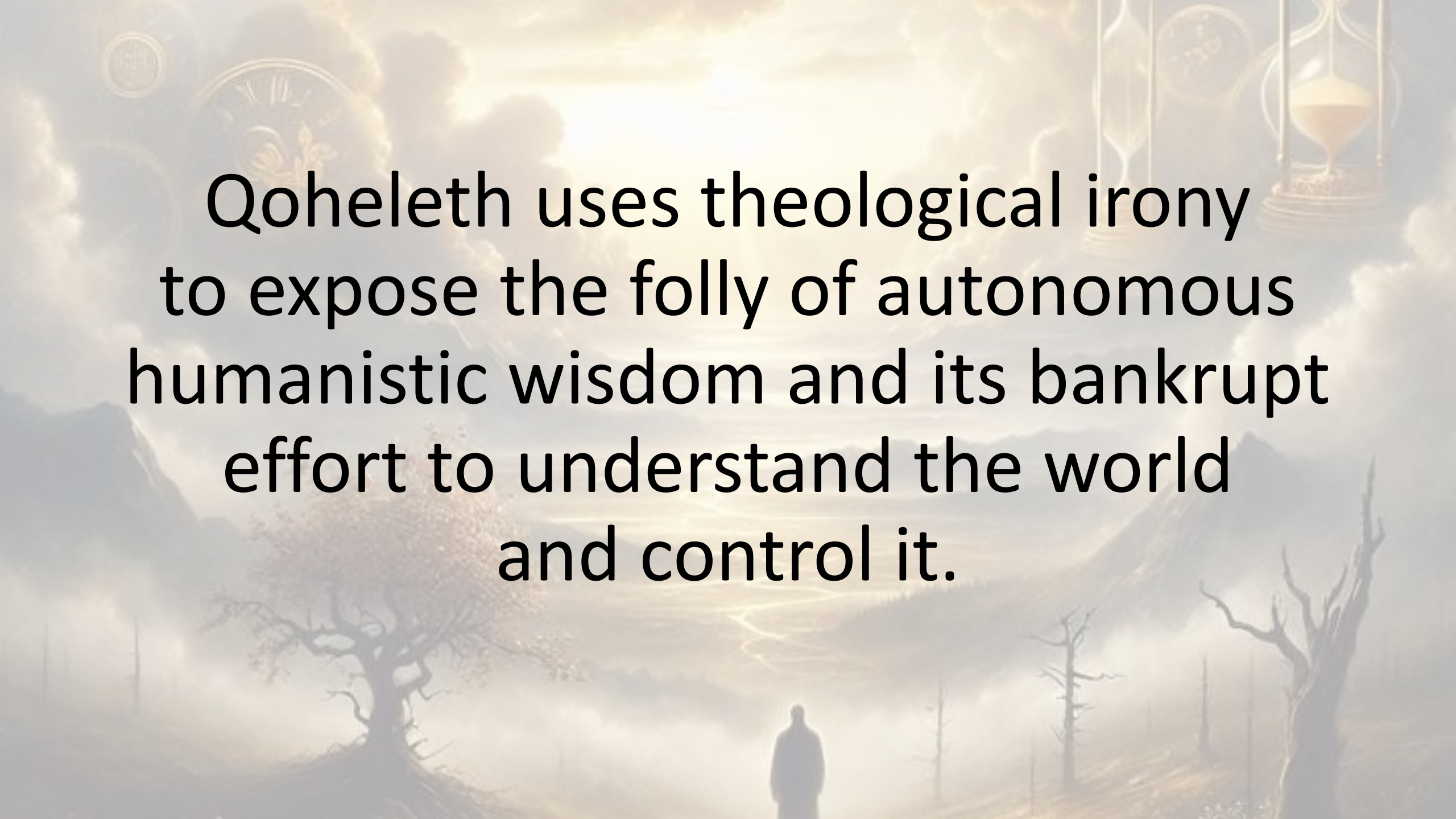
Sincere faith is not naïve,
ignoring the realities of the real world,
nor does it simply sugarcoat the
seeming contradictions between God's
goodness and the presence of evil.
Sincere faith can be honest about life!

