

'SMOKE & MIRRORS'

(Wisdom from Above to See through the Facades of Life Under the Sun) Studies in Ecclesiastes

'Fools' Gold'

A childhood vacation I remember was when my dad took us all to neighboring South Dakota. I think that since he had become a recent believer in Jesus, his plan was to take us to the famous outdoor "Passion Play" to hear and see the gospel, hoping we might all also come to salvation. It was a great trip for other reasons too – seeing Mount Rushmore, the Corn Palace, an 'old wild west' drama in Deadwood where Wild Bill Hitchcock was killed. We kids especially liked the tour of an old deserted gold mine where we saw glittering gold-speckled walls and piles and buckets full of sparkling gold-flecked ore (or so we thought).

A tour guide squelched our fantasies of being rich beyond imagination when he told us that the gold rocks were pretty but worthless fake gold embedded in rock. Called 'iron-pyrite,' it only looked like gold but it wasn't. The fake gold was even called 'fools' gold' because of people like us tourists who couldn't tell real gold from fake.

In this world there is a lot of *fools' gold* in 'them thar hills, pawdner'. People who outwardly appear to be better than they really are on the inside, shiny material possessions whose glow turns quickly to rust, seemingly beautiful opportunities that end up being nightmares for the rest of your life. As someone has said 'all that glitters isn't gold'....most of it is *fools' gold* in this life under the sun.

Solomon went *prospecting* for fulfillment in riches, pleasure, romance and power only to find that it was either *vanity* (disappointing, unfulfilling, a waste of time) or *chasing the wind* (craving to have something you can't get righteously or something that stays just out of reach) in 'living under the sun'. He ended up accumulating more *fools' gold* than anyone ever and wrote about it in this portion of God's Word, '**Ecclesiastes**', to warn us all, but especially young people, to spend this life going after *real gold* – a simple uncomplicated life, a vocation you really like and are pretty good at and plenty of time for studying the Bible, faith, knowing Christ and the things of God.

Solomon didn't know the verse that someone wiser than him would compose someday, but he undoubtedly would have agreed with it 100%: "**Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you**" (Matthew 6:33). Compared to the Lord Jesus and the wisdom of heaven He lived by, King Solomon's pursuit of *fools' gold* caused him to conclude in **Ecclesiastes**; "It is I, Solomon, Lord of the idiots' under the sun.

You see, to get gold out of the rock in which it is embedded, it has to be separated from worthless iron ore by intense heat. Someday God will do exactly that with what we did with everything we spent our time, talent and treasure on after becoming a Christian (1 Corinthians 3:11-15). If what we did survives the scrutiny of His holy inspection, we will be rewarded with a crown and blessed with 1000 years of holy responsibility in His kingdom when He comes again. If we wasted it on the *fools' gold* of this life we will suffer shame and loss and regret (1 John 2:28-3:3, Revelation 3:10-12).

To help us test the sparkles and glitter of earthly things now God has given us the holy Bible by which we are to test all things (1 John 4:1) and the Holy Spirit as the Assayer of heaven within our hearts to evaluate what attracts us and steer us away from all the 'fools' gold' of this world to the 'true gold' of God (1 Peter 1:6-7). Those who don't know the Lord think we are the fools for thinking like this (1 Corinthians 1:25), but, as usual, they are wrong again-- they who foolishly laden themselves with dirty gravel that is nothing more than ore flecked with gold paint that fades.

True believers with wisdom from above (James 3:17-18) are after the 'real gold' of God's very best (Philippians 1:10), not the *iron pyrite fools' gold* of this world. PtL

‘Folly-days’ Under the Sun’
(Wise Eyes Look Around Folly-wood)
Ecclesiastes 10

‘When Fools Rule Under the Sun’
Ecclesiastes 10:1-10

How people become foolish

(Failing to get pesky, unbecoming habits out of one’s life)

“Dead flies putrefy the perfumer’s ointment, and cause it to give off a foul odor; so does a little folly to one respected for wisdom and honor.” (10:1)

Discuss what these ‘dead fly’ things are...

(vs. 2-4) Talk about the 3 things foolish people do to lose wisdom and respect

- (2) How they do things
- (3) How they carry themselves in public
- (4) How they handle problems

(vs. 5-10) Talk about the evil ‘trickle down’ consequences of when folly is in authority

- (5-7) When people are in the wrong roles
- (8-10a) When things aren’t planned or maintained

“But wisdom brings success” (10b)

This phrase ends this section of **Chapter 10** and seems to imply that all the failures and evils ‘under the sun’ (vs. 1-10) are because of fools who:

live foolishly (2-4),
lead foolishly (5-7) and
labor foolishly (8-10).

However, heavenly wisdom is able to fix the situation and bring success. True wisdom ‘under heaven’ doesn’t just judge and criticize the messes fools make of things – it delights in correcting the wrongs of this ‘life under the sun’ ...this ‘hinge’ phrase **“wisdom brings success” connects verses 1-10 with verses 11-20...**

When Wisdom Schools Fools ‘Under Heaven’
Ecclesiastes 10:11-20

- (11-14)** Wisdom about a fool’s life (corresponds to vs. 2-4)
- (15)** Wisdom about foolish labor (corresponds to vs. 8-10)
- (16-20)** Wisdom leadership folly (corresponds to vs. 5-7)

If a fool listens to these wise sayings about his or her problems, success can happen (10b) and the fool can start to become wise.

- Do you think that most foolish people will heed wise advice?
- Why do you think that what one says is so important to success?
- The NT agrees that our talk determines our walk. Discuss **James 3:1-8**