

# JOB 6

## Job Answers Eliphaz' Accusations: "My Complaint is Justified"

### **Introduction:**

Do you remember growing up as a child? Perhaps that is difficult for you, but if you have children or grandchildren you probably have observed a question they constantly ask when they get to a certain age: "Why?" You may remember questions such as, "Why do we have to go to church?" "Why does Jimmy get to go to the beach and I don't?", "Why do I have to take a bath", "Why do I have to take out the trash?", "Why do people say nasty things?", "Why is the sky blue?", "Why do fish live in the water?", "Why did "Sparky" have to die?" "Why, why, why.....?"

As adults we ask our own brand of "Why" questions: "Why can't that person be nicer?" "Why doesn't my boss appreciate what I've been doing?" "Why didn't my plan work out?" "Why am I going through this?" "Why is God doing this to me?"

Perhaps better questions to ask are: "Why is my loving Father allowing this to happen?" "What good purpose could He be desiring to accomplish through my suffering?" We need to remember that our Holy, Gracious, Merciful, All-Powerful God is not the "God Father" but the "Father God" and He, like a "Good Shepherd", loves and protects us and sometimes His correction is painful. By faith we need to remember: ".....that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" {**Rom. 8:28**}.

Job was in a very difficult place. He was wondering why he was in the situation he was in. He was questioning "why" all this has happened to him. He hasn't been able to figure it out and reasoning about his dilemma continued to add to his anguish. Now he explains to Eliphaz, and his other two "friends", that they really don't understand and they haven't been much help to him. He explains to them that his reaction to his calamity is justified and uses a wonderful figure of speech to describe it. Job was correct in his assessment about the situation but even that didn't help him.

### **vv. 1-7** ➤ **JOB DEFENDS HIS GRIEF—YOU DON'T REALLY UNDERSTAND**

*[1 Then Job answered and said: 2 "Oh, that my grief were fully weighed, And my calamity laid with it on the scales! 3 For then it would be heavier than the sand of the sea—Therefore my words have been rash [lit. "swallowed"]. 4 For the arrows of the Almighty are within me; My spirit drinks in their poison; The terrors of God are arrayed against me. 5 Does the wild donkey bray when it has grass, Or does the ox low over its fodder? 6 Can flavorless food be eaten without salt? Or is there any taste in the white of an egg? 7 My soul refuses to touch them; They are as loathsome food to me."]*

Job now answers Eliphaz, but before we look at that it will be worthwhile to be reminded of Job's original reaction to losing his wealth and children:

Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.—**Job 1:20-22**

Job did not lash out at God and complain to Him when everything that was important to him was taken.

But then his own life was threatened by a horrible disease that affected his skin<sup>1</sup>. Even then, even after his wife suggested he give up his integrity and end his suffering by cursing God and dying, note what Job's response was:

"You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips"—**Job 2:10**

Job remained steadfastly faithful to God and would not speak evil of Him [Job would not blaspheme against the LORD, which is what Satan was trying to get him to do].

However, Job was beside himself to understand what was going on, especially in light of the fact that he had been so devoted to God.

There were many things that Eliphaz said in chapters 4 and 5 that were true about God's dealing with man {e.g., **Job 4:17-21; 5:8-16, 17-27**}. But there were some things he said that were misguided {e.g., **Job 4:7-11** contrasted with **John 9:2-3**} and clouded the issue.

The point is however that none of what Eliphaz said to Job were helpful to him. Actually, Eliphaz' accusations and aspersions were relentless and somewhat merciless {e.g., **Job 5:1-7**}. They were of little or no value in helping Job through his suffering.

So now Job answers Eliphaz and wants him [and by implication his other two friends] to understand the extent of his *grief* and why Eliphaz' words did not really address his issue.

Job wants his friends to know why his words have seemed so rash. After all, in several different ways he had not only wished he had died at birth, but that he had never been born alive; that he would have died in his mother's womb! Refer to **Job 3:1-26** and review:

- *Job cursed the day he was born* {**Job 3:1-3**}
- *Job wished that day his mother had been barren* {**Job 3:7,10**}
- *Job wished he had died during childbirth* {**Job 3:11**}
- *Job wished he had been "stillborn", died in his mother's womb* {**Job 3:16**}

So Job uses a wonderful example of Jewish *hyperbole*<sup>2</sup> to explain how he feels. He wishes that his *grief* were *fully weighed* and his *calamity* be *put on scales* and weighed against the *sand of the sea*. In dramatic fashion Job is trying to make the point that he believes his friends have totally *underestimated* the depth of his grief, anguish and distress.

The word for "*grief*" here carries with it the aspect of sorrow, anger, indignation, provocation, aggravation and frustration. In other words Job has a *full plate* of "grief"—there's nothing missing from his *calamity*. Perhaps the best way to describe Job's situation is that he is dealing with aggravated sorrow and is indignant over his calamity.

