

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: JOB

JOB

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

JOB CHAPTER 1

Job 1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz- Job was real, indeed "there was a man...", as confirmed by Ezekiel and James. But there are parts of the story which appear crafted, e.g. the way Job loses his children but then has new children to replace them and apparently the loss is thus easily compensated; and the way after each loss, one person survives and comes to tell him. As holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel observed, "Tragedies do not cancel each other out as they succeed one another". It is not fiction, but it is a poem [men don't talk amongst themselves in poetry] and story only based on fact; it could be called 'faction'. Later scripture assumes that Job was a real historical person (Ez. 14:14; James 5:11), although the entire book is poetry, and clearly isn't to be taken as real time recording of words spoken. It is a drama, concluding with a thunderstorm approaching and the revelation of God Himself. "The whole is divided into three parts—the prologue, poem proper, and epilogue. The poem, into three—(1) The dispute of Job and his three friends; (2) The address of Elihu; (3) The address of God. There are three series in the controversy, and in the same order. The epilogue also is threefold; Job's justification, reconciliation with his friends, restoration".

As will be noted further on this chapter, it would seem he lived in patriarchal times. This would explain why there is no reference to the exodus from Egypt, which is to be found in nearly all subsequent scripture apart from Job. Uz appears to be the relative of Abraham of Gen. 22:21. But much of scripture was rewritten under inspiration at the time of the restoration and also in Hezekiah's time. This explains why ancient Hebrew terms are used along with later Hebrew, with copious connections to the restoration prophecies of later Isaiah. And as noted on :7, there is allusion to Persian concepts too- appropriate if the book was reapplied to the Jews in Persia. Judah and Israel in captivity were struggling with the questions raised in the drama of Job; Job and his children become representative of God's people. His children suffered because of their sins. Job as the righteous remnant also suffered, but was restored. This speaks of the restoration from exile possible for Judah and Israel. They for the most part refused it. But the key was for the faithful remnant to appreciate that they too had sinned, as Job did, even though they were pleasing to God. All was under God's control; the book deconstructs the popular views of evil, a satan being, and suffering being a direct consequence of personal sin. This was required for the exiles. We note that Job is not presented as a Jew, but one of the surrounding peoples related to Abraham. The hero is not strongly Jewish and is presented without genealogy; and that was a lesson for the exiles too, for the prophetic intention was that Jews and Gentiles would repent and form a multiethnic people of God in the restored Kingdom. As we learn from Ezra and Nehemiah, the Jews sought to redefine "Israel" as only those who could prove their genealogy and were strictly from the tribe of Judah. This created the 'Samaritans'; but the book of Job has a hero who was vaguely connected with the seed of Abraham, who didn't live in Canaan nor worship at the Jerusalem temple, but was set up as the representative of the exiles. The name of Yahweh is likewise barely mentioned until Yahweh is revealed at the very end of the book. They had effectively forgotten His Name in exile, in real spiritual terms; but through their sufferings and repentance, His Name would be revealed to them at the end. One etymology of "Job" is 'the returning one', setting him up as representative of the exiles. And the Hebrew idea of 'returning' is 'repenting'. His repentance was and is his lead characteristic. The language of Job's restoration is that Yahweh 'turned his captivity' when he turned in repentance-language clearly connectible to the exiles.

Whose name was Job- He appears to be the "Jobab" of 1 Chron. 5, indeed the LXX states he is this person. "Job" may come from an Arabic word meaning 'repentance'; and that really is the appeal of the book, for the repentance of God's people, especially the exiles, so that God's saving purpose might be brought forward. The problem of suffering is secondary to this theme of the book.

That man was blameless- God's opinion of Job was that he was "blameless". But as the drama progresses, Bildad argues that if Job were in fact "blameless" then God would not cast him away (Job 8:20 s.w.). Job absorbs this reasoning, and confesses that he is not "blameless" (Job 9:20,21 s.w.), and yet he is driven to the conclusion that the "blameless" and sinner are "destroyed together" by God (Job 9:22 s.w.). It's quite possible that in depression and periods of suffering, we can come to have a lower view of ourselves than that which God has of us; just as at other times we can have a higher view of ourselves spiritually than we ought to. There is true guilt, the guilt which we should take, and false guilt. And Job seems to have picked up the false guilt thrown upon him by Bildad. We too need to learn this difference between false and true guilt.

And upright- God's opinion of Job was that he was "upright". But as the drama progresses, the friends argue that if Job were in fact "upright" then God would not be afflicting him (Job 4:7; 8:6 s.w.). Job absorbs this reasoning, and confesses that he is not "upright" and therefore cannot find God (Job 23:7,8 s.w.). As discussed above, he absorbs false guilt and becomes influenced by the guilt placed upon him by his religion and "friends" amongst the "sons of God".

And one who feared God- A true son of Abraham and Joseph (s.w. Gen. 22:12; 42:18). It seems Job lived in the patriarchal age. The phrase is also used about the righteous remnant amongst the captives in Babylon / Persia, for whom this book was apparently rewritten to comfort them (Is. 50:10).

And turned away from the evil- Job begins the book by being described as a man who shunned [the Hebrew word is also translated "to be without" and "to reject"] *ra*, "evil". Michel understands *ra* here to refer to 'the evil *one*', the Canaanite god of evil, whom Job disbelieved and rejected (W.L. Michel, *Job in the Light of Northwest Semitic* (Rome: Bible Institute Press, 1987) Vol. 1 p. 29). One of the many themes in Job is the deconstruction of the 'satan' myths of the time, many of which are alive and well today. See on Job 3:8. Job was aware that he had indeed "turned away from evil" and feared God; it was those things, rather than the traditional wisdom of the friends, which he came to see was the true "understanding" (Job 28:28 s.w.). The phrase is also used about the righteous remnant amongst the captives in Babylon / Persia, for whom this book was apparently rewritten to comfort them (Is. 59:15). See on Ps. 34:14.

The book starts with Job being presented as of perfect integrity in God's eyes. God and Elihu will however criticize him for being a terrible sinner; and then the book ends with Job again of perfect integrity before God. Working this through, the Divine criticisms of Job are therefore of his responses to the false accusations of the friends. The friends will accuse Job of having sinned prior to his disasters; and God will confirm those accusations are false. We are left with the conclusion that the sins God condemns in Job are therefore committed by him after the disasters and before his final repentance. They occur during the dialogues with the friends. God's wrath with him was therefore 'only' because of his words and attitudes, expressed as he sat there scratching and scraping himself. Although Job does later reference 'sins of my youth', it's quite possible that God viewed this man as absolutely perfect at the point of the prologue. As perfect as His later Son. But Job messed up. That's how important are words and attitudes in God's book. Job's repentance in dust and ashes at the end is because he covers his hand with his mouth and admits he has spoken wrongly- during the dialogues. By the end of the dialogues with the friends, in Job 27, Job swears that he will never admit any of the accusations against him are true, and he goes on to basically say that he has not only been innocent in the past, but he will never be anything but innocent. This is the problem with false accusation. We may know that to be false, but that doesn't mean we never sinned or never will sin. We can be led to the very self righteousness of Job which God and Elihu will later rightly condemn. When challenged on this by Elihu, he is silent. When the same challenges are made by God, he repents in dust and ashes.

