

Ecclesiastes Chapter 11

The first six verses contain a series of sayings about the uncertainty of human industry, and are held together by the fourfold occurrence of the expression "thou knowest not". Although man cannot comprehend God's work, nor predict success, he needs to be involved in life's activities and trust God for the results.

Ecclesiastes 11:1 "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days."

"Cast thy bread": Take a calculated and wise step forward in life, like a farmer who throws his seed on the wet or marshy ground and waits for it to grow. (See Isa. 32:20).

"Cast thy bread upon the waters" is speaking of sharing bread with those less fortunate. When you give to those in need, you are giving to God. God will give back to you in such abundance, you will never know need.

Psalms 112:9 "He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honor."

Luke 6:38 "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

Ecclesiastes 11:2 "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth."

This is expounding on verse 1. It is saying, do not stop by giving one person bread, but give to everyone in need. A person never knows what time he will need help himself. Those who have helped others will be helped themselves.

Psalms 41:1 "Blessed [is] he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble."

Be generous while there is plenty, and make friends while time remains, because one never knows when he might need them to return the favor.

The world is full of things over which one has no control including the purposes of God. There is no virtue in wishful wondering, but there is hope for those who get busy and do their work.

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."

Some things are inevitable. The clouds being full and pouring rain is natural, the tree falling is not under our control either. This is just saying that life is uncertain.

We do not know when troubles will come. We must be thoughtful of others in trouble, and then, God will take care of us in our trouble. Trouble is inevitable. It comes to everyone sometime. We must learn to accept things the way they are.

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

This is speaking of someone who makes excuses for not doing things.

Just because the wind is blowing, is no reason not to sow. The idea is to find a way to sow in the wind, not to make excuses why you cannot sow.

The very same thing is true regarding reaping. There are a thousand excuses that could be made why you cannot reap, but that will not bring in the crops. No one will benefit from the crop then.

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."

These are speaking of some of the mysteries of God. The spirit is like the wind. The wind blows, and we enjoy the freshness of the air, but we cannot see it, or describe it.

The bones in the mother's womb is another mystery that truly only God knows. God is the Creator of life. Every time a baby is born, we know that God has not given up on mankind. Somehow, mothers and daddies are coupled with God in the process of creating this new life.

Man and woman are the instruments God chooses to create life through. That is one really good reason that homosexuality is not an alternate lifestyle. Sex occurs to create life. Two men cannot create. For men to sleep with men is against nature. The same is true with two women.

The natural thing is for a man and a woman to sleep together and pro-create life with God. We do not understand the process. We just know that is the way God made things.

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."

Generally, early in the morning, the wind is not blowing. You also, are fresh and energetic in the morning. You have more energy to work. This is not just speaking of farming, but is speaking of all who have work to do.

Do not be lazy, get up and be about your work. It is also saying, do not quit half-way through the job. If the sowing in the morning happens not to take, then the sowing in the evening will. We must put out whatever effort is needed to succeed. We do the work, and it is God who prospers the effort. If both morning and evening efforts prosper, how great that prosperity will be.

(In 11:7 – 12:8), Solomon crystallizes the book's message. Death is imminent and with it comes retribution. Enjoyment and judgment, though strange partners, come together in this section because both clamor for man's deepest commitment. Surprisingly, one does not win out over the other. In a world created for enjoyment but damaged by sin, judgment and enjoyment/pleasure are held in tension. With too much pleasure, judgment stands as a threatening force, with too much judgment, enjoyment suffers. In the final analysis, both are prominent themes of life that are resolved in our relationship to God, the primary issue of life and this book.

Verse 9 can hardly be taken in a hedonistic sense, because the controlling factor in the youth's enjoyment is said to be God's judgment. Rather, it is a warning against a life misspent in self indulgence.

Verse 8 adds a cautionary note to enjoyment that may be summarized in two ideas:

- (1) There will be many days of darkness, calamitous day;
- (2) All that cometh is vanity: That is, joys will not come easily; they must be wrested from a puzzling and futile life.

In verses 7-10 once again the exhortation to enjoyment is put in the imperative mood. Here the appeal is particularly addressed to the youth to admonish him to enjoy life before the onset of the feeble years described (in chapter 12 verses 1-7). The comparison with light (verse 7), speaks of the enjoyment of life.

Ecclesiastes 11:7 "Truly the light [is] sweet, and a pleasant [thing it is] for the eyes to behold the sun:"

Light, in this sense, could be also speaking of life.

We do know that all believers are children of the Light. We are not in darkness. Very little can be accomplished in the dark. After the night is passed and the sun comes up in the morning, it is very pleasant. The darkest time is just before the sun comes up.

1 John 1:5 "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

1 John 1:7 "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

Good times in contrast to "darkness" (verse 8, meaning bad times (12:1).

Ecclesiastes 11:8 "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."

The time of darkness, spoken of here, is speaking of tribulation that comes upon all men. It is not the amount of trouble we have that makes us what we are. It is our attitude toward that darkness.

We must use that time of darkness to make us better appreciate the Light. The time of darkness makes us remember how wonderful the Light is. If we had light all the time, we would not appreciate the Light.

There is physical darkness, and there is spiritual darkness. I believe this Scripture is speaking of both. Solomon again, feels that man has little control over the times of darkness and light. He does have control of his own attitude about that darkness.

Ecclesiastes 11:9 "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."

In the book of Proverbs, Solomon went into great detail about the conduct of a young man. He explained that his mother and father had taught him well in this matter. Young people are supposed to enjoy their youth, but they are also, apt to get themselves in trouble.

They must control their desires, to avoid sinning against God. Youth do not have the problems that older people do. Older people are already in the process of making a living and meeting the bills for the family. Youth, who follows the call of his flesh, will bring himself into the judgment of God, because of the sins he commits.

It is best to let the Spirit of God teach and direct your life from an early age, to avoid much sin.

“Rejoice ... Judgment”, the two terms seem to cancel out the other. How can this be explained? Enjoy life but do not commit iniquity. The balance that is called for insures that enjoyment is not reckless, sinful abandonment. Pleasure is experienced in faith and obedience, for as Solomon has said repeatedly, one can only receive true satisfaction as a gift from God.

Ecclesiastes 11:10 "Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth [are] vanity."

Children and youth make a lot of mistakes. They are not trained in the school of experience.

Enjoy childhood and youth while you can because they are fleeting and are soon gone.

2 Timothy 2:22 "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

1 Corinthians 13:11 "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

As never before, the youth of our generation should follow after their spirit, and not their flesh. Lust of the flesh is not only sin in the sight of God, but today can also, get you exposed to A.I.D.S. In this sense, the warning above is physical, as well as spiritual.

Ecclesiastes Chapter 11

1. Cast thy bread upon the _____.
2. What does that expression mean?
3. When you give to those in need, you are giving to _____.
4. What is verse 2 saying?
5. What causes the clouds, full of rain, to empty themselves upon the earth?
6. Who is verse 4 describing?
7. The spirit, in verse 5, is like the _____
8. The things mentioned in verse 5, are _____ of God.
9. _____ is the Creator of life.
10. What do we realize every time a new baby is born?
11. Sex occurs to _____.
12. Two men having personal relations is _____.
13. Verse 6 says, sow _____ in the _____.
14. Do not _____ half-way through the job.
15. In verse 7, the light is spoken of as being _____.
16. It could also, be speaking of what?
17. Why is it necessary to have darkness?
18. What book, in the Bible, is about the conduct of the young man?
19. The youth that follows his flesh has what happen?
20. Why do the youth make so many mistakes?
21. What are some of the dangers today, that go with lust of the flesh?