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<sup>1</sup> Job's skin was stricken with a painful "boil" [lit. "burning" and "inflammation"] from the bottom of his foot to the top of his head {**Job 2:7**}, which caused multiple skin ulcers. His skin was painful to the touch, full of open wounds and inflamed. Thus, Job had one enormous *inflamed skin condition* over his entire body (not individual pocks or pustules like smallpox). Note that the skin is actually one of the body's organs protecting it from infection and disease. When the skin is diseased it can become the catalyst for a myriad of other serious maladies and disorders, which can easily lead to a state of incessant pain and misery.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g., **Matt 19:24**; "And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

To fully make his point with his friends, Job wishes that his *grief and calamity* were put on one side of a balancing scale and the *sand of the sea* on the other and then be lifted up. If that were done, Job says his suffering would be shown to be heavier than the sand of the sea—the scales would completely tip in the direction of his grief and calamity.

That's a powerfully descriptive way of putting it! It hits home the level of pain, distress and anguish that Job is experiencing. Job's sorrow is aggravated and he is indignant about his calamity—his situation is overwhelming!

[“*For the arrows of the Almighty are within me; My spirit drinks in their poison; The terrors of God are arrayed against me*”] This is the first time that Job verbalizes the fact that he thinks he is being *attacked* by God [instead of Satan] using a metaphor of weapons of warfare. He describes this as if the *Almighty God* [Shaddai Elowah] has shot him full of *poison arrows* [lit. arrows of *wrath & fury*] adding that he feels like the *terrors* of God are *arrayed* against him. Job uses the same analogy in **Job 7:20; 16:12-13**. See also Jeremiah in **Lam. 3:12-13**.

But please note, it is not God who slings “arrows” at those are called by His name, it is Satan<sup>3</sup> who does that! **Eph. 6:16** tells that, “.....*above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one*”. The “wicked one” is Satan.

#### **APPLICATION:**

The lesson for us here is, not to ascribe to God something that should be ascribed to Satan (or even to man)!

The opposite of this is also true: Do not ascribe something to Satan (or man) that should be ascribed to God. The Pharisees did this when they said of Jesus casting out a demon, “*This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons*” {**Matt. 12:24**}.

The proof of this is to consider what Jesus says in response; “*Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you*” {**Matt. 12:25-28**}.

This is also the case when people worship “mother earth”, or Gaia as she is known to the ancient Greeks\*, and sing the “Earth Day Anthem” to her (sung to the tune of *Ode to Joy*). This is nothing more than the worship of nature which is idolatry in it's most raw form {see **Rom. 1:20-25**}.

Although Job did not know this until later, it was Satan that had attacked him—not God!

Continuing to hit the point home, Job asks his friends four rhetorical questions which all have the obvious answer, “No!” These are all taken from daily experiences. A wild donkey has no need to bray after it's full. An ox does not low when it has sufficient food. Flavorless food needs salt and there's no taste in the white of an egg [unless you add something like sugar].

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\* In ancient Greek mythology **Gaia** is the personification of the Earth and one of the two Greek primordial deities. The other being Uranus, the personification of the Sky, whom she spontaneously gave birth to. Gaia was the great mother of all: the primal Greek Mother Goddess; creator and giver of birth to the Earth and all the Universe; the heavenly gods, the Titans, and the Giants were born to her. The gods reigning over their classical pantheon were born from her union with Uranus (the sky), while the sea-gods were born from her union with Pontus (the sea). Her equivalent in the Roman pantheon was Terra. Thus, “she” stands in direct opposition to the one true God and Lord of all, Jesus Christ.

Job is trying to get his friends to admit the answer to this rhetorical question; “Am I really so far out-of-line in responding to my calamity the way that I have?” is also an obvious, “No!”

Job’s illness has affected his appetite; food tastes flavorless and makes him feel nauseous [the meaning of the Hebrew word here is “sickness”].

**vv. 8-13 ➤ JOB WANTS GOD TO GET IT OVER WITH**

[8 “Oh, that I might have my request, That God would grant me the thing that I long for! 9 That it would please God to crush me, That He would loose His hand and cut me off! 10 Then I would still have comfort; Though in anguish I would exult, He will not spare; For I have not concealed the words of the Holy One. 11 What strength do I have, that I should hope? And what is my end, that I should prolong my life? 12 Is my strength the strength of stones? Or is my flesh bronze? 13 Is my help not within me? And is success [lit. “aid”, “help” or “deliverance”] driven from me?”]

Job harkens back to his prayerful request for release from all his pain, suffering and anguish through death. Job still desperately desires that God would grant him the one thing he now longs for—death! Job is basically complaining to God and telling Him, “God you are withholding from me the one thing I long for most at this time—death.”

