

Ecclesiastes

*& the Quest for Elusive Happiness:
Why Everything is Never Enough*

Death: Why Bother Then?

Ecclesiastes 2:12-23

Rev. Dr. Jason Carter, Lead Pastor

Death: Why Bother Then?

Please Turn to Ecclesiastes 2:12-23 - Page 657 in the Pew Bible



**Life is being
transformed into love**

(The Song of Solomon Experience)

**Life
is Meaningless**

(The Ecclesiastes Experience)

**Life
is Suffering**

(The Job Experience)



“I loathe my life; I will give free utterance to my complaint; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say to God...let me know why you contend against me.” – Job 10:1-2

JOB

Ecclesiastes

*& the Quest for Elusive Happiness:
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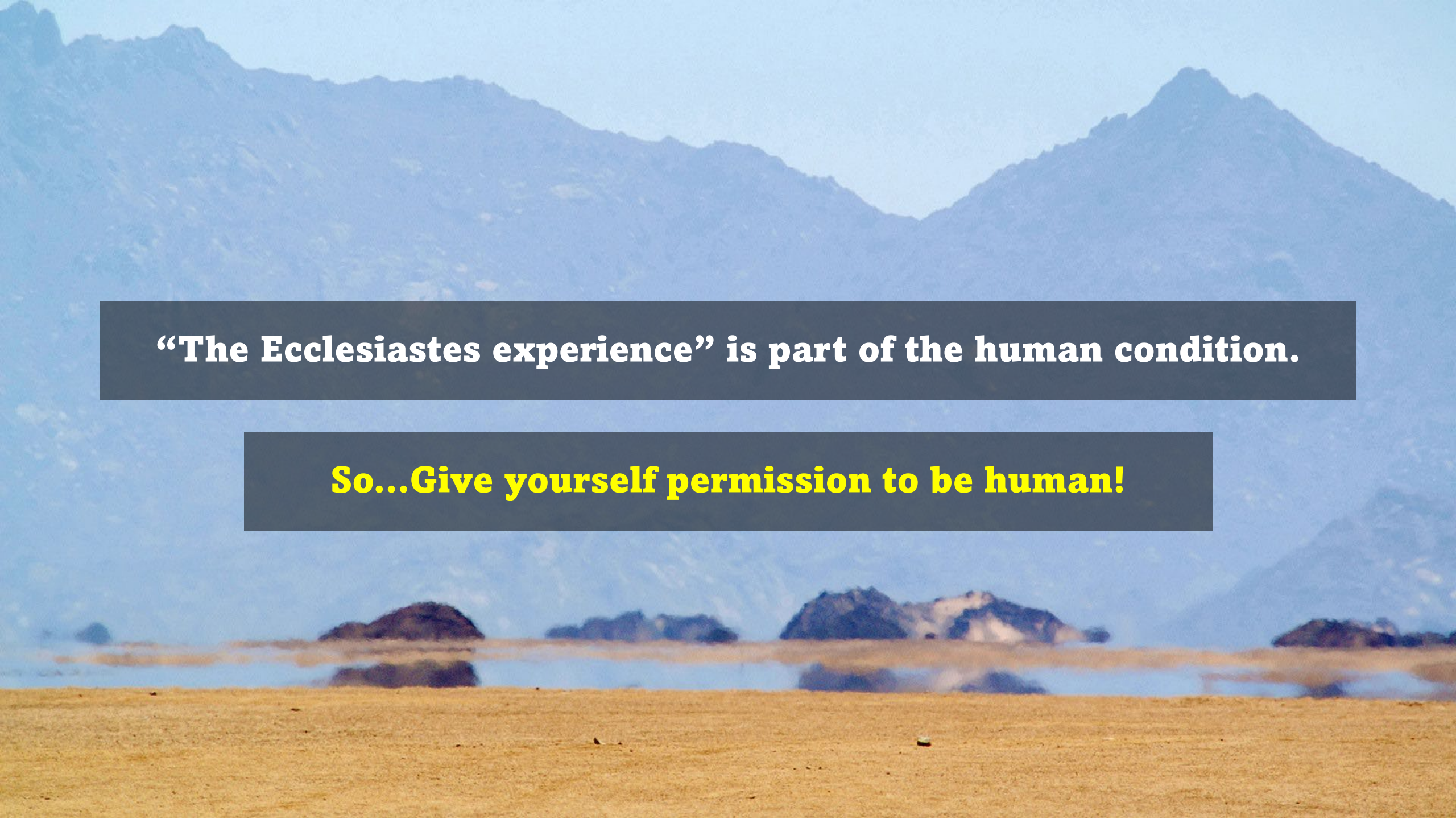
**All streams run to the sea, *but the sea is not full;*
to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again.**
Ecclesiastes 1:7

Satisfaction is a mirage. “Satisfaction is a false summit.” (Bobby Jamieson)
This is the reality of life “under the sun”.



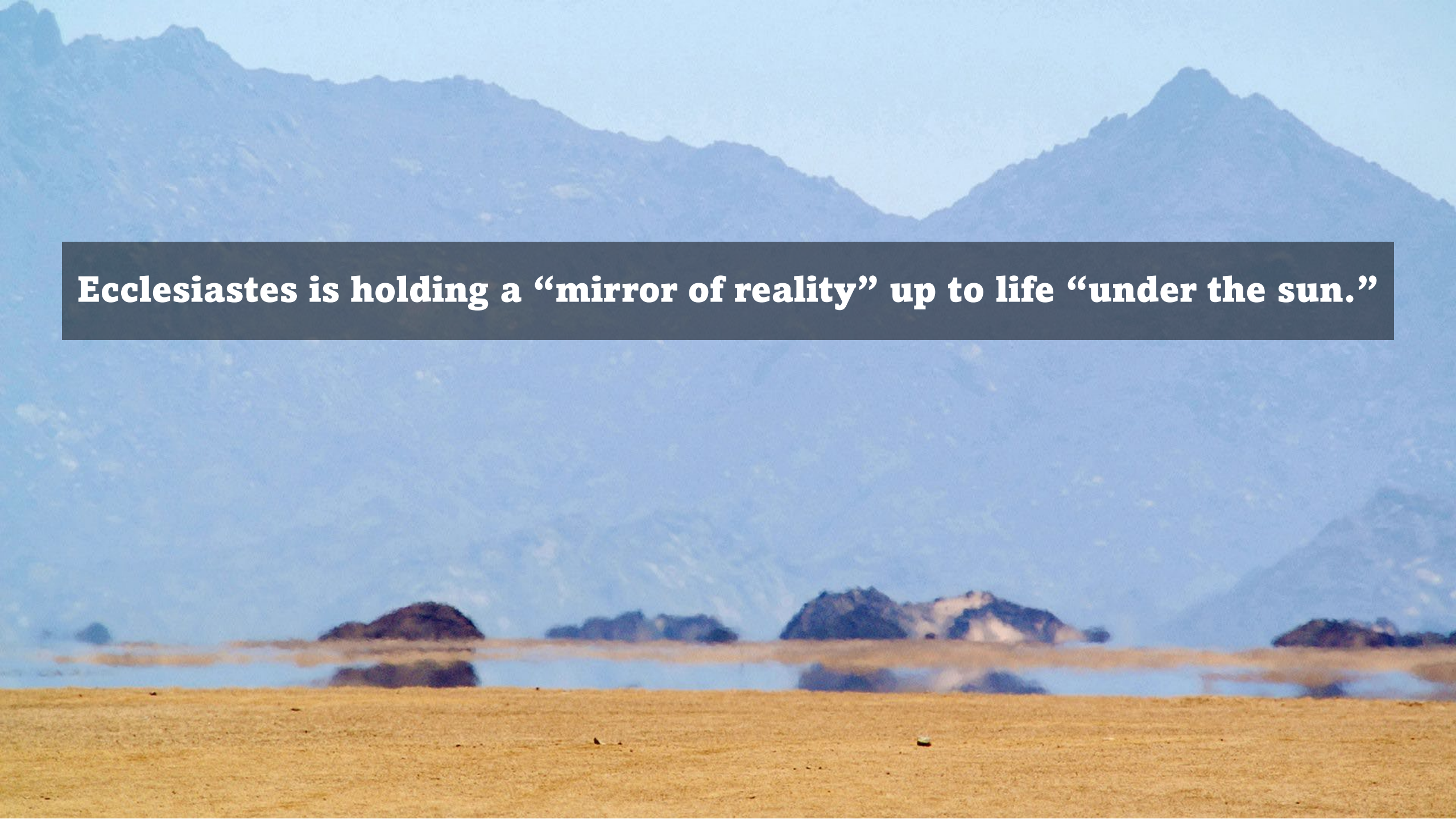
A landscape photograph featuring a wide, flat, sandy foreground in the lower third. In the middle ground, a calm body of water reflects the sky and the distant mountains. Several dark, rocky islands or peninsulas are visible in the water. The background is dominated by a range of large, rugged mountains under a clear, pale blue sky. A dark gray rectangular text box is centered horizontally across the middle of the image, containing white text.