Purpose

To explore the gaps between sincere faith and real-world experience.

To expose the folly of pursuing human wisdom
as a pathway to understanding and control.





Qoheleth uses theological irony
to expose the folly of autonomous
humanistic wisdom and its bankrupt
effort to understand the world
and control it.

The folly of autonomous human wisdom

Ecclesiastes 1:13-14

I set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom concerning all that has been done under heaven...I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is an enigma and striving after wind.

The folly of autonomous human wisdom

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The folly of autonomous human wisdom

Ecclesiastes 2:1 and 11

I said to myself,

“Come now, I will test you with pleasure.”

“Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done
and the labor which I had exerted...

and behold all was an enigma and striving after wind
and there was no lasting benefit under the sun.”

The folly of autonomous human wisdom

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Purpose

To explore the gaps between sincere faith and real-world experience.

To expose the folly of pursuing human wisdom
as a pathway to understanding and control.

To encourage us toward faith and
contentment in a confusing world.



Ecclesiastes 2:24-25

There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink
and tell himself that his labor is good.

This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God.
For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?

Ecclesiastes 2:24-25

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Ecclesiastes 3:12-14

I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice
and to do good in one's lifetime; moreover,
that every man who eats and drinks sees good in all his labor
— it is the gift of God.

I know that everything God does will remain forever;
there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take
from it, for God has so worked that men should fear Him.

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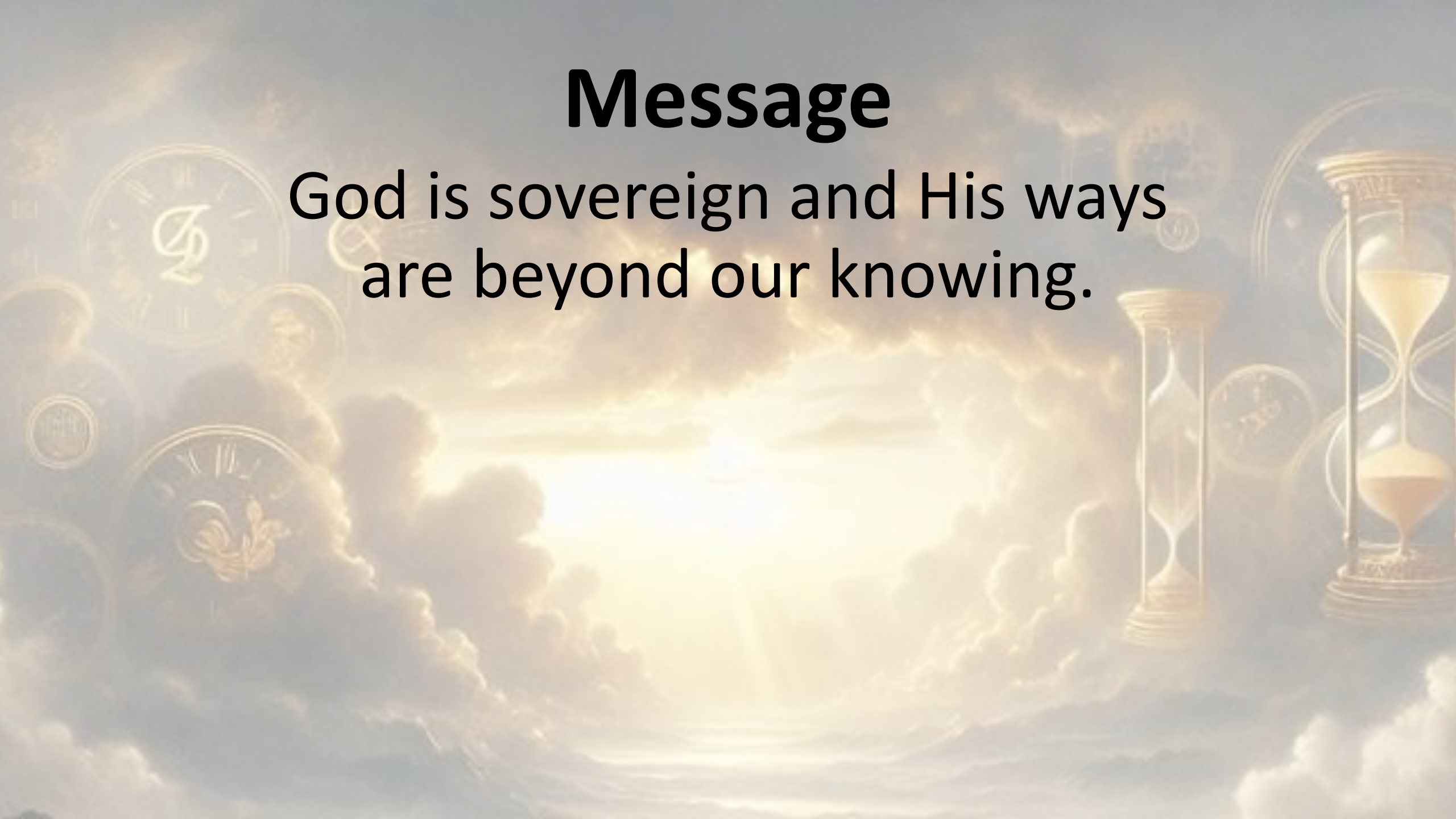
Purpose