From a purely human perspective Job had reason to think this way: First, he loses all of his livestock [7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 oxen and 500 female donkeys], which represented a substantial part of his wealth, along with a very large household of servants {**Job 1:3,13-17**}. Second, he loses his children [7 sons and 3 daughters] whom he deeply loved, cared for and protected {**Job 1:2,5,18**}. Last, but not least, Job loses his health to the extent that it becomes a kind of “living death” {**Job 2:7; 7:5**}.

The collateral damage is that because Job has been put “out of commission” he can no longer intercede for the widows and orphans in his community whom, through his power and status, he was able to keep from being destroyed {**Job 29:7-17**}; when he “*put on righteousness as clothing and justice was like a robe and turban*”; when he “*broke the fangs of the wicked and plucked the victim from his teeth*”.

Job is understandably in severe pain, distress and anguish, but he is also conflicted over his predicament because he knows God all too well. Isn’t that the case with us at times. Oftentimes we question God not because we don’t understand something but that we understand God’s character all too well.

At this point Job believes that if God; whom he has devoutly served and worshipped for so long, must somehow be pleased to allow him to go through this much raw suffering and undiluted agony. If that is the case, then Job concludes that it should also please God to *crush* him.

So Job prays that God would just “get it over with” and *crush him*, that He would *loose His hand* and *cut Job off*. The Hebrew meaning of the word “*crush*” here is to “*beat into pieces*” and “*loose*” is a word used to describe *setting prisoners free*.

Job desires that God would *loose his hand* [of restraint] and “*cut-off*” Job. The phrase “*cut-off*” is a euphemism and it means to destroy through death. If that were to happen, Job says it would bring him comfort because it would bring relief from his suffering.

Despite his anguish Job says he would also *exult* [lit. "leap for joy"] if God took his life.

Evidently Job considered himself "imprisoned" by his calamity. Perhaps you have felt that way, thinking that there's no way out of this situation. That your predicament is too big for God to handle or too small for Him to even consider. However, those are not God's thoughts towards His children, those who have put their trust in Him as Lord and Savior! Note:

For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us, you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many.—**2 Cor. 1:8-11**

And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.—**2 Cor. 12:7-10**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls.—**1 Peter 1:3-9**

Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord — that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.—**James 5:7-11**

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.—**James 1:2-8**

Read and compare what Job says in **Job 10:8-22**, which he admits is in direct conflict with his knowledge of God as his Creator. Job is essentially asking God to destroy something He created in His image.

But from a Heavenly perspective it makes no sense at all so God answers Job's prayer for death with a definitive, "No!" God does not take Job's life nor does He allow Satan to take it.

Therefore, note that “No” is just as much an answer as “Yes” is! Looking back over your life I hope you realize that when God gave you an answer of “No” to a specific prayer it was for your own benefit.

That the answer was “No” because God cares for you, loves you and protects you as a Good Shepherd does His Sheep. As the GOOD SHEPHERD {see **John 10:1-16**}, Who is “*willing to give His life for the sheep*”; the GREAT SHEPHERD {see **Heb. 13:20-21**}, Who shed His blood to “*make you complete in every good work to do His will*”; and the LAMB OF GOD who shepherds us, “*leading us to fountains of living waters*” {see **Rev. 7:17**}.

This is why believers need to be in submission to a Holy God:

“For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ‘Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth’<sup>4</sup>; Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. 25 For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”—**1 Pet. 2:21-25**

Job is obviously not thinking straight here and, understandably, is letting the physical pain and the mental frustration get the better of him.

#### **APPLICATION:**

Effective prayer is not haughty—it’s *humble*. Humble prayer is not in the form of a “directive” to God telling Him how He should do something. Nor is effective prayer presumptuous but it is *pure* with the understanding that God is the Creator and I am His “creation” and remembering that relationship. The prophet Isaiah reminds us:

“Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as His counselor has taught Him? With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding?”—**Isa. 40:13-14**

Because our Heavenly Father understands our frailties and limited understanding, His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, intercedes for us sitting at His right hand {**Rom. 8:34**}. Because our knowledge is imperfect and incomplete, the Holy Spirit prays for us with “*groanings that cannot be uttered*” {**Rom. 8:26**} to make our prayers conform with His will and bring comfort to our souls. Through these kinds of prayers our lives are therefore conformed to the image of Christ and we are brought into perfect harmony with God’s plans for us. See **Rom. 8:26-39**.

In asking God to take his life Job is in reality *presuming upon* God. Job is not considering what God is doing or wants to accomplish. Job’s desire and prayer is all about alleviating his suffering by any means possible—even if that means asking God to take his life! Job’s concern is mainly for himself—his prayer for death is a selfish one.

What is Job’s issue? **Job’s issue is that he hasn’t yet submitted to God with all his heart, soul and mind.** Why should Job have submitted to God? Because God’s power is great and His works are awesome! {**Psalms 66:3**}. And as Job reminds himself in **Job 9:10**: “*He does great things past finding out; Yes, wonders without number.*”

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<sup>4</sup> Quote from **Isaiah 53:9**.