Job 1:2 There were born to him seven sons and three daughters- Having ten children may invite us to connect Job with the ten tribe kingdom of Israel; their sufferings in captivity, along with those of Judah, elicited the kinds of questions discussed in the book of Job. We note that Israelites from the ten tribe kingdom were excluded from Nehemiah's redefinition of "Israel" as being solely Judahites. But the hero of the story

is Job, who was clearly not from Judah but loosely associated with Abraham, just as much as Horonites and Ammonites were, whom Nehemiah excluded.

Job 1:3 His possessions also were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys and a very great household-

Connecting with :2, perhaps we are to assume that the boys had 1000 sheep each, and the girls had 1000 camels each. The lack of reference to horses would indicate that Job lived in patriarchal times, before horses were introduced to the Middle East from Asia. The huge number of camels suggests he lived near the desert, which corroborates with the reference to marauding Arab bands (:15) and a desert wind coming upon the tents (:19). This kind of internal harmony within the Biblical record is to me the greatest evidence of its veracity.

So that this man was the greatest of all the children of the east-

Job was the “greatest of all the men of the east” (Job 1:3), the Hebrew implying the eldest, the most senior. The friends were older than Job, and take pleasure in reminding him of the wisdom of the ‘elders’. He had risen above his place, got too great too quick, and therefore they were intent on proving to him that actually he was not so great, he had sinned, and they by their supposed wisdom and understanding were really greater than him. And they bent their theology, their guesswork as to his possible sins, to that subconscious end- of justifying themselves and pulling Job down beneath them by their interpretations of his misfortunes. What this indicates is that during their period of ‘friendship’ previously, they had nursed unconscious feelings of jealousy against him. The lesson for us is to re-examine our friendships, our loyalties, to see if they carry the same feature; a desire to ‘be in with’ the popular and the successful, to catch some reflected glory. The conversion of Job led him to understand the fickleness of his friends, and to pray for them in it.

Job was the wealthiest man of his time- but at the end, God makes him even twice as wealthy, giving him "twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10). This is unimaginable wealth. And so the story returns to the question of whether Divine blessing is indeed associated with piety. From the end of the story, it would certainly seem so. Job was the wealthiest in the earth / land, but spiritually there was also none like him in the land (:8). And yet that connection between faith and blessing is not as simple as the satan imagined; it is nuanced, by the whole story of Job in between chapters 1 and 42. Massive wealth is usually vested in a company or at best a family. But the book of Job presents Job's amazing wealth as being personal to himself alone. The idea clearly is that in his time, or for him personally, Divine blessing was indeed related to his blessing of God. We see this likewise in the lives of those broadly contemporary with him, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In our days, "blessing" has been redefined and reapplied to a more spiritual definition. But the same correlation essentially holds true.

Job 1:4 His sons went and held a feast in the house of each one on his birthday; and they sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them- Seven times a year they had these feasts "on their day" (Heb.), i.e. their birthday (Job 3:1). They each had their own houses, admittedly on the edge of the desert (:19) and were not tent dwellers.

Job 1:5 It was so, when the days of their feasting had come to an end, that Job sent and sanctified them- Each child had a birthday at some point in the year, and when the last birthday in the year had been celebrated, Job did some kind of sanctification

ceremony, hoping to get forgiveness for the sins of their wild parties throughout the year. Perhaps the idea is that he sent for them and sanctified them.

And rose up early in the morning- The characteristic of Abraham; Job is presented as Abraham's seed.

And offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all- There were 10 children, and he offered seven times / year (:4), meaning he offered 70 sacrifices / year for them all. He is presented as carefully and generously obedient to Divine principles of sacrifice, although all those sacrifices didn't save his children from a judgment which (we can infer) they deserved. We see developing the picture of God's people being judged by their neighbours for their sins, despite their receipt of great blessing from God and the existence of a righteous remnant amongst them, represented by Job. For Judah went into captivity because of their feasting (Is. 5:12 s.w.).

For Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and renounced God in their hearts- The same phrase used by his wife when she urged Job to renounce God (Job 2:9). It would seem that the family had indeed done this. The sons or children (s.w.) of Israel did indeed sin and therefore went into exile (s.w. Is. 1:4).

Job did so continually- "Continually" is Heb. 'all the days', i.e. the birthdays of the sons (:4 cp. Job 3:1). There is good reason, linguistically and theologically, to think that the events of Job occurred early in spiritual history (compare the mentions of "Jobab" and some of the friends in 1 Chron. 5). There are also many links with the early chapters of Genesis. We should therefore see Satan's description of himself as being in the context of Gen. 4:12-14, where Cain is made a wanderer in the earth because of his bitter jealousy against his righteous brother. So the Satan may have been another believer who was in some sense 'out of fellowship', represented by an Angel before the court of heaven, who still came to the gatherings of the believers to express his envy of Job. The reference to the sons of God coming together in worship before a priest or altar comes straight after the record of Job's children holding rather riotous birthday parties (1:4). "All the days", each day they did this, Job offered sacrifice for them; but then "there was a day" when the sons of God came to keep a feast to Yahweh. It seems that we are led to connect the keeping of days. It could be that the sons of God were in fact Job's children. They came together to party and kill their fatted calves, and then they came together to kill their sacrifices; like Corinth, they mixed the table of the Lord with the table of their own pleasure.

LXX adds "offered sacrifices for them, according to their number, and one calf for a sin-offering for their souls", as if they really had sinned.

Sanctified them- Job prayed God would forgive his children in case they sinned. The friends mocked this in Job 5:4; 8:4; 17:5 and 20:10, saying that the children of the foolish die for their *own* sins, whereas, by implication, Job had figured that *his* prayers and sacrifices could gain *them* forgiveness. Yet in the end, Yahweh stated that Job had understood Him and His principles right, whereas the friends hadn't. We wonder why we have this part of Job's life recorded at this point. Quite possibly it is presented as a cameo of what a truly righteous man is like- desperately concerned for the spiritual state of his family, worrying for them and seeking to get them right with God. That is hugely significant to God, and the epitome of Godliness. The story concludes with Job praying for his friends and also getting them forgiveness (Job 42:7-9). Intercession for others is again seen as the essence of an acceptable life before God. The Satan says that Job will curse God if his wealth is removed, so he

sees Job's concern about his children cursing God as being motivated by a desire to retain Divine blessings.