Message



Message

God is sovereign and His ways
are beyond our knowing.



Ecclesiastes 1:2 and 15

“Enigma of enigmas,” says Qoheleth,
“Enigma of enigmas! **All is an enigma.**”

What is crooked cannot be straightened
and what is lacking cannot be counted.

Ecclesiastes 7:13

Consider the work of God,
For who is able to straighten what He has bent?

Ecclesiastes 1:2 and 15

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Consider the work of God,

For **who is able to straighten *what He* has bent?**



Ecclesiastes 3:11

He has also set eternity in their heart,
yet so that man will not find out the work which
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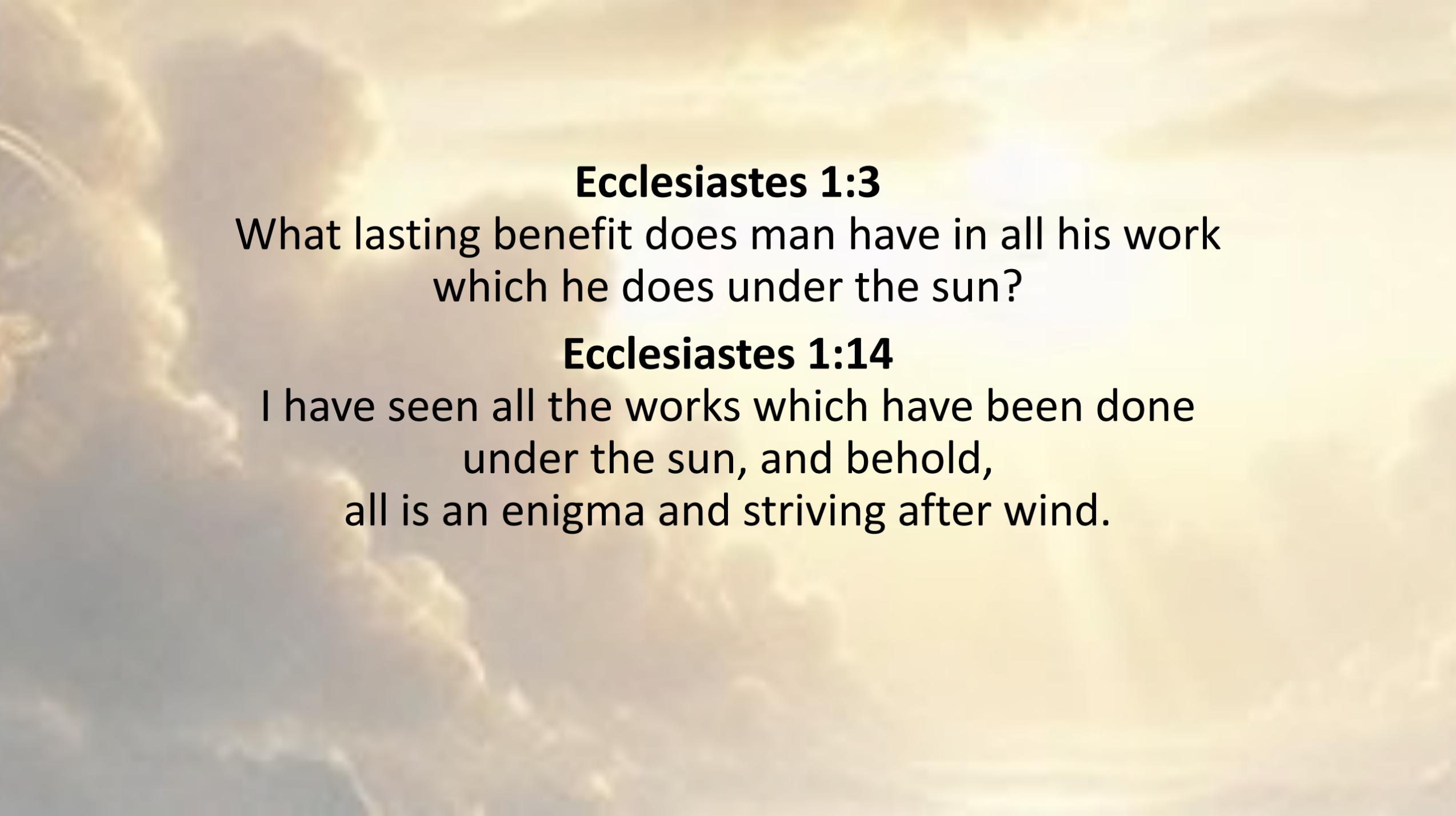
God has done from the beginning even to the end.

Message

God is sovereign and His ways are beyond our knowing.

Apart from Him, the pursuit of any satisfaction is an exercise in futility.





Ecclesiastes 1:3

What lasting benefit does man have in all his work
which he does under the sun?

Ecclesiastes 1:14

I have seen all the works which have been done
under the sun, and behold,
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under the sun, and **behold,**
all is an enigma and **striving after wind.**

Ecclesiastes 2:1-2

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

And behold, it too was an enigma.
I said of laughter, "It is madness," and of pleasure,
"What does it accomplish?"

Ecclesiastes 2:17

So I hated life, for the work which had been done
under the sun was grievous to me;
because everything is an enigma and striving after wind.

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God is sovereign and His ways are beyond our knowing.
Apart from Him, the pursuit of any satisfaction is an exercise in futility.

**All good things are gifts from God
and serve as means for worship.**



Ecclesiastes 5:18

Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting:
to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labor
in which he toils under the sun during the few years
of his life which God has given him;
for this is his reward.

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for **this is his *portion*.**



Ecclesiastes 5:19

Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his portion and rejoice in his labor;
this is the gift of God.