“The Ecclesiastes experience” is part of the human condition.

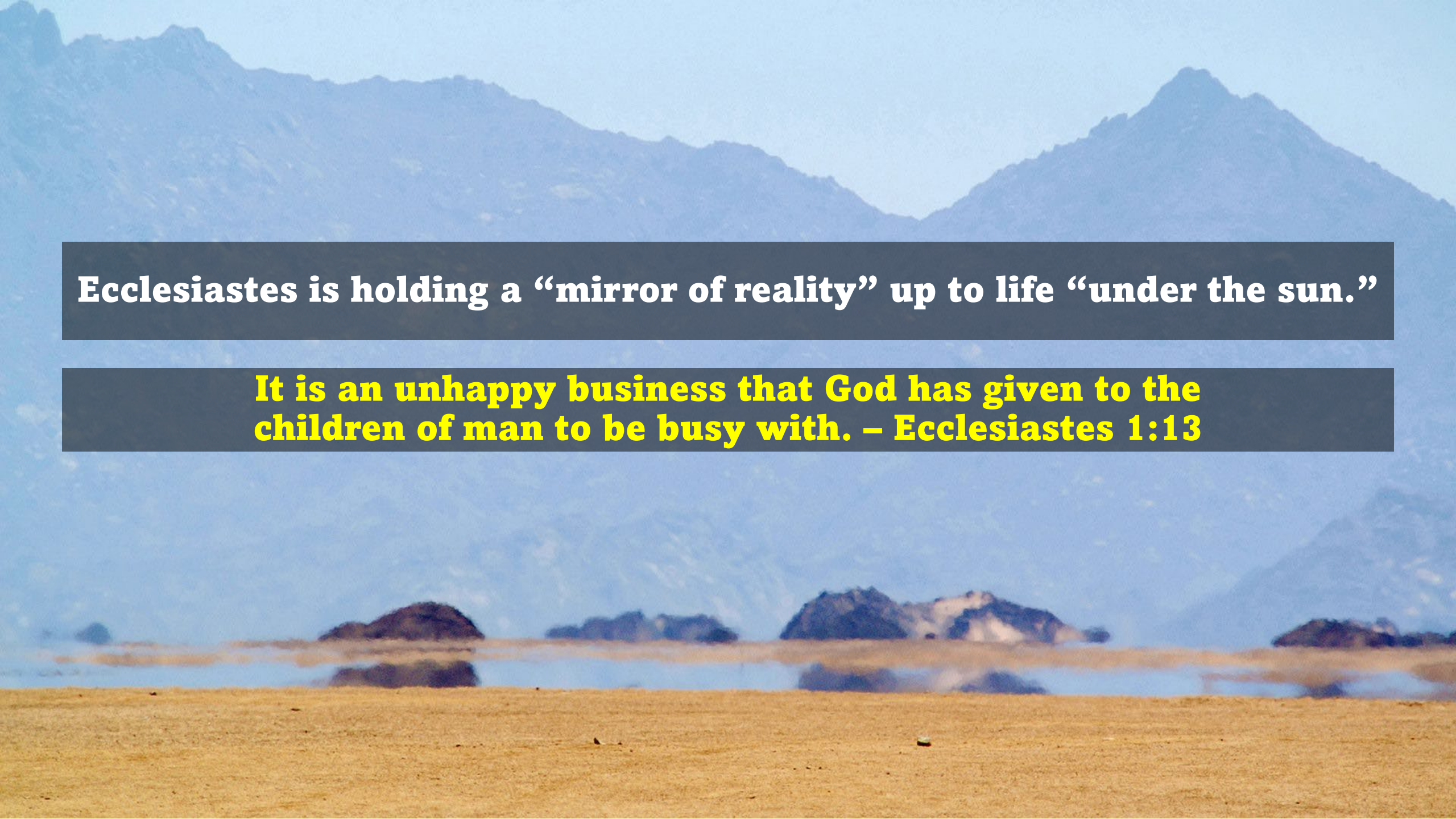


“The Ecclesiastes experience” is part of the human condition.

So...Give yourself permission to be human!

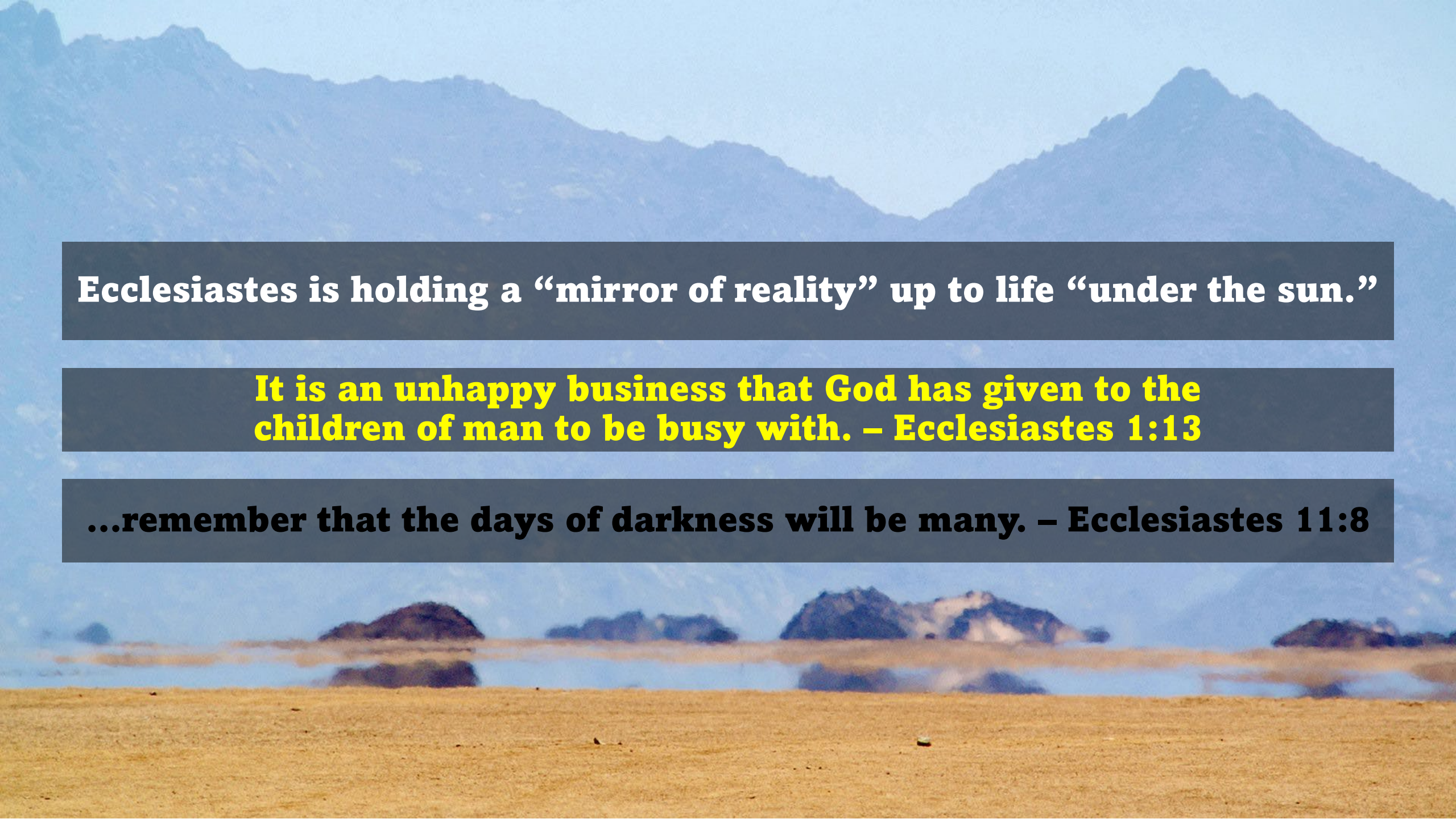
A landscape photograph featuring a wide, flat, sandy foreground in the lower third. In the middle ground, a calm body of water reflects the sky and the distant mountains. Several dark, rocky islands or hills are visible in the water. The background is dominated by a range of jagged, blue-toned mountains under a clear, light blue sky. A dark, semi-transparent rectangular box is centered horizontally across the middle of the image, containing white text.