But it must be observed that his sacrifices for them didn't seem to work- because fire and whirlwind from Heaven is always Divine judgment. And it is impossible not to see the similarity with Aaron, a later priest- who offered sacrifices for his errant sons (Lev. 8-10), and then they were destroyed by fire from God (Lev. 9:22-10:3).

Job 1:6 Now it happened on the day when the sons of God- “Sons of God” can refer to God's people (Rom. 8:14; 2 Cor. 6:17-18; 1 Jn. 3:7). Angels do not bring false accusations against believers “before the Lord” (2 Pet. 2:11). It cannot be conclusively proved that Satan was a son of God - he “came among them”. The “sons of God”- the believers at that time- presented themselves before a priest or angel, perhaps at a religious feast. Someone there, maybe one of the worshippers, reflected that it was not surprising that Job was such a strong believer, seeing that God had so richly blessed him. God gave that person the power to afflict Job, to demonstrate that Job's love of God was not proportionate to the blessings God had given him. Maybe the Satan was composed of Job's three “friends” - they are rebuked at the end of the book (notice that “satan” is not rebuked by name). They were these "sons of God" who heard the reasoning of the satan, and they take over from the satan after he disappears from the story at the end of Job 2. The satan morphs into the friends. Their discussions with Job indicate that they had their doubts as to his integrity and suspected that his faith was now weak because God had taken away the blessings from him - “But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest: it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled... who ever perished (which it looked as though Job was going to), being innocent?” Eliphaz pointed out (Job 4:5 ,7).

Came to present themselves before Yahweh- "Before Yahweh" doesn't mean 'in Heaven'; the phrase is often used about appearing before Yahweh's representatives such as priests or Angels. The angel which led Israel through the wilderness was called “the Lord” because it carried God's name (Ex. 23:20,21), but it was not God himself in person (Ex. 33:20 cp. :12). Similarly, priests represent God (2 Chron. 19:6) and to come before them was to come “before the Lord” (Dt. 19:17). Cain “went out from the presence of the Lord” (Gen. 4:16) - not out of heaven but probably away from the presence of the angel - cherubim. Jesus was presented as a baby “before the Lord” (Lk. 2:22)- i.e. before the priest. How can Satan be in heaven and also on the earth in Job's time when, according to popular belief, he was thrown out at the time of Adam, or in 1914, according to the “Watchtower”? There cannot be sin or rebellion against God in heaven (Ps. 5:4,5; Hab. 1:13; Mt. 6:10; Ps. 103:19-21).

That Satan also came among them- Even if the “satan” (adversary) to Job was an angel, there is no reason to think it was sinful. An angel asked Abraham to offer Isaac to find out exactly how obedient Abraham would be, hence he said, “Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me” (Gen. 22:12). Similarly the angel which guided Israel out of Egypt, “led thee these forty years in the wilderness to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no” (Dt. 8:2). God himself knows all things, but the angels bring problems into the lives of their charges in order to see how they will respond. It may be possible to understand Job's satan like this. Remember that an evidently righteous angel was called a “satan” in Num. 22:22. Much has been made of the fact that in Job 1 and in Zech. 3:1,2 we read of *ha satan*, the adversary. In Hebrew as in English, the definite article is significant. If I

refer to myself as a personal, specific individual / being, I say "Duncan". To speak of "the Duncan" would be a description of a function, more than a reference to my personal name. Sitting at a restaurant table, you might call out: "Waiter!", intending a specific individual. You'd only speak of "*the* waiter" when describing his function- e.g. "The waiter served me badly". Hebrew and English operate in the same way here. So when we read in Job 1 and Zechariah 3 of *the* satan, *ha satan*, we're not reading of 'A specific person whose personal proper name is 'Satan'. Rather we're reading of a person who *functioned as* a satan or adversary. Dianne Bergant makes the point: "The word 'satan' appears with an article indicating that here the word is a title or description and not a proper name" (Dianne Bergant, *Job, Ecclesiastes* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1982) p. 27). In other words, 'the satan' isn't the personal name of a personal being called Satan. It's a description of the function of a character, as an adversary. Note that the man Haman is called *ho diabolos* in Esther 7:4 LXX. The Russian literary analyst Vladimir Propp has shown that all stories, folklore etc. of that time contained characters with a set function- there was the hero, the companion, the friends / bystanders, and the adversary (Vladimir Propp, *Theory And History Of Folklore*, ed. Anatoly Liberman (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 1984); *Morphology Of The Folktale* (Austin: University Of Texas Press, 1968).). Whilst I accept that Job was a historical character, the way the book is written in such structured Hebrew poetry shows for sure that the events were 'written up' in story / ballad form. And so when the initial readership encountered "the adversary", *ha satan*, they wouldn't have thought of him as a cosmic being of evil. The presence of someone functioning as "the adversary" would've been quite normal to them. If we follow through the argument of the book, the logical answer of Job to the friends' allegations would have been "I'm suffering because Satan has it in for me! He's doing this, not God!". For the friends were reasoning that God was bringing such affliction into Job's life because Job was a sinner. The fact Job doesn't make this obvious retort indicates to me that "the Satan" wasn't understood by either Job nor the friends as a personal supernatural being of evil.

It must be noted that the satan never occurs again, under that name. The real adversary of Job was his "friends"; and in God's final judgment, it is they who are condemned, not 'satan'. It is therefore reasonable to see a connection between the satan and the 'friends' of Job; they too walked to and fro in the earth in order to come to him, as it seems satan did at the beginning. And we pause here for another lesson. The great satan / adversary of Job turned out to be those he thought were his friends in the ecclesia. And so it has been, time and again, in our experience: our sorest trials often come from the words of our brethren. Without underestimating the physical affliction of Job, his real adversary was his brethren. Rather than bemoaning his physical affliction, he commented how his friends had become his satans (Job 19:19) And so with the Lord Jesus, whom Job so accurately typified. Again, without minimizing the material agony of His flesh, the essential piercing was from His rejection at the hands of those He died for. For other reasons to connect the satan with the friends, see on Job 6:19; 8:6; 12:6; 19:28.

