

Notes on Job 6—15

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Chapters 6 and 7

Job's pain was that God's arrows were in him. He preferred death to further pain because then he would not be tempted to sin with his lips. To ask him to do anything was futile. His friends should have been true comforters—with water for him in a time of drought. They should have been this even if he had ceased to fear God (6:14 NIV). He must have known that even God remains kind to covenant breakers. Eliphaz had said he should find solace in his traditional faith, but the outward rewards of this faith were now gone and he needed his friends to help him find a path through sorrow.

He could not understand their lack of friendship—he had not had bad business dealings with them. Had Job's protests uncovered a false trust in their theology to make them so defensive? They were playing with his despair as they would with a casual trading deal when what was at stake was his righteousness—or vindication.

Each day passed for him without hope. Nights seemed long but his days were passing quickly so that soon he would be no more. In such bleak days, he maintained the right to speak in his despair and not be 'jumped on' by his friends. (The dreams and visions—7:14—may refer back to 4:12–16.) How could he be so important to God—to be so pursued for his sins? Why could God not forgive him? Clearly, he had already known the grace of God's forgiveness and could not understand the severity of the alienation he was now experiencing.

What is man? Job asked. He wished not to be important but could not avoid the high calling of being a human being. The answer has been given to us finally in Jesus Christ—who tasted death for us (Heb. 2:9). He is the true comforter and enabler of our humanity.

Chapter 8

Bildad believed that Job's children who died in calamity must have suffered for their sins—because God gives strict justice. But Job was still alive and Bildad offered him such hope as he knew of. 'Pray and you will be more that compensated! Evil men have always come to nought but God will not forsake you. Soon, you will be laughing.'

Chapters 9 and 10

Bildad had not sat where Job sat. He had no need to prove that he was just before God—he was at ease; Job stood in great need of reassurance that he was justified before God. But how could he do so when God was so wise, mighty, powerful and unreachable. Job felt that the very order of the creation had been disturbed. How could he protest his innocence when he dealt with One so much more powerful? His innocence or otherwise did not seem to matter. Unless he could deal with God as an equal he was in no position to protest his innocence.

(Job has spoken of the majesty of God. For the moment he saw this as caprice and it was bitter to think of. But when God actually displayed his majesty, it brought him healing of mind.)

Job loved God. That had been affirmed by God at the beginning of the book. Was it this love that now made him able to speak freely to this God who appeared as his accuser? Again, feeling his mortality, he asked if God could feel as he does. The Father of Jesus Christ must have longed to answer that question. For the moment, Job wrestled because the same God who had upheld his spirit with steadfast love had planned this horror. He would rather live in chaos—a world unattended by God—than be ‘attended’ in this way.

Chapter 11

Zophar, like Bildad, held out hope for Job, but not before he shamed him for his rash speech. Any suggestion that God was unjust inflamed Zophar so that he could not hear what Job was saying or remember what manner of man he was. Zophar could only see God as judge (not as lover) and Job’s suffering as judgement.

Chapters 12 to 14

Zophar’s words did not touch Job. The former, like a robber or provoker of God, could be at ease with his own wisdom, while Job, like the animals and nature, had encountered the sovereign God. Only this God was wise and the wisdom of this world’s leaders he could remove at a stroke.

(Job longed that they would learn to fear God. What if God searched them out as he had been examined by them?)

Job’s friends had presumed to speak for God, but Job wanted to speak to God. For lack of fear of God, Job’s friends could not lead him to true knowledge. He spoke to his friends but prepared to present his case to God. He would come to him even if it killed him—but he knew he was godly and would be received. Only let God call him into his presence!

So, Job spoke to God. ‘Tell me my sins. Why am I treated as an enemy?’ Why would a human being, though more vulnerable than a tree, be so closely tested? Better to be dead. Better to wait until this time of testing was over. His sins would be forgiven—that he knew. God would wait fondly for him—that he knew also.

Chapter 15

Eliphaz was incensed by Job speaking as he did. What he knew of the fear of God was being directly challenged. He asked Job if he thought he was closer to God than others. He asked why he was not content with God’s comforts. He thought it preposterous that someone like Job should protest their righteousness in God’s sight—especially when the signs of God’s chastening were so apparent. He continued by describing (accurately) the way God treats the wicked—assuming of course that Job must be such a wicked person.