Ecclesiastes is holding a “mirror of reality” up to life “under the sun.”

A landscape photograph showing a wide, flat, sandy foreground. In the middle ground, there is a calm body of water that reflects the sky and the mountains. Several dark, rocky islands or hills are visible in the water. In the background, a range of mountains with jagged peaks stretches across the horizon under a clear blue sky.

Ecclesiastes is holding a “mirror of reality” up to life “under the sun.”

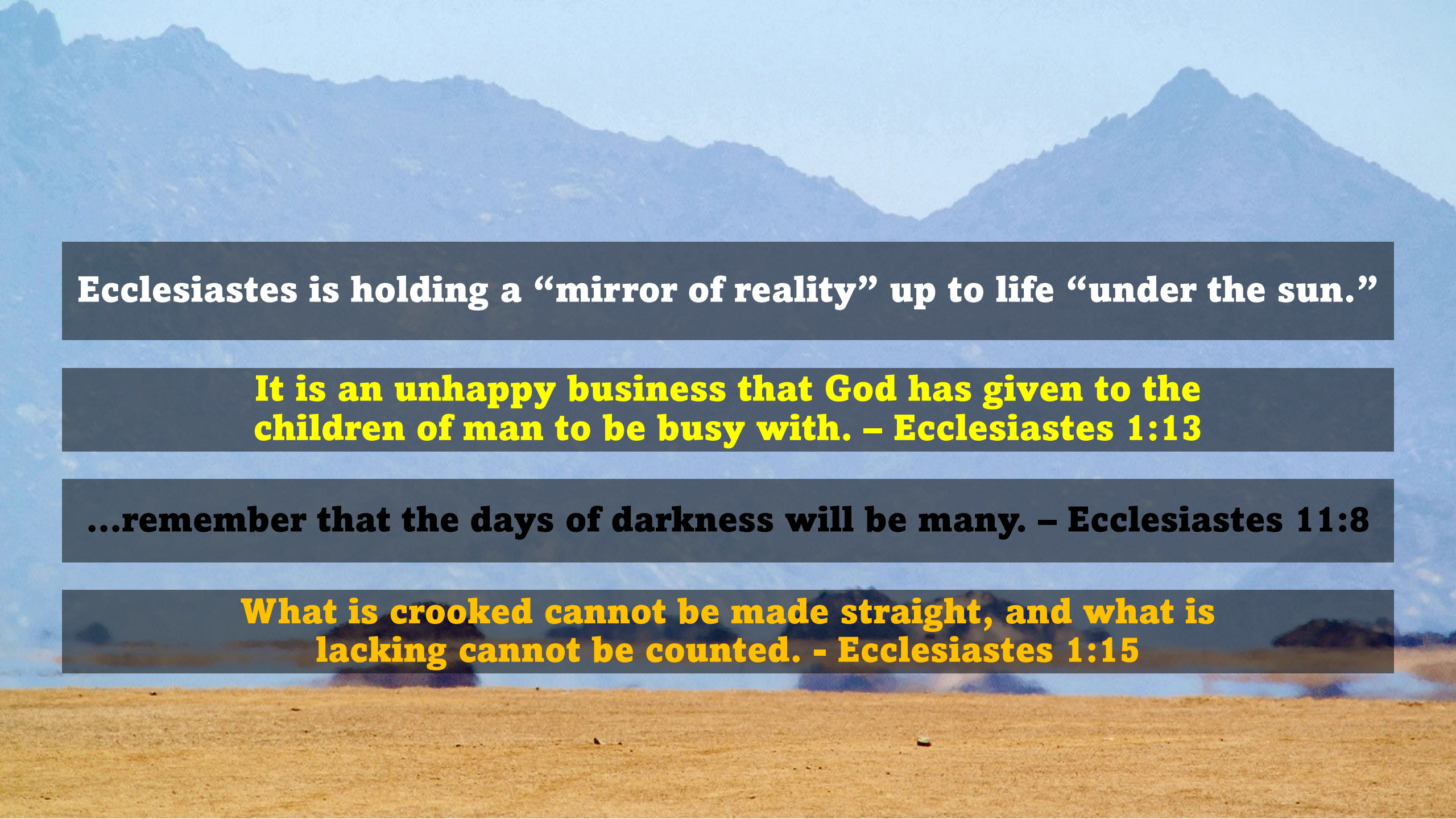
It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. – Ecclesiastes 1:13

The background image shows a vast, flat, light-brown landscape, possibly a dry lake bed or desert floor, in the foreground. In the middle ground, there are several dark, rocky islands or mounds of earth. The background is dominated by a range of jagged, blue-grey mountains under a clear, pale blue sky.

Ecclesiastes is holding a “mirror of reality” up to life “under the sun.”

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...remember that the days of darkness will be many. – Ecclesiastes 11:8



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...remember that the days of darkness will be many. – Ecclesiastes 11:8

What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted. - Ecclesiastes 1:15

Hebel (translated “**vanity**” by modern translations) literally means “*a breath, vapor, mist, or a puff of smoke*” which emphasize the transitory nature of human life.



*So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly.
Ecclesiastes 2:12a*



*So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly.
Ecclesiastes 2:12a*

***For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases
knowledge increases sorrow. – Ecclesiastes 1:18***



*For what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done.
Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in
light than in darkness. The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in
darkness. And yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them.*

Ecclesiastes 2:12b-14



“You will be placed in a box in the ground, just like the village idiot!”

David Gibson



Then I said in my heart, “What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?” And I said in my heart that this also is vanity. For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool!”

Ecclesiastes 2:15-16





Ask not for whom the bell tolls | It tolls for thee.