But the "Sons of God" of Job 1:6 are interpreted as Angels in Job 38:7. There is nothing in itself wrong with an Angel being called a satan- we have examples of this in Num. 22:22 and 1 Chron. 21:1. We know that Angels can't sin: and yet they are limited in knowledge (e.g. Mt. 24:36). An Angel commented that now he knew that Abraham feared God, after he had seen his willingness to offer Isaac (Gen. 22:12); Israel's guardian Angel lead them through the wilderness in order to learn about

Israel's spirituality (Dt. 8:2,3). God Himself, of course, already knew the hearts of men. The sons of God coming before Yahweh suggests a scene in the court of Heaven, similar to that of 2 Chron. 18:19-21, where the Angels appear before Yahweh to discuss the case of Ahab, and then one Angel is empowered by God to carry out his suggestion. Those Angels represented God's people on earth; this is why the interpretation of the Satan can equally apply to both the people of God at the time, gathering before a priest; and to their representative Angels gathered before the throne of God in the court of Heaven. Satan going out from the presence of Yahweh, empowered by Him to afflict Job, would correspond with other references to Angels 'going out' from God's presence to execute what had been agreed in the heavenly assembly (Ps. 37:36; 81:5; Zech. 2:3; 5:5; Lk. 22:22; Heb. 1:14).

In the same way as the earthly tabernacle was a pattern of the Heavenly system (Heb. 9:24), so it would appear that each of us has an Angelic representative in Heaven, appearing before the presence of God's glory in what we are invited to see as the court of Heaven. Angels can also represent a whole group – e.g., an ecclesia (Rev. 1:20). So closely identified with their charges are these Angels, that they themselves are rebuked (e.g. Rev. 2:5) – not that they sinned, of course, but because they represented those ecclesias in the Heavenly court.

Satan describes himself as going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it (1:7)- using exactly the language of Zech. 1:11 concerning the Angels. The way that the satan smote Job with a skin disease (Job 2:7) would suggest that he was not only a mere man; accepting an Angel-satan solves this problem. No unaided man could have brought a skin disease upon Job. If the satan refers to a righteous Angel, it is likewise easier to understand why all the problems which the satan brought are described as God bringing them (especially as Job may have conceived of God in terms of an Angel). It is also understandable why there is no rebuke of the satan at the end. For other connections between the satan and Angels, see on Job 1:14,16,19; 4:5; 5:7; 6:9,10; 14:3; 16:9; 19:8.

It has been correctly observed that we don't read of 'Satan' after the prologue to Job. Instead we read only of God bringing the afflictions into Job's life. But the friends, and Job himself, struggle to explain those afflictions in terms of the current ideas in the surrounding world. This may not be immediately evident, because the Hebrew of Job is notoriously hard to translate. But closer attention to the text reveals that there is repeated mention of the various beings and forces of evil which were thought to be in competition with God. It seems that the story of Job originated very early in Biblical history, in the times of the patriarchs. And yet the book has many connections with the latter half of Isaiah – just take a glance down the marginal cross references in Job, and see how often the later chapters of Isaiah are referenced. My suggestion is that the book was rewritten and edited [under Divine inspiration] during the captivity in Babylon, as a message especially relevant for the Jewish exiles as they struggled with the temptation to accept Babylonian mythological explanations of evil. This would explain the allusions to both early Canaanite and later Babylonian views of the 'Satan' figure. And we recall from Is. 45:5–7 how Israel's God was at pains to remind the exiles of His omnipotence, that He is the only God and source of power in creation, and that both good and disaster, light and darkness, are ultimately His creation; and the surrounding Gentile myths about these things were totally wrong. This is in fact the theme of the book of Job. Susan Garrett points out how Babylonian views of a dualistic cosmos, with God creating good and the 'Satan' figure creating

evil, began to influence Jewish thought. She shares my view that the purpose of the book of Job was to counter this: "The story of Job checked an escalation in the power and authority that were ascribed to the Satan-figure, by the repeated and unambiguous assertions in Job 1–2 that Satan had obtained the authority to test Job from none other than God" (Susan Garrett, *The Temptations of Jesus in Mark's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) p. 49).

The references to 'Satan'—like beings and related myths in the book of Job is in order to ultimately deconstruct them as false, and to re-iterate the utter omnipotence of Yahweh as the only source of power, the only God. And this of course we would expect from an Old Testament, God-inspired book. It's been suggested by literary critics that the prologue which mentions Satan (Job chapters 1 and 2) and epilogue (Job 42:7–17) were likely written before the poetic discourses – they appear to be "an Israelite revision of an older Canaanite or Edomite epic poem expressing their views on the age-old problem of evil" (Douglas Wingeier, *What About the Devil? A Study of Satan in the Bible and Christian Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006) p. 15. More documentation of this is to be found in *The Interpreter's Bible*, ed. George Buttrick, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1954) Vol. 3 pp. 878,879). Thus those ideas are alluded to and deconstructed – God is presented as all powerful, and the 'Satan' beliefs as untrue.

Theodicy, the problem of evil, our own struggles with God, seem to revolve around our difficulty in accepting three things simultaneously: i) God is the Almighty; ii) God is love / good; iii) there is evil. To simply avoid "there is evil" by blaming an external satan... is to miss the point. It is to refuse to engage with the God who causes evil and suffering, to paint a plastic picture of God that is neither Biblically faithful nor true to real life. The book of Job engages with this issue, head on. And nobody gets it right, and every man struggles to humble himself beneath the answer. God's final response to Job's struggles will be that all human suffering, hurt feelings, hurt bodies, lost families... is all irrelevant to the bigger picture. Something went on in heaven, and Job suffered on earth; and he is condemned for complaining or probing "why?". This is not at all a human-centred cosmos. But God does it all in such a way that His sensitive love to His creatures is shown. James got this, when he says that in Job we see the end of the Lord, we see His ultimate end- which is that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy to man. Man thinks that he is king of the planet, just as the lion is king of the jungle. The lion thinks he is king of the jungle and so do all the other animals. But I once knew a white African who did hunting trips for tourists who wanted to shoot lions or other big cats. He has a pack of rottweilers which he would release. And the lion, surrounded by the rottweilers [whom they feared] would beg for mercy like a pussy cat. The terrified leopard would run up a tree, with the rottweilers surrounding it. And the tourist, with multiple video cameras trained on him to show the folks back home, carefully not capturing the dogs, would shoot the terrified lion or leopard. Lion is not king of the jungle when some other factor is introduced. And neither is man king of the planet let alone the cosmos.

This approach explains the role of the Satan at the beginning. The scene is intentionally vague, defying systematic exposition. Because the point is that Job suffers for reasons other than his sin, other than 'because suffering makes you a better person', or all the other reasons the friends will claim. God Himself blandly states that Job suffers "without cause", for no reason (Job 2:3). There is no answer to human suffering. Job's sufferings were the result of some heavenly conversation, they were an outcome of a debate that was beyond man and in a way, does not concern man. See on Job 6:3. Once we get this, we will understand why the Heavenly court room

scenario we are presented with at the start is intentionally impossible to understand, or expound word by word, verse by verse, with a clear 'this means that'.