Isn't this the way all believers are at times—we forget the character of God in the midst of our struggles, hardships, pain and suffering. That is why it is so important to study God's word and "*hide it in our hearts*" so that the Holy Spirit can bring to our remembrance not only God's sovereignty and power but also His grace, mercy and loving-kindness, which will sustain us through difficult times.

In the end, note that Job repents of his spiritual pride:

Then Job answered the LORD and said: "I know that You can do everything and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, 'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.' I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."—**Job 42:1-6**

Although Satan is not explicitly mentioned after **Job 2:7**; Job's pride would have played into Satan's hand, and in that sense Satan is still actively having his way with Job. Note what the apostle James tells us:

"But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble'<sup>5</sup>. Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."  
—**James 4:6-10**

What should have been the response of his friends? To understand this and show patience and compassion to Job; trusting that their God, our God, would eventually bring restoration back to Job. Here is what the apostle Paul reminds us of:

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 'For who has known the mind of the LORD?'<sup>6</sup> Or 'who has become His counselor?'<sup>7</sup> Or 'who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?'<sup>8</sup> For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen."  
—**Rom. 11:33-36**

[*For I have not concealed the words of the Holy One.*] Job has not tried to *conceal* [lit. "hidden away"; the intensive form means to "cut-off", "to destroy"] the words of the Holy God. In other words, Job is claiming that his expression of grief is consistent with the wisdom and truth of God's words. The implication being that what's he has said is valid. Contrasted with:

Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the LORD, and their works are in the dark; they say, "Who sees us?" and, "Who knows us?" Surely you have things turned around! Shall the potter be esteemed as the clay; For shall the thing made say of him who made it, "He did not make me"? Or shall the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?— **Isa. 29:15-16**

[*What is my strength, that I should hope? And what is my end, that I should prolong my life?*] Job is basically expressing the fact that he feels that he has come to "at the end of his rope". He's saying that he has limited strength *to wait* much longer and he just wants to die {**v.9**} and that would bring him the comfort he desires {**v.10**}. His hope cannot stretch that far.

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<sup>5</sup> Quote from **Prov. 3:34**.

<sup>6</sup> Refer also to **1 Cor. 2:13-16**.

<sup>7</sup> Refer to **Isa. 40:13** and **Jer. 23:18**.

<sup>8</sup> Refer to **Job 41:11**.

The idea in v.11 is that Job is debating in his mind whether or not he should continue to patiently wait upon the LORD for a solution to his calamity. Job appears to have come to the conclusion that his illness is terminal and he wonders how long he has to live.

From that perspective he may not have long to so why should he try going on living—*“prolong his life”*?

Have you ever felt this way? Have you ever felt like there is no reason or purpose for continuing to struggle? To just have the pain and sorrow removed? Has your physical and or emotional pain become so great that there just doesn't seem to be “an end in sight”? That you are so overwhelmed you God's word gives us the answer to these questions:

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No testing has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tested beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.—**1 Cor. 10:12-13**

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.—**Rom. 8:28-30**

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons<sup>9</sup>: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.—**Heb. 12:1-13**

Christ Jesus is the ultimate example to follow:

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Do all

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<sup>9</sup> **Prov. 3:11-12.**



things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.—**Phil. 2:5-16**

As great a man of faith and righteousness as Job was, he is now coming to the realization that his situation may be beyond the limits of his physical, emotional and spiritual endurance to bear it. Job's pride is slowly, but steadily, being chipped away.

Job now uses two metaphors to explain his desperate situation to his friends, one uses stones the other brass. He tells his friends that he does not have the strength to endure the accumulated disasters that befell him when they lack compassion and understanding for his crisis.

In the first metaphor Job asks his friends if they think his strength should be like that of stones, which are very prevalent in that region to this day. Stones were used to build walls and fortifications that could withstand the assaults of foreign invaders. Additionally, stones are able to endure the onslaughts of wind and floods. But in contrast to stones, man is made of flesh that is easily damaged and "broken".

The implication is how do you expect Job fair under the assault of his troubles?

In the second metaphor Job asks his friends if they think his flesh is made of brass. Brass is a metal alloy made from copper and zinc and produces a fairly strong material that was used to make both musical instruments and instruments of war as well as furniture, household and Temple vessels.

The Hebrew grammar in **v.13** should be rendered, "*Is it not that my help is not within me.....*"; in other words Job is really saying, "Alas, there is no help in me!" Job is saying that since he has no strength within him, he must give up under the weight of his despair.

Jesus said, "*You shall know the Truth and the Truth shall set you free*" {**John 8:32**}. The Truth of God's word will *deliver* a person from sin and deception.

The wisdom of Truth has a way of delivering a person from folly and even death. Job is saying that any wisdom or knowledge that could have delivered him from his anguish and despair has been driven from him. Job is saying that the understanding that would have delivered him is nowhere to be found.