John Donne



*Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at the close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light. – Dylan Thomas*

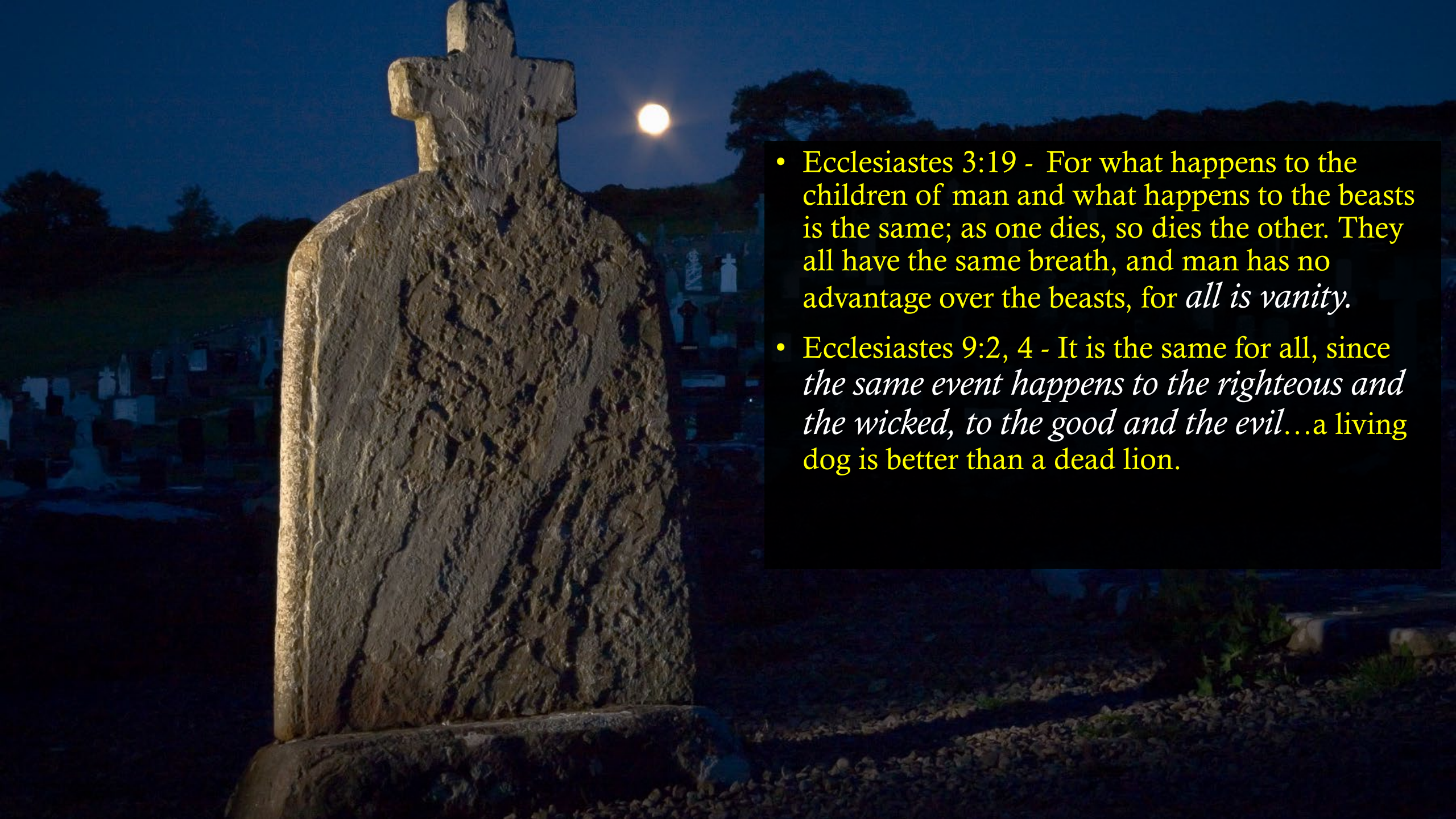
**“Qoheleth’s biggest problem
with life is death.”**

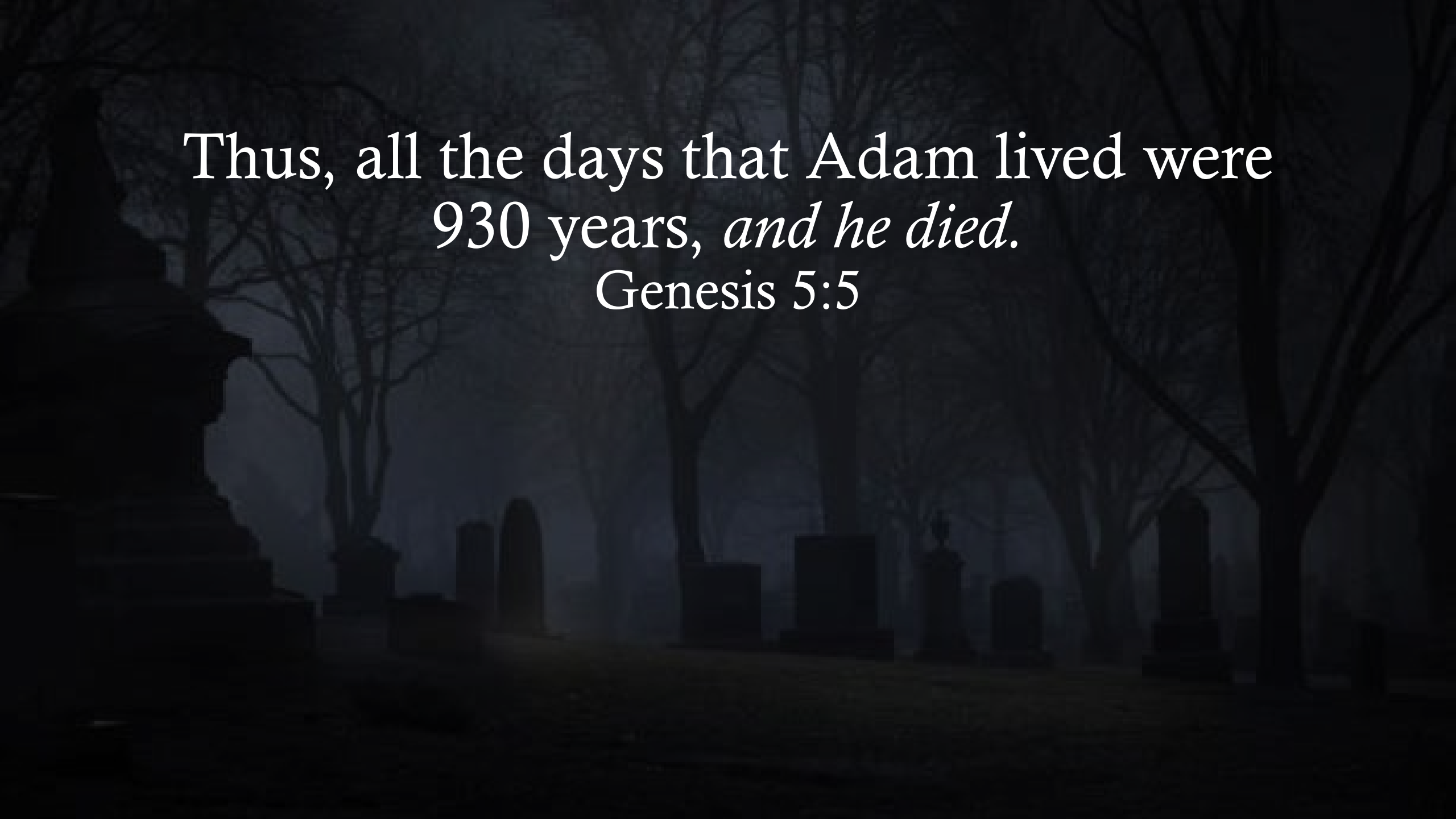
Bobby Jamieson

“Wisdom does not guarantee living longer or dying better than a fool. **Death treats the wise person exactly as it treats the fool, as if they were the same. To death, they are.**