Job 1:7 Yahweh said to Satan, Where have you come from? Then Satan answered Yahweh and said, From going back and forth in the earth, and from walking up and down in it- There is no implication that he was doing anything sinful. Zech. 1:11 implies that this is a Hebraism for observing. The references to 'wandering about on the face of the earth' have great similarities with the language used to describe the Persian empire's spies, called "The King's Eye"- a kind of agent of the King who wandered around picking up information and reporting back to him. But of course, "The King's Eye" was on the King's side and not working against him! (More documentation of this in Rivkah Kluger, *The Satan Of The Old Testament* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967). This view is confirmed in other research by Harry Torczyner, *The Book Of Job* (Jerusalem: Kiryat-Sefer, 1981) pp. 38-45. Note that Torczyner also interprets the Satan as being in God's service, and not in opposition to Him: "The figure and role of the Satan derives from the Persian secret service... We now understand that there are in God's service, as in that of any earthly king, secret roving officials, who go and come and report to him on the doings of his subjects"). Satan's walking / running "to and fro in the earth / land" and reporting back to God about an individual is thus very much taken from the Persian idea of the King's "evil eye", "the eye of the King", a kind of *agent provocateur*, a secret police-type agent, travelling around the Kingdom and reporting back to the King about suspect individuals. It also has an evident connection with the Zechariah passages which speaks of the Angels in the time of the exile and restoration from Persia "running to and fro in the earth" on God's behalf (Zech. 1:10,11; 4:10). The implication of course was that God and His Angels, and not the Persian King and his agents, were the ones really in control of the land. It's maybe significant that the Septuagint translates "going to and fro" in Job 1:7 with the word *peripatei*- and we find the same word in 1 Pet. 5:8 about the adversary of the early Christians 'going about' seeking them- a reference to the agents of the Roman and Jewish systems. I have elsewhere demonstrated that much of the Hebrew Bible was rewritten [under Divine inspiration] in Babylon, to bring out relevant issues for the Jewish exiles in Babylon. This includes the book of Job. It can be understood as an allegory- Job, the suffering servant of the Lord, becomes a type of Israel, the suffering servant of Isaiah's later prophecies. There are many links between Isaiah's prophecies and Job- a glance down the margin of most reference Bibles will indicate that. Just as the returning exiles faced 'satans' in the form of local Arabic opposition, so did Job. The Zechariah 3:1,2 passage uses the word 'satan' to describe this opposition to the returned exiles. Note that both Zechariah 3 and Job 1 use the idea of a Heavenly court. As God put a fence around Job (Job 1:10), so He was a "wall of fire" to the returning exiles (Zech. 2:5). And his final triumph and restoration, by God's grace, was intended as a prototype for Judah in captivity. J.B. Russell mentions a Babylonian document consisting of a dialogue between a sufferer and his friend (J.B. Russell, *The Devil* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977) p. 87). Perhaps the re-writing of the book of Job during Judah's captivity in Babylon was intended as a counter to this, explaining Yahweh's perspective on suffering.

Eliphaz reminds Job that the wicked of Noah's time were destroyed by a flood, implying that the sudden calamities of Job's life were like the flood, thus equating him with the world at Noah's time. Jude, Daniel, Peter and the Lord Jesus all interpret that world as representing apostate Jewry in the first century, destroyed by the "flood" of

AD70. It is therefore interesting that 1 Pet. 5:8,9, concerning the Jewish devil walking around seeking to draw away Christians, is quoting the Septuagint of Job 1:7, suggesting Job's satan is also to be linked with the Jewish satan.

Job's satan was perhaps not simply a sceptical worshipper who had these questions and was represented by an Angel in the court of heaven; but also an Angel wanting for himself to find out more about Job, not understanding how a man with all the blessings Job had could sincerely worship God. God therefore gave this Angel the power needed to try Job to see whether this was the case. The idea of an Angel being called a satan (adversary) is familiar to us in Num. 22:22 where the Angel stood in the way of Balaam for an adversary. The fact the Angel brought the trials would explain why all through the book the trials are credited to God. Satan coming "from going back and forth in the earth" (Job 1:7) would connect with the descriptions of the Angels being God's eyes going to and fro in the earth (Zech. 1:11). Job 1:16 describing God sending a flame of fire to minister one of the trials is understood in the Angel context when one recalls that He "makes His ministers a flaming fire" (Ps. 104:4). The series of "messengers" who come to Job announcing the trials (Job 1:14) may possibly also be Angels, or Angels controlling human messengers on earth. Job associates his trials with God's eyes being upon him (e. g. Job 7:8) and we have seen that the eyes of God seems to be a synonym for the Angels.

Job 1:8 Yahweh said to Satan, Have you considered my servant, Job? For there is none like him in the land, a blameless and an upright man, one who fears God, and turns away from evil-

We note God's very high opinion of Job. Yet he was aware of sins of youth (Job 13:26) and in Job 9:20 he speaks of his imperfections: "If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall prove me perverse". But God considered him "perfect", despite those imperfections. Job didn't get to read the prologue that we readers have read. He failed to know how high was God's opinion of him; just as we can labour under false guilt, and consider that because man no longer loves us, then neither does God.

Notice that Satan had to get power from God (Job 2:3-6); he had none in his own right, indeed, God brought Job to Satan's notice (1:8). Job comments about God being the source of his sufferings: "If it be not he, who then is it?" (Job 9:24 RV). Job didn't believe anyone apart from God was responsible.

God knew what the satan Angel's response would be to His question. Thus God guides an Angel to think about a believer- or person- in order to further that Angel's spiritual education. This is still necessary, despite them having "had their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" previously. The knowledge of good and evil which the Angels have is exactly the same as we have- "the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil" the Angels lamented in Eden (Gen. 3:22). Despite our experience of life, we appreciate pitifully little how God works through evil. Some can scarcely comprehend it, especially if they have no knowledge of the Truth. Yet by nature they have some dull concept of it- and it is this dim concept which the Angels possessed in Eden, which was shared with us by Adam's eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Thus we can understand why the Angels need to be educated like this.

The tragedy was that those taken into captivity weren't reformed by their sufferings, and now their children likewise refused to "take it to heart" and repent (Is. 42:25 s.w.). Here we have another connection between Isaiah and Job, the book which

appears to have been rewritten for the exiles with Job as representative of both the exiles and the righteous servant. "Have you considered My servant..." (Job 1:8) is the same phrase in Is. 42:25 "take it to heart". The book of Job was therefore written as a way of appealing for the repentance of the exiles and for them to contextualize their own sufferings.

