

'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