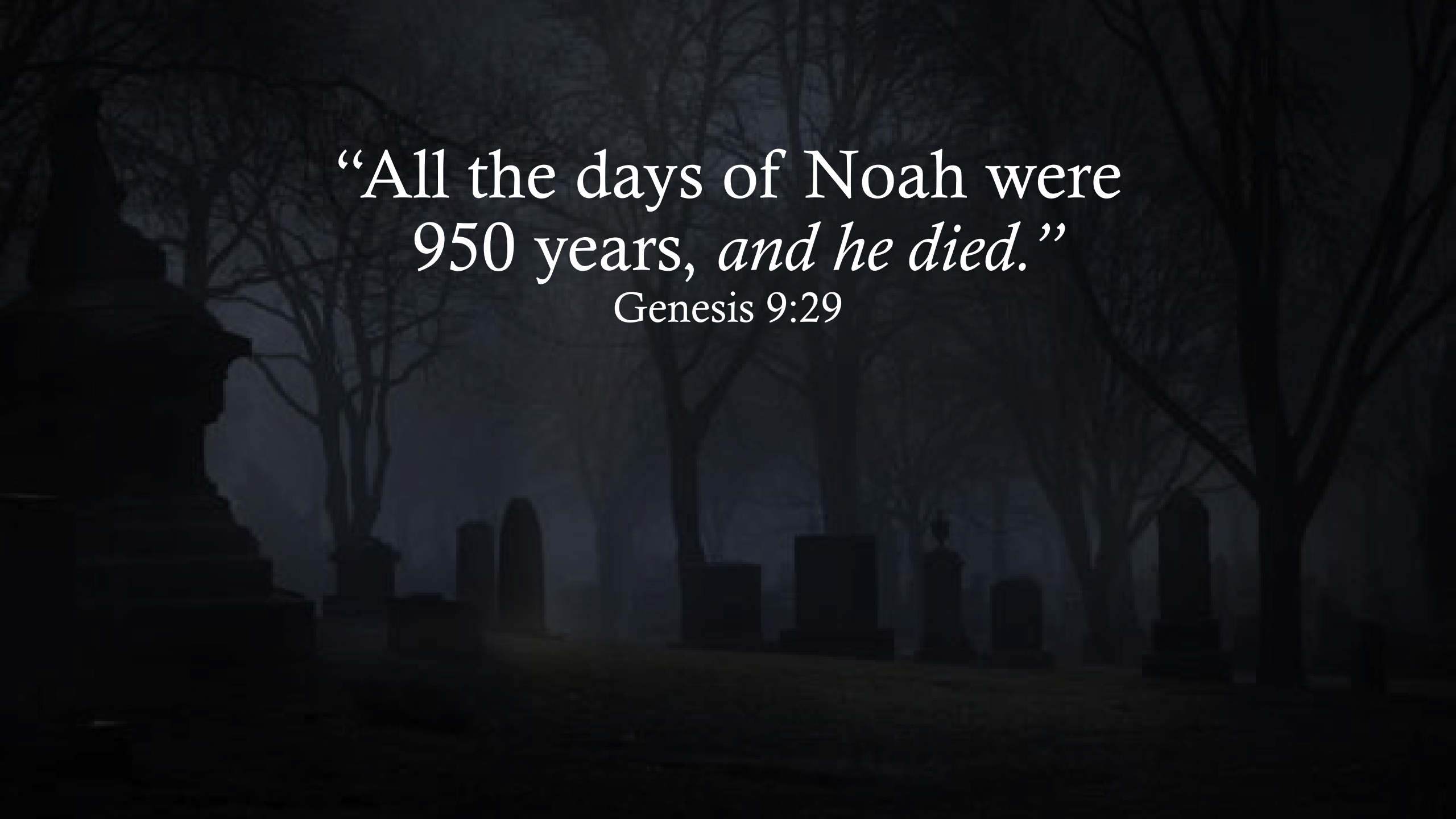
Qoheleth takes this as an insult not only to the wise but to justice. The wise deserve better, but death denies them justice.”



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- A large, weathered stone cross stands prominently in the foreground of a cemetery at night. The cross is made of rough-hewn stone and is illuminated from below, casting a long shadow. In the background, other tombstones are visible, and a full moon hangs in the dark sky. The overall mood is somber and reflective.
- Ecclesiastes 3:19 - For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for *all is vanity*.
 - Ecclesiastes 9:2, 4 - It is the same for all, since *the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil...a living dog is better than a dead lion*.

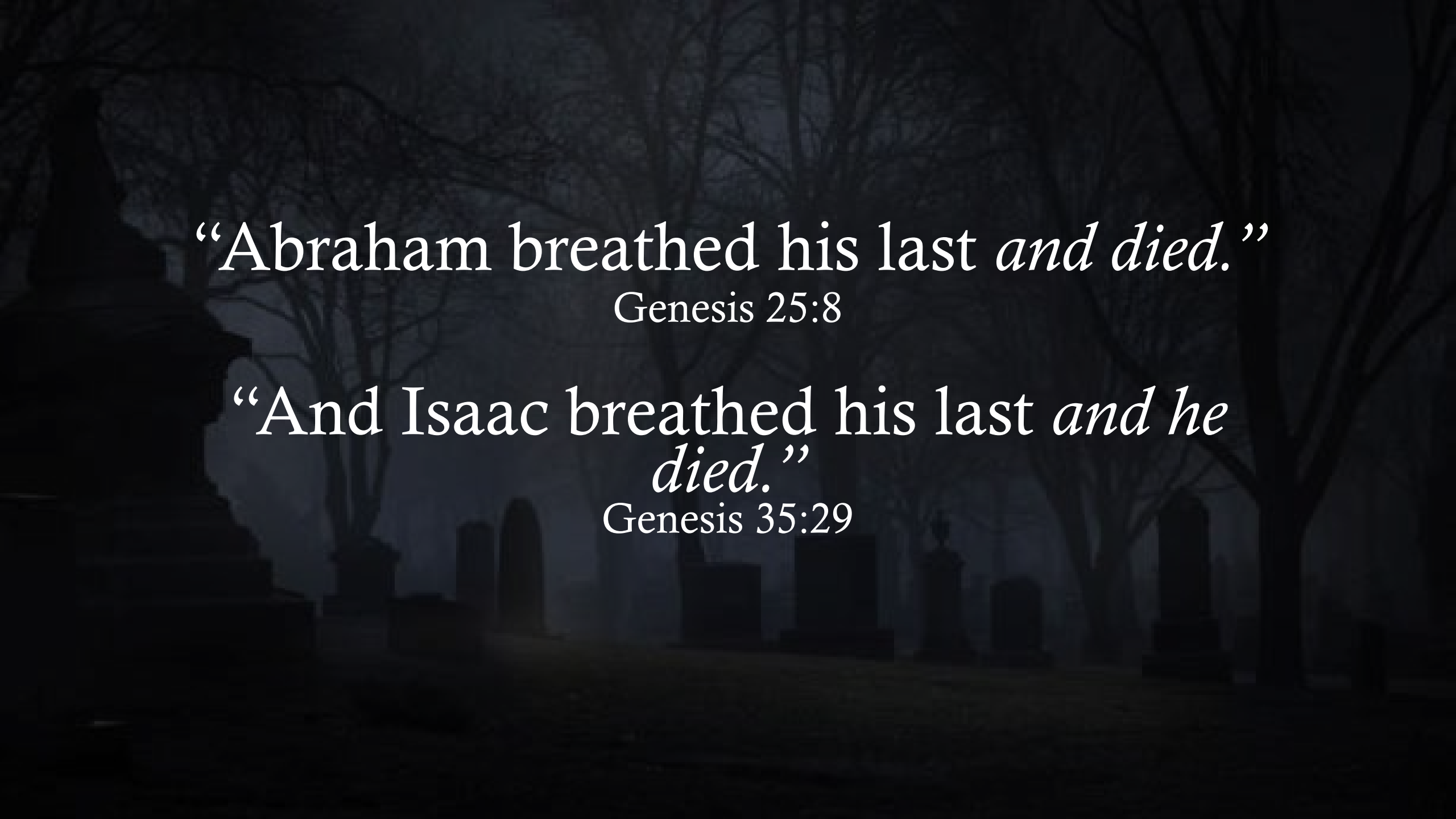


Thus, all the days that Adam lived were
930 years, *and he died.*
Genesis 5:5



“All the days of Noah were
950 years, *and he died.*”