#### **vv. 14-21** ➤ **JOB'S DISAPPOINTMENT IN HIS FRIENDS' LACK OF COMPASSION**

[14 "*To him who is afflicted, kindness should be shown by his friend, Even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty. 15 My brothers have dealt deceitfully like a brook, Like the streams of the brooks that pass away, 16 Which are dark because of the ice, And into which the snow vanishes. 17 When it is warm, they cease to flow; When it is hot, they vanish from their place. 18 The paths of their way turn aside, They go nowhere and perish. 19 The caravans of Tema look, the travelers of Sheba hope for them. 20 They are disappointed because they were confident; They come there and are confused. 21 For now you are nothing, You see terror and are afraid.*"]

Job prefaces his following remarks by saying that true friends will show kindness to another friend who is *afflicted*—even if he *forsakes* the fear of the *Almighty* [*Shaddai* who is God].

The Hebrew word translated “*afflicted*” is used only here in the Old Testament and comes from a primitive root word that literally means to “liquefy”. The Hebrew word translated “*forsakes*” literally means “to loosen”; that is *to leave* or *relinquish*.

Thus, Job is referring to the fact that his resolve, his desire to go on, has turned to jelly inside him—his heart is faint from the severe physical suffering and the mental exhaustion of his grief. And in this state utter discouragement and disillusionment it appears that he is leaving God behind.

[*Like the streams of the brooks that pass away*] Job really thought he could count on his friends to be much more supportive and reassuring. He expected them to offer comfort and consolation, but instead they were deceptive—like “*the streams of the brooks that pass away*”. Using this striking metaphor, Job now describes his disappointment and surprise in his friends’ lack of compassion and encouragement.

But, unless you have lived for some time in that region of the world you cannot fully understand and appreciate the beauty of the metaphorical poetry here. Here is a Biblical example of having to do a little “homework” related to the geographic regions; the deserts of the Middle East and Arabia, that Job lived in<sup>10</sup>.

Job is using a very interesting illustration which is common in the Middle East, that of a stream or brook that deceptively gives the appearance that it can be depended upon for refreshment<sup>11</sup> but when you really need it—it’s not there! Just like weary and thirsty travelers looking expectantly for water and are then sadly disappointed when they come to the place of the stream only to find it dried up.

[*Which are dark because of the ice*] Job is alluding to valley streams that in the spring and summer are filled by torrents of water from thawing ice from the mountains. These waters become murky, literally “ashen color”, because they are mixed with mud from the erosion of sediments as the ice melts.

[*And into which the snow vanishes*] Job poetically describes the snow as *vanishing* and *disappearing* [lit. “hidden”] when it melts into water to form torrents of streams and rivers.

Job describes the progression of “vanishing water” further. At the *appointed time*, when it gets warm the water begins to evaporate, and when the water is exposed to the intense heat of the sun it either dries up or gets absorbed by the desert sand and is completely *consumed* and *vanishes* [lit. “extinguished”] and provide no water for weary travelers. Such *seasonal* streams are common in the Middle East where they are referred to as a “dry wash” or a “wadi”.

[*Their pathways turn aside, they go nowhere and perish*] The streambed may also meander [lit. “to bend”] and move to an unknown location [“*nowhere*”] only to “*perish*” [lit. “to wander away”]. These streams wander along until they become smaller and smaller, and then wholly disappear and thus deceive the thirsty traveler who hoped to find refreshment there.

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<sup>10</sup> Other examples of understanding scripture better include knowing the historical, cultural or environmental background of the passage of scripture one is studying.

<sup>11</sup> A man who deceives and disappoints is compared to such a stream in many Middle Eastern proverbs. In describing a treacherous friend they might say, “I put no trust in his torrent;” and, “O torrent, your flowing subsides.” Similarly, they say of a man known for speaking falsehoods that he “is more deceitful than the appearance of water”; a reference to the deceitful appearance of the mirage above the hot sands of the desert.

The Hebrew word translated “*nothing*” or “*nowhere*” [i.e., where the waters go] in **v.18** is [“*tohuw*”] and it means “to lie waste” or “a desolation”. It is the same word used to describe the *initial* state of creation<sup>12</sup> in **Gen. 1:2** [“without form” and “void or empty”] before God began organizing the *raw* material He created into useful forms:

“The earth was without form and void and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”

Here the word is used to describe the desert sand and appropriately describes the “nothingness” into which a stream vanishes when it is dried up or absorbed by and lost in the sand.

What often times happens is that travelers in a caravan would approach the streambed where they expected to find water [since it had been there before] but would find the stream dried up, or the stream lost in the sand and *nowhere* to be found. So when they looked for refreshment to satisfy their thirst, they found only dryness and disappointment.

Even the waters from large streams can be absorbed this way. For example, the *Barada River*, the main river which waters Damascus and the surrounding areas, after passing a short distance to the southeast of the city toward the Arabian desert, is evaporated by the heat of the sun and lost to the sand<sup>13</sup>. Streams that depend on thawing ice and melting snow have *no permanent source* like a spring or fountain so they are seasonal.

