

**Ecclesiastes 11:1-2 ¶ Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.**

In scripture the term “bread” is usually a reference to one’s provision to sustain life. Since I am interested in prophecy, I couldn’t help but think of the verse in Revelation that identifies the “waters” as multitudes of people.

*Revelation 17:15 “And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.”*

If those are valid connections, Solomon is extolling the benefit of generosity. Those who are generous to others will more likely find themselves at the receiving end of another’s generosity in their own time of need.

As I looked at some of the other translations and a few commentaries, they made application to diversification in financial investments. The Complete Jewish Bible supported this understanding: *“Send your resources out over the seas; eventually you will reap a return. Divide your merchandise into seven or eight shares, since you don’t know what disasters may come on the earth.”*

**Ecclesiastes 11:3 If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.**

As we observe the creation, we see that once the clouds are full of rain, they empty that rain upon the earth; this cycle is a natural one that was set in motion by the Creator. When a tree falls as a natural result of impact from its surrounding environment, it has no control over the direction it falls nor can it change its position once it has fallen.

I think in connection with the previous verse, emphasis is being given to the truth that life has a natural ebb and flow over which we have no real control.

**Ecclesiastes 11:4 He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.**

I think the NLT expresses this thought well: *“If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done.”* One who adopts this attitude will find himself with idle hands; and idleness always feeds the flesh and sin. This brings to mind the old saying, “Idleness is the devil’s workshop.”

We have no control over the wind or the clouds; they function according to the laws established by the Creator. Our lack of control should not prevent us from taking action to provide for ourselves and our families. It brings to mind another old saying, “Nothing ventured, nothing gained.”

**Ecclesiastes 11:5 As thou knowest not what *is* the way of the spirit, *nor* how the bones *do grow* in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.**

It was interesting to note that the other main translations I use all assume the “spirit” to be a reference to the wind. Frankly, I’m not sure that is the case. The baby that grows in the womb is a being of flesh and spirit. I tend to think he is referencing our lack of understanding as to how the wholeness of each human being comes together. We certainly understand much more today about the physical formation of the body of flesh, but we still have no understanding of how the spirit is joined to that body of flesh. It is all a miraculous work of the Creator, God Almighty.

Again, the emphasis is on the truth that there is much that is beyond our understanding or our ability to control in life. The wise will be in awe of their Creator and will realize that they will never be able to understand Him or think like Him. If we could, He would no longer be God.

*Psalms 33:8 “Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.”*

*Isaiah 55:8-9 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*

**Ecclesiastes 11:6 In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both *shall be* alike good.**

This verse seems to be another warning against idle hands. Don’t be content with just doing enough to get by, prepare for unknown contingencies. It could be that the extra work you put in will provide for the failure of your initial investment of time and energy. Or—it could be that the extra work results in a bonus harvest. At any rate, by avoiding idleness, you deprive the enemy of an opportunity to draw you into sin.

**Ecclesiastes 11:7-8 ¶ Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant *thing it is* for the eyes to behold the sun: But if a man live many years, *and* rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh *is* vanity.**

Well, these verses took a while to process. Solomon is declaring that a long life is something to rejoice about. It was a reference to the “days of darkness” that “shall be” that jumped out at me. We know that in life we will all experience times of sorrow and trouble, but this reference is to future darkness. One of the choices for “remember” was to “think on.” In other words, this life isn’t all there is. I found some verses in Job that seem to apply here.

*Job 10:20-22 "Are not my days few? cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death; A land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness."*

The Hebrew for "darkness" is the same in both sections of scripture and makes reference to "the dark, death, and ignorance." Solomon recognizes that the days of our "life after death" will be many compared to our present life. He seemed, however, to be clueless as to the potential for personal fulfillment in the afterlife.

The last statement is confusing. Maybe it is just a reference to ignorance as to what awaits one in the afterlife. Maybe it is a statement of understanding that your eternal destiny is sealed at the moment of death. I really don't know.

***Ecclesiastes 11:9-10 Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.***

I really thought the Complete Jewish Bible expressed the intent of these verses much more clearly: *"Young person, if you spend your youth only having fun, if you use your early years just to entertain yourself, if you follow your heart as you live your life, and let your eyes be your guide; understand that for all these things God will bring you to judgment. Therefore, remove anger from your heart; and keep from harming your body; for neither adolescence nor youth has any lasting value."*

These are wise words of instruction that should be shared by every Christian parent with their children. There is nothing wrong with having a good time and investing time and energy in things that you love as long as you are doing so in accordance with God's will for your life as revealed in His word. Things that we do that are rooted in the flesh will only result in sin and/or loss of heavenly treasure.

When I looked at the Hebrew for "sorrow," vexation, anger, wrath, and spite seemed to be the emphasis. We will all deal with sorrow, and scripture tells us that sorrow is often beneficial.

*Psalms 126:5-6 "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."*

*Proverbs 3:12 "For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth."*

*2 Corinthians 4:17 "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;"*

It makes much better sense to read this as putting away anger—because anger, like love, is a choice. The Holy Spirit produces fruit in the life of the believer, including love and self-control.

*Galatians 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." (temperance = self-control)*

It seems that if the enemy can't get you to fall for the deceit of following the desires of the flesh, he will often turn his deceit to the value of life. From the very earliest times we know that the false religions have made use of human sacrifice. Even members of the early church were deceived into thinking that self-flagellation was beneficial to their spiritual growth. I am convinced that God never intended such. His word is clear that we are to exercise self-control and obedience, but it is also full of the truth that He desires to bless us and fill our lives with joy.

*Proverbs 12:20 "Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil: but to the counsellors of peace is joy."*

*John 15:10-11 "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."*

It's interesting that these verses are directed to the young, since that is when one is most vulnerable to the attack of the enemy in these areas. I can't help but think of so many of our youth today, in particular, who are under attack in this area. They are duped into practicing eating disorders, cutting themselves, drug abuse, etc., because they haven't been taught the truth of God's word and the value of their life before God.

*Psalms 139:13-16 "For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them."*

God loves every life He brings into being. He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

*2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."*

He loves us so much that He gave His only Son as the sacrifice for our sin and to provide for our eternal life with Him.

*John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."*