Genesis 9:29

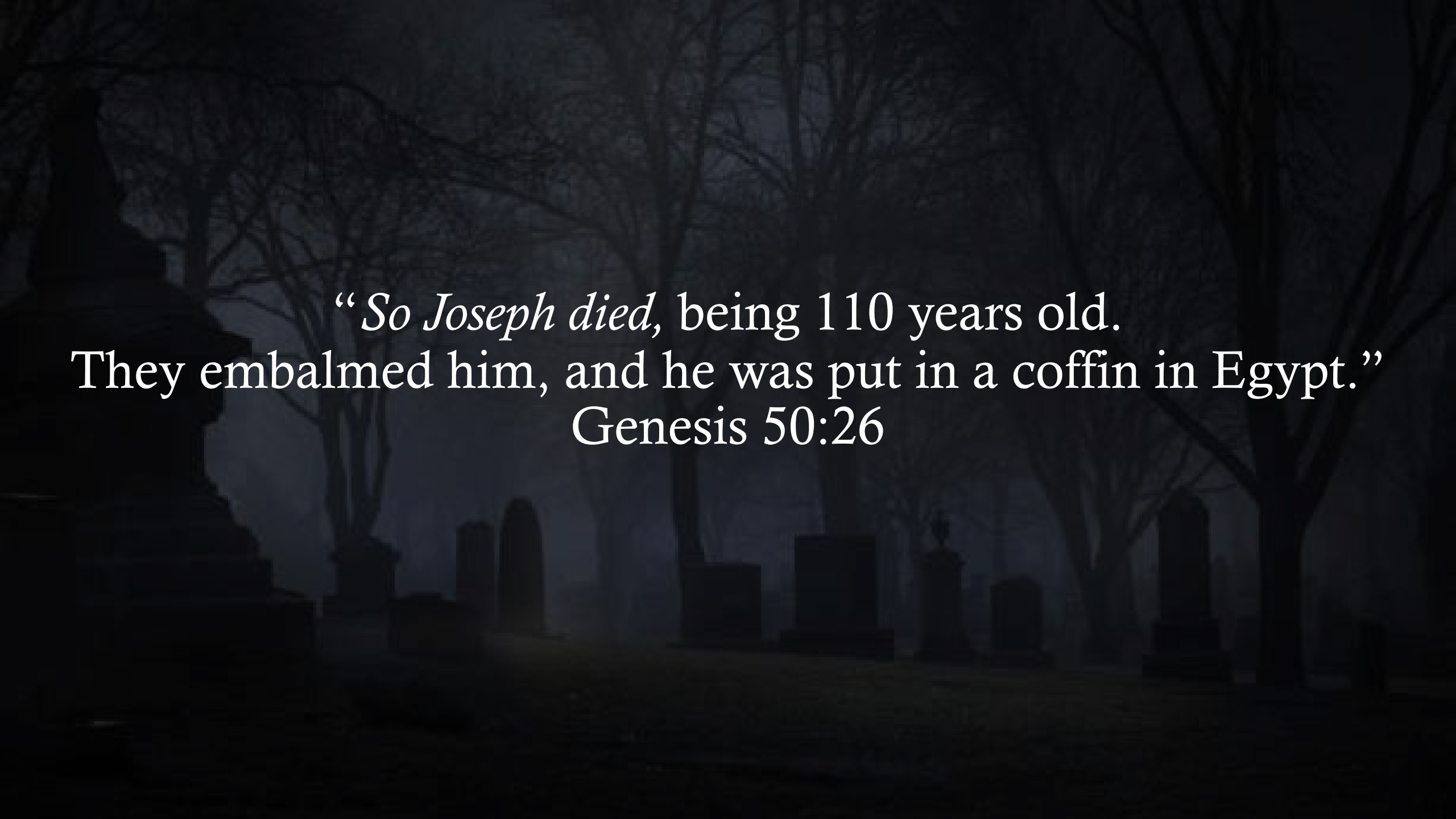


“Abraham breathed his last *and died.*”

Genesis 25:8

“And Isaac breathed his last *and he died.*”

Genesis 35:29



*“So Joseph died, being 110 years old.
They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.”*
Genesis 50:26

“Being unable to cure death...men have decided, in order to be happy, not to think about such things.”

– Blaise Pascal





WeCroak

**Don't forget – you
are going to die.**



WeCroak

**Don't forget – you
are GOING to die!!**



WeCroak

By the fourth week, I begin to enjoy its company. Trembling with nerves before giving a talk to a group of strangers, I get a ping: “Don’t forget, you are going to die.” What’s a little public speaking next to the terrifying finality of my inevitable demise? Soon after, I’m at a friend’s wedding, sulking about an impending work deadline, when WeCroak again reminds me: “Don’t forget, you are going to die.”



WeCroak

The dark and dismal reminder –
“Life is short!”

EVENTUALLY BECOMES
AN AFFIRMATION

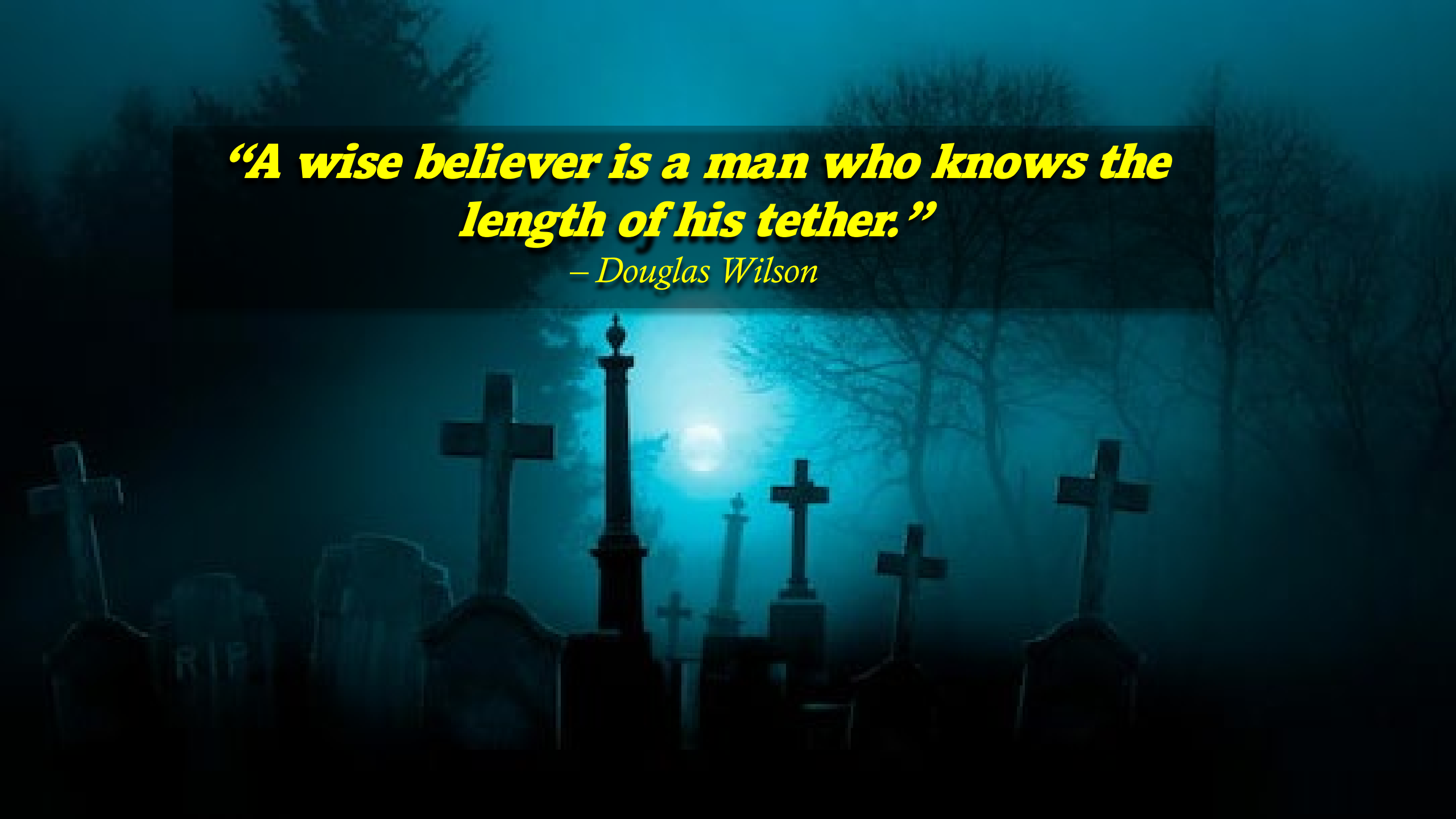
“Life is too short!”