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<sup>12</sup> There are some who would argue that the use of this word indicates God’s had a prior creation of earth that was destroyed, presumably by Satan, and became this way [i.e., “without form and void”]. They do so because they want to fit **Genesis 1:1-2** within the evolutionary framework that the earth is billions of years old. This idea puts forth the theory that the earth was initially created with form but became *formless* and *void* as a result of Satanic destruction and then it was *recreated* or *restored* by God. The time between these “creations” is not specified in scripture so a time period of billions of years based on evolutionary theory is assigned. The major objections to this theory are (1) Satan [who is a created angelic being] would not have enough power to destroy the entire earth so thoroughly, (2) God has infinitely more power than Satan and would have been able to stop him from destroying His creation, (2) God would not need to “wait” billions of years to restore the earth [why not a million or even a thousand years], and (3) this word is used in many other places [especially Isaiah] in scripture where it is translated variously as “wasteland”, “futile”, “pathless waste”, “empty”, “chaos”, “worthless” and “useless” has nothing to do with a *previous* state or condition. The word describes an *existing* condition. Note that this theory is distinct from the Gap Theory which arbitrarily assigns billions of years between **v.1** and **v.2** of **Genesis 1**, again to *compromise* God’s word with evolutionary theory. The days in Genesis 1 are literal 24 hour days [Heb. “yom” with an ordinal number] and the genealogies in Genesis match those of Matthew and Luke making human civilization about 6000 years old with the flood occurring about 2400 BC. The usage of this word in **Job 6:18** means that the waters don’t become formless but simply disappear to an *existing* place where they cannot be found. The true meaning of the usage of this word in **Gen. 1:2** is that God first recreated the raw materials from which he made the earth and everything in it. Prior to being organized into useful forms and processes, as described by the DAYS OF CREATION, the materials of earth would have appeared *lifeless* and *desolate* to a human observer. A simple analogy would be the contrast between sand, cement and water [“formless”] versus the finished building made/organized from those materials [“with form”].

<sup>13</sup> The Scottish missionary to South Africa, John Campbell (1766-1840), describes another such case in his book *Travels in South Africa: Undertaken at the Request of the Missionary Society*. Campbell writes, “In desert parts of Africa it has afforded much joy to fall in with a brook of water, especially when running in the direction of the journey, expecting it would prove a valuable companion. Perhaps before it accompanied us two miles it became invisible by sinking into the sand; but two miles farther along it would reappear and raise hopes of its continuance; but after running a few hundred yards, would sink finally into the sand, no more again to rise.”

Job then gives two specific examples of this. The first is “*The caravans of Tema*<sup>14</sup>”, which confidently looked for the streams of water to satisfy their thirst and those of their animals but could not find them. Tema is modern-day Tayma in north-western Saudi Arabia, midway between Damascus and Mecca. Tema was centrally located on the lucrative Arabian caravan trade routes and it had an oasis. Note that Eliphaz was from Tema [**Job 2:11; 4:1** mentions he was a “Temanite”], which makes Job mentioning this very poignant. Perhaps Eliphaz had encountered this problem and understood what Job was saying only too personally!

The second example is that “*The travelers of Sheba waited for them*” or literally, “*the travelers of Sheba wanted to be bound in them*” [i.e., strengthened by the refreshing waters]. Sheba refers to the land in south-western Saudi Arabia known as Yemen and is where the Queen of Sheba was from {**1 Kings 10:1-13**}. The land of Sheba was known for its gold and frankincense {**Isa. 60:6; Jer. 6:20**} and its merchant trade {**Ez. 27:22-23; 38:13**}. Job’s friends knew exactly what he was referring to in **vv.14-18**; since caravans from Tema and Sheba were common in that day.

both the caravans from Tema and Sheba were *disappointed* [lit. “confounded”] because they had looked for water confidently [lit. “to hide for refuge”] and then were confused [lit. “ashamed”] because they had *expectantly* looked for water and then were *dismayed* only to find they had failed to find any.

There are few metaphors more poetic than this, and they dramatically express the disappointment and shame that Job feels in having trusted his friend to provide consolation.

Job is describing his friends as “fair-weather” friends! Therefore, just like the seasonal streams, such friends cannot be confided in or counted on. Note what Job says in **v.27**: “.....*you undermine your friend.*” Job is looking to his friends for assistance, like the weary and thirsty traveler in the desert but he feels like he’s been deserted; just like the deceitful streams in the hot and dry desert that cannot be found when they are needed most.

So is with the disappointment of “comforters” in our lives, who do not live up to expectations, who are really no comforters at all {see **Job 16:2**}. Their help is transitory and evaporates in the time of real need. Their “true colors” can sometimes lead to disappointment and frustration and a feeling of *embarrassment* and *shame* because their friendship is inconsistent cannot be depended upon in difficult times.