Ecclesiastes 5:19

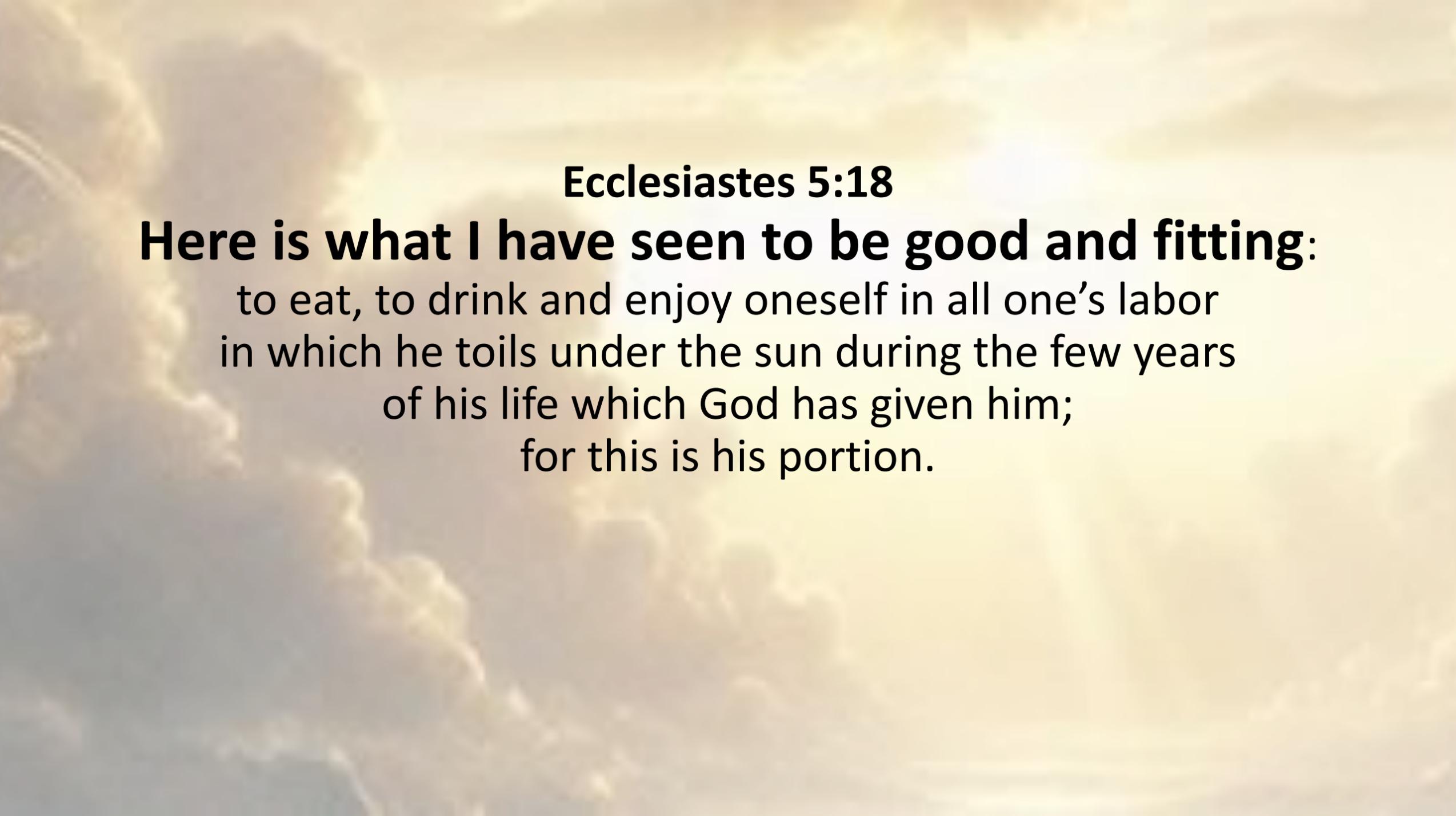
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of his life which God has given him;
for this is his portion.

The Conclusion?

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

The conclusion, when all has been heard, is:

fear God and keep His commandments,

because this applies to every person.

For God will bring every act to judgment,
everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.

Concluding Questions:

Can you be honest about the realities of this world and your life in it and still believe that God is good and trust Him?

Are you content with the portion He's given you?

Are you worshipping Him *in* and *with* the life He has given you?