WeCroak

***“A wise believer is a man who knows the
length of his tether.”***

– Douglas Wilson



***“Death destroys a man:
the idea of death saves him.”***
– E.M. Forster





The reality of death
lifts your gaze higher –
it helps you *not* live for
life “under the sun”.



The reality of death
reengages you to live
your life on mission –
for things eternal.

“Preach the Gospel. Die. And Be Forgotten.”

Count Nikolaus Von Zinzendorf (1700-1760)



The reality of death
begs you not to worry
about unimportant
things.



The reality of death
teaches me to “lay my
soul in the dust”.

FOR YOU ARE
DUST
AND TO DUST
YOU SHALL RETURN



GENESIS 3:19

FOR YOU ARE
DUST
AND TO DUST
YOU SHALL RETURN



GENESIS 3:19

***“Lay Your Soul in
the Dust.”***

FOR YOU ARE
DUST
AND TO DUST
YOU SHALL RETURN



GENESIS 3:19

When Mordecai learned all that had been done, *Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes*, and went out into the midst of the city, and he cried out with a loud and bitter cry....And in every province, wherever the king's command and his decree reached, *there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and many of them lay in sackcloth and ashes.*

Esther 4: 1,3

FOR YOU ARE
DUST
AND TO DUST
YOU SHALL RETURN



GENESIS 3:19

Then Jacob tore his garments and put
sackcloth on his loins and mourned for
his son many days.

Genesis 37:34

FOR YOU ARE
DUST
AND TO DUST
YOU SHALL RETURN



GENESIS 3:19

Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until the evening, he and the elders of Israel. And they put dust on their heads.

Joshua 7:6



#1: **The reality of death** lifts your gaze higher – it helps you *not* live for life “under the sun”.

#2: **The reality of death** reengages you to live your life on mission – for things eternal.

#3: **The reality of death** begs you not to worry about unimportant things.

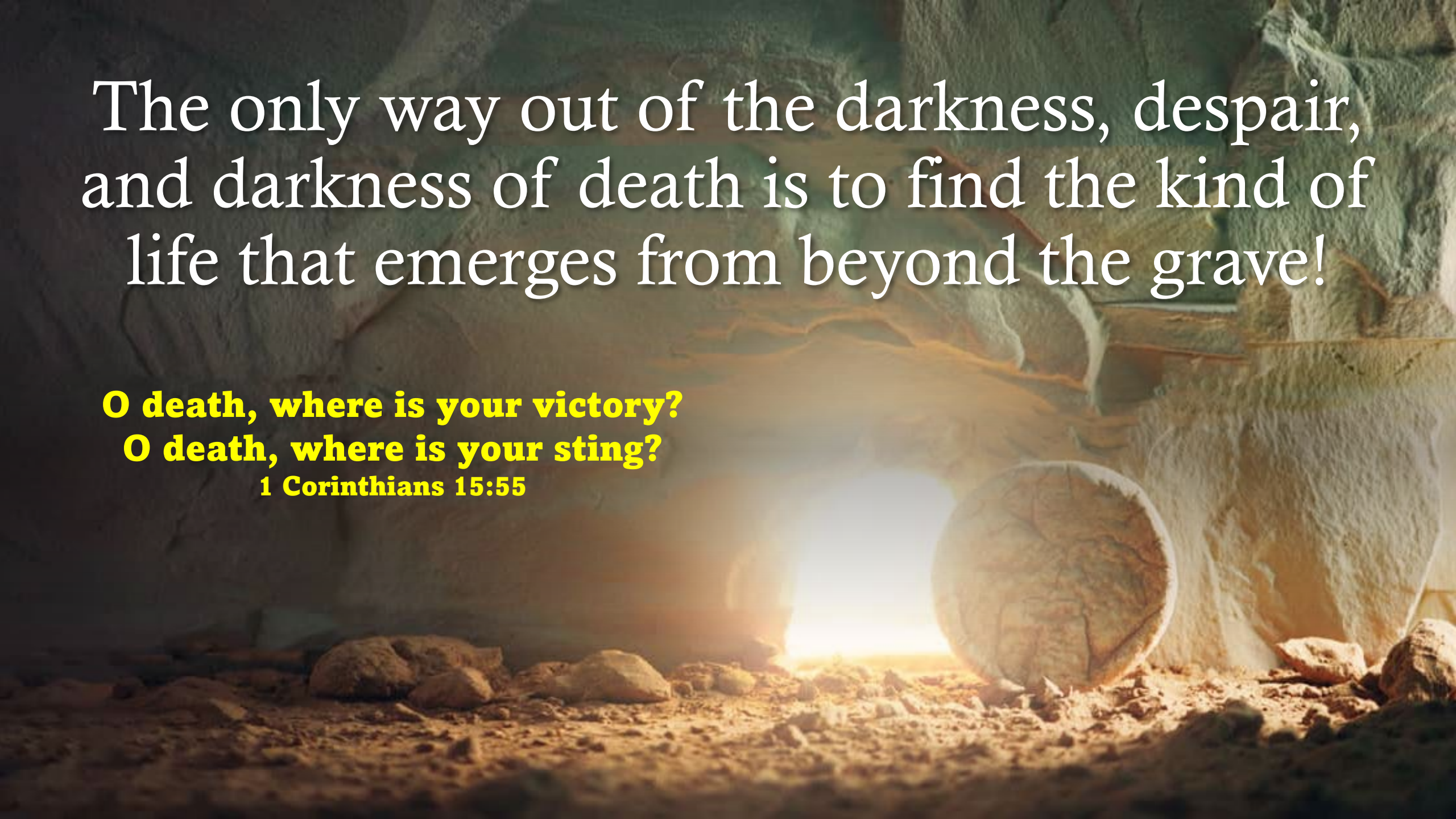
#4: **The reality of death** teaches me to “lay my soul in the dust”.

How the wise dies just like the fool! ¹⁷ So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind. ¹⁸ I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, ¹⁹ and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. ²⁰ So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun, ²¹ because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. ²² What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? ²³ For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity.

Ecclesiastes 2:16b-23



The only way out of the hatred, despair, and darkness of death is to find the kind of life that emerges from beyond the grave!