This is how Job is metaphorically describing his friends. They had probably traveled some distance to be with Job and just like streams swollen by melted snow and ice, they promised to be a real comfort by their coming.

But when Job looked for that *refreshment*, that *comfort*, some relief from his despair and agony, all he got was unsatisfying dryness, “dust & sand”. Now it seems his friends were going to offer him nothing.

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<sup>14</sup> Recent archaeological discoveries show that Tema/Tayma has been inhabited since shortly after the flood. In 539 BC, Nebuchadnezzar’s son, Nabonidus [ruled 556—539 BC], retired to Tema for worship and looking for prophecies, entrusting the kingship of Babylon to his son, Belshazzar [Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson], which is why the prophet Daniel was made third in the kingdom {**Dan. 5:7, 16, 29**}. That was the same year that Babylon was conquered by the Persians under the command of Darius the Mede and King Cyrus the Persian. Cuneiform inscriptions, possibly dating from the time of Daniel, have been recovered from Tema. It is mentioned two other times in the Old Testament {**Isa. 21:14** and **Jer. 25:23**}.

[*For now you are nothing*] or [*Indeed, you have now become such*] Job is basically saying, “You’ve become like the dried up streams in my metaphor”; “Now you are good for nothing—you can’t help me.”

[*You see terror and are afraid*] Job then alludes to the fact that when his friends actually got a good look at him, heard the *extreme* desperation of his words [wishing he had died at childbirth, been still-born] their courage failed. The Hebrew word translated “terror” here literally refers to “dismay” caused literally by a violent breakdown or figuratively by confusion and fear.

When Job’s friends finally saw the extreme despair and desperation in Job’s affliction, how cast down he was. When they saw this [*“terror”*] Job’s friends realized they really couldn’t help him. This problem was beyond them and now Job is saying they are terrified.

True friends are not terrified over someone else’s tragedies but rather sympathize with them. They overcome their fear about what to do with God’s faithfulness, strength, love and grace and seek real ways to help friends.

#### **vv. 22-23 ➤ JOB PROTESTS: HE’S NEVER EXPLOITED OTHER PEOPLE FOR HELP**

[22 “*Did I ever say, ‘Bring something to me’? Or, ‘Offer a bribe for me from your wealth’? 23 Or, ‘Deliver me from the enemy’s hand’? Or, ‘Redeem me from the hand of oppressors’?”]*

Job rhetorically asks four questions meant to reinforce the fact that he has never asked to be a burden on anyone. They are intended to be answered, “No!”

Job indicates that he has never asked anyone to bring him an offering, or asked for a bribe, or asked to be delivered from the enemy’s or rescue him from the hand of those who had oppressed him.

The point that Job is making is that he has never exploited, taking advantage of or manipulated other people for his own benefit; and he doesn’t intend to start now. So his friends should be relieved.

#### **vv. 24-30 ➤ JOB MAINTAINS HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS & CHALLENGES ELIPHAZ’ ACCUSATIONS**

[24 “*Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; Cause me to understand wherein I have erred. 25 How forceful are right words! But what does your arguing prove? 26 Do you intend to rebuke my words, And the speeches of a desperate one, which are as wind? 27 Yes, you overwhelm the fatherless, And you undermine your friend. 28 Now therefore, be pleased to look at me; For I would never lie to your face. 29 Yield now, let there be no injustice! Yes, concede, my righteousness still stands! 30 Is there injustice on my tongue? Cannot my taste [lit. “palate”] discern the unsavory?”]*

Job is telling his friends, “Hey, look; I’m willing for you to really teach me what’s going on and if you do, I’ll shut up”. Having voiced his utter disappointment in the ability of his friends to help him, now Job pleads for one of his friends to tell him where he went wrong and admits that the right words, that is *words of truth*, are *forceful*.

Jesus said, “*You shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free*” {**Jn. 8:32**}.

Job is echoing the words previously spoken by Eliphaz that before God “*injustice shuts her mouth*” {**Job 5:16**}. And justice and injustice are relative to God’s standards—not man’s! Paul puts it this way in his letter to the Roman Christians:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

—**Rom. 3:19-20**

Truth is not like the wind, its not light and airy, it’s not fluff or pabulum—it “*carries weight*” and it’s *powerful*. Jesus said of Himself that He is the “*Way, the Truth and the Life*”—*no one comes to the Father except through Him*”. Jesus is the “Going”, the “Knowing” and the “Growing” of life! Note:

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”—**Heb. 4:12-13**

By contrast, Job is somewhat incredulous that Eliphaz’ intent was to rebuke the words of a man who is not necessarily thinking straight, a man who is deep in despair [“*the speeches of a desperate one*”]. Job refers to his own words as so much *wind*, that is, “*hot air*”.

