

## **'SMOKE & MIRRORS'**

(‘Under Heaven’ Spiritual Vision for Seeing Through ‘Under the Sun’ Illusions)  
Studies in Ecclesiastes

*Synopsis:* All people live their lives ‘under the sun’. The *natural man* (born physically alive but not spiritually) lives out his or her earthly life without God. The *spiritual man* (‘born again’ by faith in Christ) lives out his or her life *under heaven* and *under the sun* in vital connection with God (through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit)/ **Ecclesiastes 1.**

Solomon teaches about the contrast between these two lifestyles:

- In **Chapter 2** (Life ‘under the sun’ only) - godless secular life is portrayed as ‘vain’ and ‘grasping after the wind’.
- In **Chapter 3** (Life ‘under heaven’ also) is seen as purposeful, beautiful and fulfilling through a simple, contented lifestyle, working at a job that one is good at and enjoys, with time for the Lord and His Word in all of life.
- In **Chapter 4** Solomon teaches that the good lifestyle lived *under heaven* will not be admired by those without God, nor will their good work be appreciated *under the sun* by those without God who are living a vain, *unfortunate* life.

Those living *under heaven* will wisely have at least one or two good friends to help him or her cope with the trials of life *under the sun*. Solomon then concludes the chapter by telling his own story as an example of his own vanity foolishly refusing all wise counsel and not having any good *under heaven* friends for assistance and the sad end that came of it.

### **The Spiritual Forecast for Life Under the Sun**

(Chapters 5, 6 & 7)

#### **Chapter 5/ Stirring up cloudy skies, thunder & lightning ‘under the sun’**

Broken promises (1-7)

Slackened principles (8-12)

Avarice & greed (13-17)

**Lesson: Don’t forsake the joy of life under heaven (18-20)**

Talk about how one act of disobedience leads to another and another in one’s departure from living wisely for God ‘under heaven’ for selfish living ‘under the sun’ (**Romans 1:21-22**).

#### **Chapter 6 / Turbulent weather patterns ‘under the sun’ (God’s chastisement):**

Blessings diminished (1-6)

Success without pleasure (7-9)

God’s restriction (10-11)

**Lesson: Enjoy what God gives while you can (12)**

Talk about the consequences of continual disobedience and God’s eventual divine intervention of chastisement (**Hebrews 12:5-11**). What does ‘no chastisement’ prove? What forms does chastisement from God take in real life? Are there also eternal reward consequences? (**1 Corinthians 3:13-17**)

**Chapter 7/ Dark storm clouds & ‘silver linings’ ‘under heaven’ (wisdom):**

‘Grown-up questions’ (1-10)

Wise balance in life (11-22)

Marry well or live to regret it (23-26)

**Lesson: Wisdom is right, but rare due to man’s ‘scheming’ mind & heart (27-29)**

**Chapter 7 True or False questions about spiritually mature wisdom**

*(Discuss your answer and why you feel that way)*

1. A good name is better than anointing to a high position (1a)
2. The day of your death is better the day you were born (1b)
3. Visiting those who are mourning is better than attending a party (2)
4. To be sad and sorrowful is better than jokes and laughter (3)
5. Attending a funeral is better than going somewhere “just for fun” (4)
6. Criticism from wise people is better than flattery and praise from fools (5-6)
7. The end of something is better than its beginning (8a)
8. Being a quiet, calm, humble is better than being bold and proud (8b)
9. Impulsive indignation is the behavior of a hostile, foolish person (9)
10. It is best not to go on and on about ‘the good old days’ (10)

*“...the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy...”*

James 3:17-18