Job 1:9 Then Satan answered Yahweh and said, Does Job fear God for nothing?-

"For nothing" is 'without cause', and God uses this word in telling the satan that he is moving Him to destroy Job "without cause" (Job 2:3). The idea seems to be that Job has already proven that he does indeed serve God without cause, not in hope of any reward; Job serves for nothing, he serves because he is God's servant. There is no cause to slay or hurt Job.

The returned exiles refused to serve God for nothing (s.w. Mal. 1:10). But the final investigation of the book of Job revealed that Job was prepared to serve God for nothing, just because He was God and he was His servant; and not because he expected any reward or material advantage. Job is therefore set up to the exiles as the embodiment and personification of who they should have become. But they refused to respond. The sufferings which came upon Judah were to reveal whether they would serve God for nothing; and Mal. 1:10 makes it clear they didn't.

Job 1:10 Haven't You made a hedge around him and around his family, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land- LXX "blessed the works of his hands, and multiplied his cattle upon the land?"- an allusion to the promises of blessing and multiplication of Abraham's seed, of whom Job was presented as being representative. In Job 10:11,12 Job complains "Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews. Thou hast granted me life and favour, and Thy visitation hath preserved My spirit". "Fenced" is the same word as "hedge" when satan complains that God has made a hedge about Job (Job 1:10). Job appears to be aware of the conversation between the satan and the Lord. It therefore makes sense to understand that the gathering of the sons of God and 'satan' was a gathering of the people of God, including the friends and Job, and the conversation was heard by all. Job is therefore saying that actually the only hedge or fence he has is his own physical body. Job seems to be saying 'You say I'm hedged about with blessings. But now the only hedge I've got is this sick body. The only help you give me now is to give me my spirit to keep me alive, only so you can torment me more'. Understandable, if faulty, reasoning in Job's situation.

Job 1:11 But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has, and he will renounce You to Your face- See on Job 30:24. The same phrase for putting forth the hand is used of how God put forth His hand against Judah and sent them into exile (Ez. 10:7; 14:13). The 'touching' of Job uses the word used of the 'touching' of Judah by their invaders and abusers (Is. 8:8; Jer. 4:10; 12:14; Ez. 7:12). And it is used of how the suffering servant of Is. 53:4 was considered "stricken" or 'touched' by God after the pattern of Job. That suffering servant represented the faithful remnant at the restoration, and then when they ultimately failed to be as intended, it was all more fully reapplied to the Lord Jesus. Several times the friends refer to how Job has been touched by God; the parallels between the Satan and the friends will be noted throughout the book. The Satan clearly influenced the friends to think likewise, and

they effectively become the Satan. And it is therefore they and not 'Satan' who are rebuked at the end of the book.

"Touch" is the same Hebrew word used in :19 for the Divine wind 'touching' [NEV "struck"] the house and killing all Job's children.

We can too easily assume that the Satan was proven wrong. Job did not curse God when all was taken from him (1:22). But that was only at the start. As discussed on Job 1:1, Job pretty much did curse God to His face in Job 9,10 and elsewhere, as the dialogues continue- and was condemned for it. Job is not at all the undefeated superhero. He repented of it, finally. God never says 'No, Job will not curse Me'. It is totally wrong to think that God made a wager, a kind of bet, with the Satan- and God won. God never says that He thinks Job will be steadfast to Him. But if there is no wager going on here, then why does God allow all this? Nothing is proved nor disproved, in terms of the Satan's questions. And that is the nub of the book. Job suffered "without cause" (Job 2:3). But despite all that- we see the end of the Lord, as James says, that He is very pitiful, and of tender, saving mercy.

Job 1:12 Yahweh said to Satan, Behold, all that he has is in your power. Only on himself don't put forth your hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of Yahweh- See on Is. 37:36, where an Angel likewise goes forth from Yahweh. I have suggested above that the Satan refers to both one or some amongst the "sons of God", perhaps the friends; and also to the Angel who represented them in the heavenly throne room. For there is no indication that anything Satan did was sinful; Angels don't sin. Satan never actually says or does anything wrong; he simply makes the observation that there may well be a relationship between Job's service of God and the material blessing which God has given him. He is then empowered by God to bring calamities into Job's life. Time and again is it stressed, really stressed, that God brought the problems upon Job, not Satan independently (Job 1:12,16; 2:3,10; 6:4; 8:4; 19:21; 42:18).

The going forth from the presence of Yahweh continues the allusion to the court of Heaven, which is implied by the sons of God, the Angels representing their charges on earth, coming before God. The 'Satan' figure is not in itself evil, but could refer to an Angel [a 'good' one, as I submit there are no 'sinful' Angels], or an Angel representative of a fellow worshipper on earth. The debates in Heaven between the Angels, the will of God as articulated there, is then reflected and carried out on earth – rather like how in Daniel 1–6 we have events on earth described in historical terms, and then we are given an insight into what's been going on in Heaven in Daniel 7–12. Yet the court / legal language continues throughout the book – e.g. Job is "perfect", i.e. legally blameless. Job appeals for 'witnesses' (Job 9:33–35; 16:18–22; 19:20–27), an advocate in Heaven (Job 9:33), denies his guilt and demands a legal list of his sins (Job 13:19), he wishes for God to come to trial (Job 9:3), and thus Job is described as a man who has taken out a 'case' with God (Job 23:4; 40:2). Job 29–31 is effectively Job's declaration of legal innocence and an appeal to God to hear his case more sympathetically (Job 31:35). And of course God pronounces a final legal verdict at the very end (Job 42:7), in response to Job's earlier plea: "Sleeplessly I wait for His reply" (Job 16:22). It's as if the whole experience of Job was [at least partly] in order to test out the Canaanite theories of 'Satan', suffering and evil in the court of Heaven; and also the various theories which arose to explain Judah's captivity in Babylon. The friends represent the traditional views of evil, and often make reference to the myths of their day about 'Satan' figures. They speak as if *they* are the final court – Eliphaz speaks of how the judges and elders of their day, the "holy ones", had concluded Job

was guilty, and that they, the friends, were right: “To which of the holy ones will you appeal [legal language]?... we have [legally] examined this, and it [Job’s guilt] is true” (Job 5:1,27). This is of great comfort to those who feel misjudged by man – above them in Heaven the ultimate Heavenly court is considering our case, and that is all that matters. Job perhaps perceived this, even though the vision of the court of Heaven in chapters 1 and 2 was presumably unknown to him as he endured his sufferings; for in response to the friends’ wrong judgment of him, he comments that “God covers the faces of the judges of the earth” (Job 9:24). The final summing up speeches from both God and Job simply emphasize the omnipotence of God; how ultimately *He* has been the adversary to Job, and there is no room in the cosmos of His creation for any other power, especially any of the various personal ‘Satan’ figures believed in by the worlds of both Canaan and Babylon. The heavenly court of “sons of God” is paralleled with all the stars in Job 38:7. Bear in mind that the stars were understood as pagan deities. The whole pagan understanding of the cosmos is being deconstructed. The stars are paralleled with the Angelic sons of God who are all totally under God’s control; they are *His* Heavenly court.