Therefore, Job chides Eliphaz by asking him, “*But what does your arguing prove?*” implying that the arguments of Eliphaz’ counsel to a man who’s words are like “*wind*” have proven nothing [i.e., they have not helped resolve Job’s understanding of his suffering nor validated Eliphaz’ counsel].

It is interesting to note that the Biblical word for “spirit” is “wind”. And Job’s wind, his spirit, is desperately hurting. He cannot understand why all this has happened to him.

Job charges Eliphaz with *overwhelming*<sup>15</sup> [lit. “cast/knock down”] one who is orphaned, who is *fatherless* [implying that was Job’s state] and *undermining* [lit. “to dig” (a pit) ] a friend. The latter is a serious charge and the Bible is full of negative examples of a person who digs a pit for someone to fall into {see e.g., **Ps. 7:15; 57:6; 94:13; 119:85; Prov. 26:27; Jer. 18:19-20**}. For example:

“They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down; they have dug a pit before me; into the midst of it they themselves have fallen.”—**Ps. 57:6**

“The proud have dug pits for me, which is not according to Your law.”—**Ps. 119:85**

“Whoever digs a pit will fall into it and he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him.”

—**Prov. 26:27**

Job then proceeds to vindicate himself. He effectively says, “Please look at me (really take a good look)—am I really overreacting? Am I making up things about my situation that aren’t true—am I really lying?” The answer is of course “No”; Job would never lie to someone’s face.

Job tells his friends to “back-off”, yield to his plight, to put themselves into his shoes and be fair—“*let there be no injustice!*”. The modern expression of this is: “Don’t judge someone unless you’ve walked a mile in their shoes.” Job is giving his friends some good advice here.

Job is saying, “I haven’t been lying about my situation.” He’s asking his friends to make an honest and fair judgment of his circumstances; not accusations which are unjust and false.

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<sup>15</sup> Some translations use the phrase, “cast lots for the orphans”.

Job maintains that he’s “innocent” so that Eliphaz’ charge against him in **Job 4:7** [“Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off?”] has no merit. Therefore, Job requests that there be no injustice [lit. “wickedness”] and that Eliphaz concedes [or yields] that his “righteousness still stands.”

To drive his point home, Job asks another rhetorical question; “*Is there injustice* [lit. “wickedness”] *on my tongue?*”, which begs for the answer, “No.” He was not speaking wickedly.

Job concludes his remarks by telling his friends that “*Cannot my taste* [lit. “palate”] *discern the unsavory* [lit. “perverse”] ?” In other words, don’t try and “pull the wool over my eyes”, Job was able to discern between that which is unrighteous and that which righteous.

At this point it might be useful to review the *themes* that are repeated in Job’s responses to his three friends. Table 6-1 summarizes these themes as they occur throughout the book of Job.

**Table 6-1. The Major Themes Repeated in Job’s Responses**

First Round of Speeches						
Theme	1 <sup>st</sup> Speech	Bildad’s Response 8:1-22	2 <sup>nd</sup> Speech	Zophar’s Response 11:1-20	3 <sup>rd</sup> Speech	Eliphaz’ Response 15:1-35
<i>Disappointment in his friends</i>	6:14-30		—		12:1-3; 13:1-12	
<i>Declaration of God’s greatness</i>	—		9:1-12		12:7-25	
<i>Disillusionment with God’s ways</i>	7:11-19		9:13-10:17		12:4-6	
<i>Despair with life (or desire to die)</i>	6:8-13; 7:1-10		10:18-22		14:1-22	
<i>Desire for vindication with God</i>	7:20-21		—		13:13-19	
Second Round of Speeches						
Theme	1 <sup>st</sup> Speech	Bildad’s Response 18:1-21	2 <sup>nd</sup> Speech	Zophar’s Response 20:1-29	3 <sup>rd</sup> Speech	Eliphaz’ Response 22:1-30
<i>Disappointment in his friends</i>	16:1-5; 17:3-5		19:1-4		21:1-6	
<i>Declaration of God’s greatness</i>	—		19:28-29		21:19-22	
<i>Disillusionment with God’s ways</i>	16:6-17		19:5-22		21:7-18, 23-24	
<i>Despair with life (or desire to die)</i>	17:6-16		—		—	
<i>Desire for vindication with God</i>	16:18-17:2		19:23-27		—	
Third Round of Speeches						
Theme	1 <sup>st</sup> Speech	Bildad’s Response 25:1-6	2 <sup>nd</sup> Speech	Elihu Speaks Chapters 32—37	The LORD Speaks Chapters 38—41	
<i>Disappointment in his friends</i>	—		26:1-4			
<i>Declaration of God’s greatness</i>	23:8-17		26:5-27; 28:1-28			
<i>Disillusionment with God’s ways</i>	24:1-17		—			
<i>Despair with life (or desire to die)</i>	—		29:1-30:31			
<i>Desire for vindication with God</i>	23:1-7		31:1-40			

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