

# Ecclesiastes 10:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place.

## Analysis

**Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place** (נָתַן הַסֵּכֶל בְּמְרוֹמִים רַבִּים) —this completes the observation begun in 10:5. Sekhel (סֵכֶל, folly) is placed in meromim rabim (מְרוֹמִים רַבִּים, great heights/dignified positions). Meanwhile, the ashirim (אֲשִׁירִים, rich/wealthy) sit in shephel (שֵׁפֶל, low place/humiliation). The term "rich" likely refers not merely to wealth but to those rich in wisdom, capability, and merit—the qualified and competent demoted while fools are exalted.

This inversion offends justice and common sense. Merit-based hierarchy would place wise, capable people in authority and reserve low positions for the incompetent. Yet human governance regularly inverts this order through favoritism, corruption, or misjudgment. The fool promoted to "great dignity" lacks capacity to fulfill responsibilities wisely, producing dysfunction cascading throughout society. This anticipates Mary's Magnificat: God "hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree" (Luke 1:52)—divine judgment will reverse unjust human hierarchies. Until then, believers endure earthly inversions trusting God's ultimate justice.

## Historical Context

Ancient honor-shame cultures were intensely hierarchical. Social position determined access to resources, legal protections, and political influence. Competent people excluded from authority while fools wielded power created not merely individual injustice but social instability. Solomon's son Rehoboam

exemplified this: rejecting wise elders' counsel for young fools' advice, splitting the kingdom (1 Kings 12). Roman governance often promoted based on patronage rather than merit. Medieval church positions went to nobility's younger sons regardless of spiritual qualification. Even democratic systems elevate demagogues while marginalizing wise statesmen. The pattern persists: social media influencers with no expertise shape public opinion while knowledgeable experts are ignored. The Reformers challenged Catholic hierarchy that elevated corrupt clergy while persecuting godly ministers. Their doctrine of vocation affirmed that God honors faithfulness in "low" positions—the cobbler glorifies God equally with the cardinal when both serve faithfully in their calling.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

## Study Questions

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1. How do you maintain contentment and faithfulness when less qualified people are promoted over you?
2. What comfort does it bring to know God sees true worth even when earthly systems invert proper recognition and authority?

## Interlinear Text

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יָשֻׁבוּ:	בֶּשׂ כָּל	וְעֹשִׂיר יִם	רַב יִם	בְּמָרוֹם יִם	הֵס כָּל	נִתְּ
is set	Folly	dignity	in great	and the rich	in low place	sit
H5414	H5529	H4791	H7227	H6223	H8216	H3427

## Additional Cross-References

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**Proverbs 28:12** (Parallel theme): When righteous men do rejoice, there is great glory: but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden.

**Proverbs 29:2** (Parallel theme): When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.

**Psalms 12:8** (Parallel theme): The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.

**Esther 3:1** (Parallel theme): After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him.

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