The legal language of the book of Job has far reaching implications. We have noted the many connections between Job and the latter part of Isaiah, where again there is the impression of ‘God in the dock’, a cosmic trial of truth. The gods of the nations are invited to present their best cases, to demonstrate their reality against the claims of Yahweh, Israel’s God, to be the only true God. In this trial, the suffering servant is the witness used by God. And this in turn is the basis for the same lawsuit motif in the Gospel of John, where the witness is the Lord Jesus as the suffering servant, and by extension all those in Him. Indeed there appear to be seven witnesses in John: John the Baptist (Jn. 1:7), Jesus Himself (Jn. 3:11), the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4:39), God Himself (Jn. 5:32), the miracles (Jn. 5:36), the Old Testament (Jn. 5:39) and the crowd (Jn. 12:17). John presents the cross as the decisive verdict, linking back to a similar verdict pronounced in Isaiah, which in turn has as its basis the final verdict of Yahweh in support of Job against the beliefs of the friends in the various ‘Satan’ gods of Canaan and Babylonia.

Job 1:13 It fell on a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother’s house- Usually Job went and offered sin offerings for his children after these parties. But the disaster came exactly whilst they were partying. This would invite us to see this as judgment upon them, looking ahead to the judgment of the children ["sons"] of Israel.

Job 1:14 that there came a messenger to Job and said, The oxen were ploughing and the donkeys feeding beside them- A *malak* came with news of the calamities brought by the satan (Angel). It would be understandable if that *malak* should have been translated 'Angel' seeing there is so much other Angelic language in this area. See on Job 1:6,7. We see again a connection to the work of a Satan Angel.

Job 1:15 and the Sabeans attacked and took them away. Yes, they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword- The Sabeans are literally 'those of Sheba'. The same word is used by Job when he reflects upon the disaster at the hands of "the troops of Tema... the companies of Sheba" (see on Job 6:19). It seems therefore that there were people from Tema involved. And Eliphaz was from Teman (Job 2:11).

Again we have a hint that these Sabeans and associated Temanites were somehow involved with the Temanite "friend" of Job, Eliphaz. The friends were in some form the Satan. In the restoration context, all the people of Sheba would repent and come to Zion (Is. 60:6 s.w.). The former enemies of God's people were to repent and join them.

And I alone have escaped to tell you- It has been suggested that the prologue to Job is in fact a literary device to place theological problems before us, e.g. of the relationship between service of God and receipt of blessing, and sin and suffering. But we must remember that later Scripture takes the experiences of Job as literal, and Job himself as a real historical person. However, it is not impossible that the account of the conversation between God and the Satan was not a literal occurrence, but simply a way of setting up the problems which the historical narrative then addresses. It's worth meditating on this one. The three different messengers come and tell Job of the various disasters and conclude with the same rubric "and I alone have escaped to tell you". This is surely a theatrical presentation rather than a literal transcription of actual speech which historically occurred; my friend Steve Cook has suggested, quoting Jewish sources, that Job may well be the very earliest extant theatrical drama script of ancient literature. Job being drama would explain why the book is written as poetry. This approach also assists us in understanding how Job was told by a messenger that his sons had all died, and then at the end of the book he appears to be given his sons back again. If the messenger wasn't telling the truth, but was just part of the plot, the mechanism to present the theological problem, then this is understandable. The use of "the Satan" would therefore not be referring to any cosmic being, but rather to a *role*. It has been observed: "In biblical sources the Hebrew term the *satan* describes an adversarial role. It is not the name of a particular character" (Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Random House, 1996) p. 39). And again: "[*ha-satan*] is not the personal name Satan but a role specification meaning "the accuser / adversary / doubter"' (N.C. Habel, *The Book of Job* (London: S.C.M., 1985) p.89). The 'satan' or adversary was not therefore necessarily sinful: "As he first appears in the Hebrew Bible, Satan is not necessarily evil, much less opposed to God. On the contrary, he appears in the book of Numbers and in Job as one of God's obedient servants" (Pagels, *op cit.* p. 39). He is "subject to God's control and was used by God to accomplish his purposes... [there is] a pronounced emphasis on his subordination" to God (S.H.T. Page, "Satan: God's Servant" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*; Sept. 2007 Vol. 50 No. 3 p. 449).

The Sabeans of 1:15 were probably the descendants of Sheba, Abraham's grandson (Gen. 25:1-3). For his children to grow into a separate tribe, the events of Job must have happened some generations before the Law was given.

Job 1:16 While he was still speaking, there also came another and said, The fire of God has fallen from the sky- As noted on :13,19, this is the language of judgment. Job's children were indeed guilty of serious sin, and all Job's animal sacrifices couldn't save them from that judgment. At the end of the book, the friends are also liable to Divine judgment, but are saved not by sacrifice or ritual but by prayer. This all looks forward to the failure of Mosaic ritual to save; whereas a righteous mediator, the Lord Jesus, is the One who can save. See on :20.

And has burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you- "The servants" is "shepherds" in LXX and GNB.

Destruction of the sheep and shepherds is language elsewhere used about the suffering of Israel at the hands of the Babylonians. Job's sons were killed by wind and fire- both of which are associated with Angelic manifestation (:16,19). See on Job 1:6,7. It was the "servants" who were 'smitten with the edge of the sword' at the Babylon invasion (s.w. Jer. 21:7). Again we see how the book of Job discusses the very issues which were facing the exiles in Babylon as they reflected upon these same tragedies.

Job 1:17 While he was still speaking, there came also another and said, The Chaldeans made three bands, and swept down on the camels, and have taken them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you- "The Chaldeans" confirms that Job is being set up as representative of the exiles in Chaldea who had lost their families to the Babylonian / Chaldean invaders. See on :16; Job 19:9. The three bands clearly mirror the three waves of Babylonian attacks upon Judah. Often the book of Job will use Persian loan words, and it is clearly connected to the later prophecies of Isaiah about the exile. Hence the otherwise strange statement at the end, that God "turned the captivity" of Job. Job was in the land of Uz, clearly somewhere in Babylonia. He is set up as representative of the exiles.

Job 1:18 While he was still speaking, there came also another and said, Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house- Again as noted on :13, the disaster came exactly whilst they were partying. This would invite us to see this as judgment upon them, looking ahead to the judgment of the children ["sons"] of Israel.