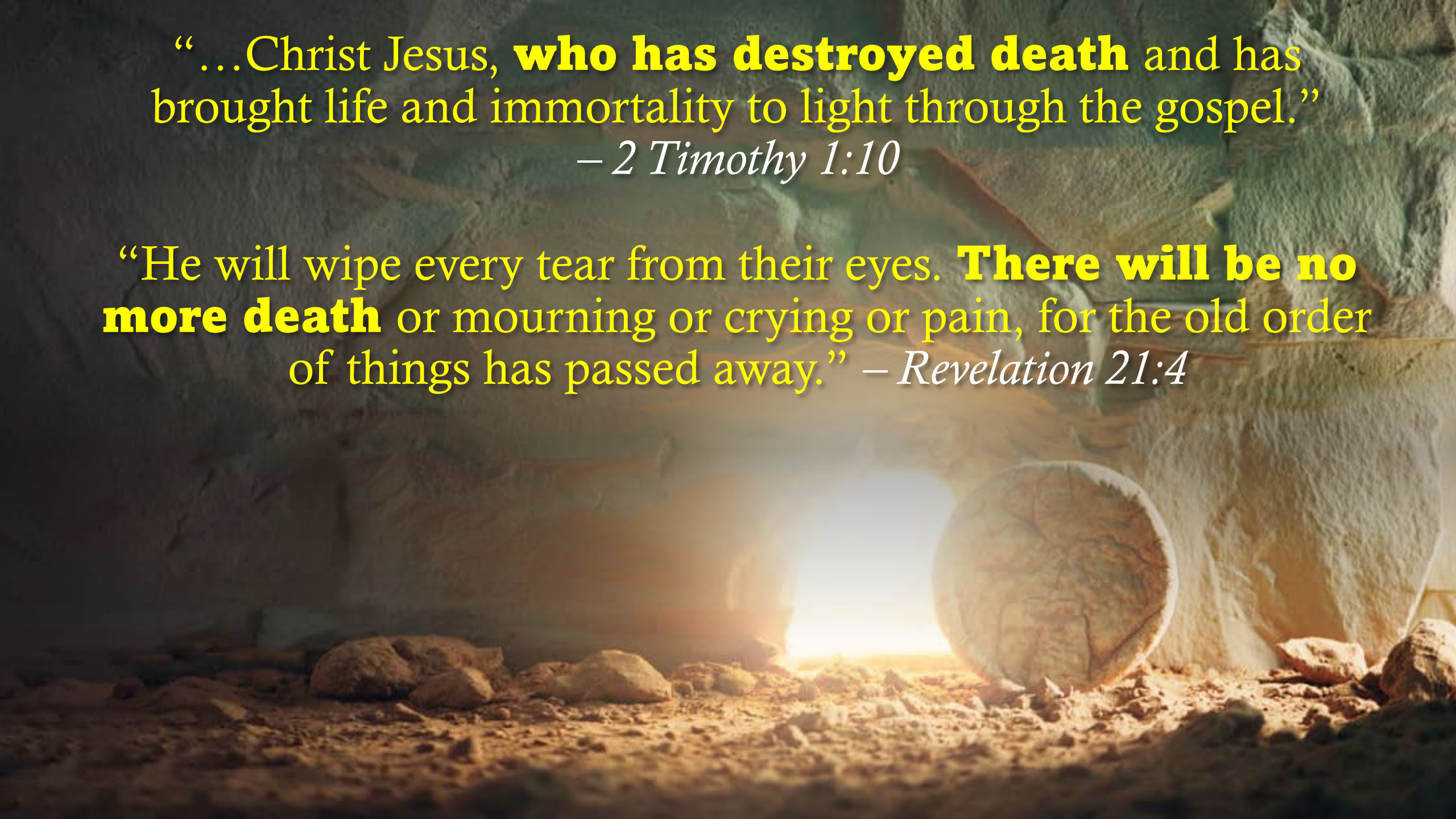
The background image is a dramatic scene of an open tomb. A large, heavy stone has been rolled away from the entrance of a dark, rocky cavity. A brilliant, golden light emanates from the opening, illuminating the interior of the tomb and casting long shadows. The stone is positioned to the right of the entrance, resting on the ground. The ground is uneven and rocky. The overall atmosphere is one of mystery and hope.

The only way out of the darkness, despair,
and darkness of death is to find the kind of
life that emerges from beyond the grave!

O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?

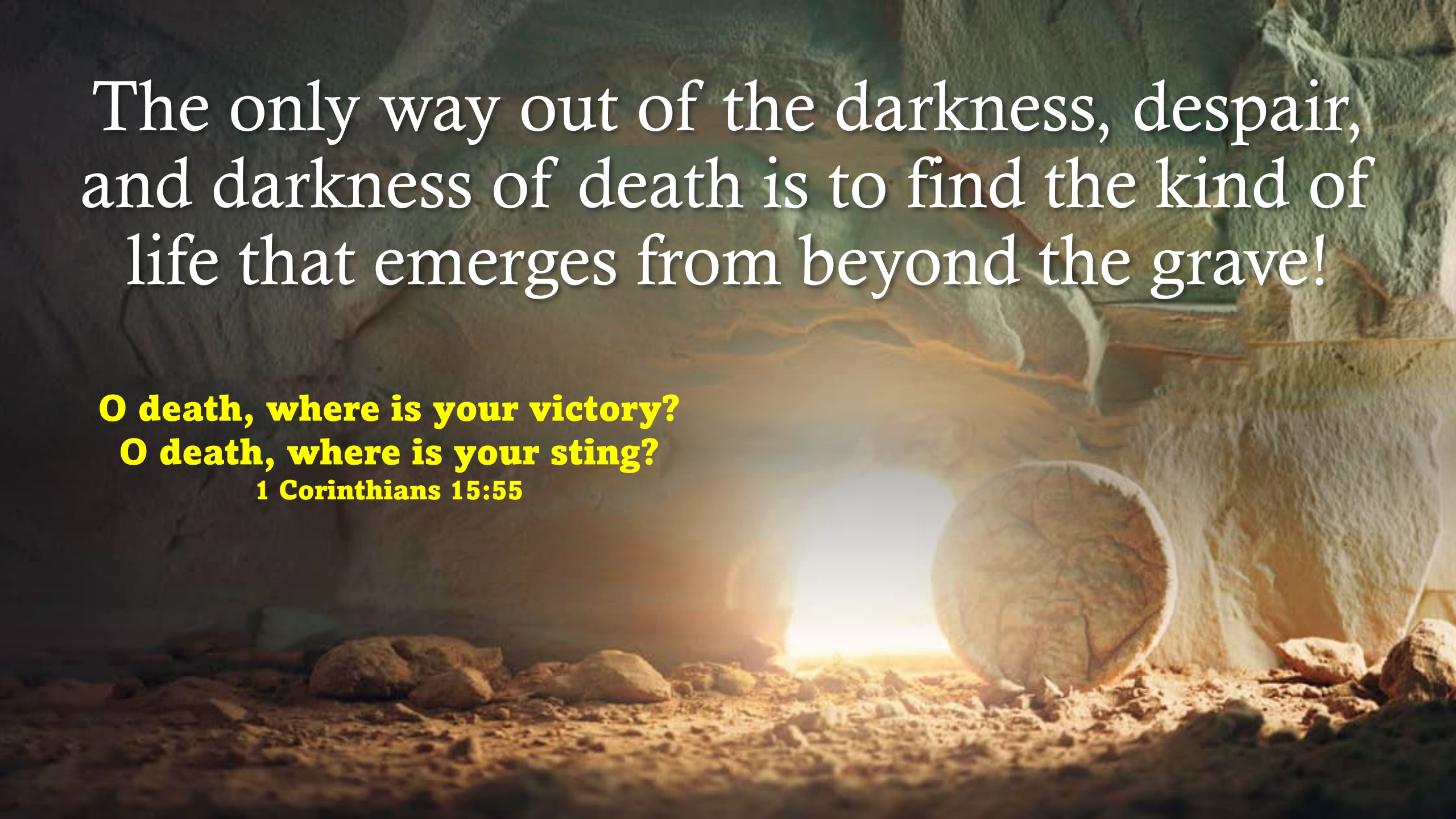
1 Corinthians 15:55

The background image shows the entrance to an ancient stone tomb. A large, heavy, grey stone has been rolled away from the circular opening. A brilliant, golden light emanates from the dark interior of the tomb, creating a strong contrast with the dimly lit exterior. The ground in front of the tomb is uneven and covered with small stones and dirt. The overall atmosphere is one of hope and new beginnings.

“...Christ Jesus, **who has destroyed death** and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

– *2 Timothy 1:10*

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. **There will be no more death** or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” – *Revelation 21:4*

The background image shows the entrance to a tomb. A large, heavy stone has been rolled away from the opening, resting on the ground to the right. A brilliant, golden light emanates from the dark interior of the tomb, creating a strong contrast with the dark, rocky surroundings. The ground in the foreground is uneven and covered with small stones and dirt. The overall atmosphere is one of mystery and divine light breaking through darkness.

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1 Corinthians 15:55