Job 1:19 and behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young men, and they are dead. I alone have escaped to tell you- Heb. "from the other side of the desert". This term would be appropriate to understanding Job as a parable of how disaster struck Judah from the other side of the desert, i.e. Babylonian. Hence the mention of a three banded attack from the "Chaldeans", an ethnic group hardly known in Job's time. But the poem uses that term to point up the fact that Job's "evil" is akin to that experienced by Judah. Hence likewise his restoration is spoken of as God 'turning the captivity of Job' (Job 42:10), language more appropriate to the exiles. "Struck" is the same word as "touch" in :11. This was the hand of God 'touching' Job as Satan had requested. A wind which struck four corners of a house at the same time was a whirlwind, associated with Divine judgment and theophany.

Job 1:20 Then Job arose, and tore his robe, and shaved his head, and fell down on the ground and worshiped- His robe, as the head of the family, was likely of religious significance; a kind of priestly robe. And he realizes now that all such ritual has failed to save- as noted on :16. The shaved Job again becomes a picture of the shaved Judah after the Babylonian invasion (Jer. 7:29 s.w.), and of the suffering servant who was "sheared", s.w. "shaved" (Is. 53:7). The response to this shaving was to "worship" and not charge God wrongly, a lesson not learnt by the exiles, who wrongly charged God over it all (as Ez. 18 makes clear).

Job 1:21 He said, Naked I came out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return

there. Yahweh gave, and Yahweh has taken away. Blessed be the name of Yahweh- The 'taking away' is the term used of Judah's taking away into captivity (Jer. 20:5). God gave Judah a king in His anger, and took him away at the time of Zedekiah and the captivity (Hos. 13:11 s.w.). The raft of questions and mental struggles elicited by all this are those which the drama of Job will now discuss and debate. We note that Job immediately sees 'God in all this'. It wasn't that Yahweh gave, and Satan took away. God took away as well as gave. Without his family and wealth, Job feels naked- as if he is now ready to go into the grave. But it was with that now naked man that God would work, and He does likewise with men today.

Some have struggled over the idea of "return there", as if speaking about returning to the mother's womb. I suggest Ecc. 5:13-16 is perhaps a commentary upon Job, the rich man who lost his riches and also his children, and the idea of 'returning' is there clarified: "There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt, and those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand. As he came from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand. This also is a grievous evil: just as he came, so shall he go". Likewise 1 Tim. 6:7 appears to allude to Job 1:21 and likewise clarifies: "For we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world".

"Yahweh gave, and Yahweh has taken away. Blessed be the name of Yahweh" has a very poetic ring to it in the Hebrew, as if Job is quoting a well known saying. This is the only time in the book that Job uses the term "Yahweh", elsewhere he uses 'elohim'- and he speaks many times of "God" throughout his speeches. This leads us to wonder whether he was quoting a formulaic, conventional wisdom statement. His later words about God are not true and God rebukes him for this, as does Elihu, and he repents. His repentance is seen as speaking, finally, what is right about God. But at this point, he doesn't sin; at least, Job 2:10 says he didn't sin "with his lips", which could imply that his heart was wrong. But he said the right words at the time; but then in Job 3:1 he opens his mouth and curses, not blesses. He pretty much accepts all this, when he finally admits that he had heard of God by the hearing of the ear, but only "now" does his eye "see" or perceive God. So for now, he says the right thing, quoting some well known maxim. Just as we can- but we have to be taught the personal truth of what we sing in hymns and the texts we cite from scripture. And that is really the story of Job.

The 'taker away' is clearly God, and not simply the satan. It was the fire "of God" that fell.

Job 1:22 In all this, Job did not sin- Job's reaction at this point was wonderful. He didn't sin in this respect; but he is later led to understand that he has indeed sinned and he accepts the call to repentance of Job 33:27. But the appeal for Job to repent and his final acceptance of it could also lead us to interpret this as meaning that Job did not consider he had sinned, when in fact he had. He would then become again representative of Judah; "Behold I will plead with you, because you say, I have not sinned" (Jer. 2:35).

Nor charge God with wrongdoing- This is legal language, as if Job did not put God in the dock and accuse Him wrongly. The idea of Israel as it were taking a court case against God recurs in the prophets. Job was their example and they largely failed to follow it. At the point of the trials, Job didn't charge God with "folly" (LXX). But Elihu and God convict Job of charging God with folly. This must, then, refer to how Job spoke during his speeches. In Job 10:1-3, and other places (e.g. Job 9:14-20), Job

definitely does accuse God of wrongdoing, of unfairly hating him, and smiling upon the wicked. It was in these statements that he did charge God with folly / wrongdoing. But at the point of the trials, he didn't. And so it often is with us all. At the point of suffering, we take it well. It is as time goes by that we are tempted to respond badly.

JOB CHAPTER 2

Job 2:1 Again it happened on the day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Yahweh, that Satan came also among them to present himself before Yahweh- "Before Yahweh" doesn't at all have to mean this happened in Heaven itself. The phrase is used of how men come before Yahweh here on earth. Note how Job addresses the friends in Job 13:7 LXX "Do ye not speak before the Lord...". This is another hint that the friends were represented by the Satan figure of the prologue, who likewise appeared "before the Lord". Satan came amongst them, but influenced them to accept his viewpoint; or even spoke for them, until they became effectively the Satan. See on Job 13:21.

Job 2:2 Yahweh said to Satan, Where have you come from? Satan answered Yahweh and said, From going back and forth in the land, and from walking up and down in it- See the extensive discussion on Job 1:7.

Job 2:3 Yahweh said to Satan, Have you considered My servant Job?- We as the readers have the advantage of knowing that God had considered Job in great detail. But Job doesn't know nor feel that. Just as we may feel God doesn't pay attention to us, when in fact He is viewing us with microscopic analysis and interest. Or, as in Job's case, that He only looks closely at us in a critical way, with the intention to make us suffer because of what He sees in us. Later Job complains to God "what is man, that You magnify him? And that You should consider him?" (Job 7:17). Thus Job sees God- whom he probably conceived of as an Angel- as considering him, whilst we are told earlier that Satan / the adversary was told to do this. A human Satan considering Job would not in itself have brought the trials, for no one human could have done all the things done to Job; and Job would not have complained so bitterly about a human being considering him.

For there is none like him in the land, a blameless and an upright man, one who fears God and turns away from evil- See on Job 1:8. The connection with Isaiah is to Is. 59:15 "Yes, truth is lacking; and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey". "He who departs from evil" is the term used about Job (s.w. Job 1:8; 2:3); and he too became a "prey" to evil. Job represents not only the exiles, but the righteous remnant amongst them who departed from evil but suffered all the same.

He still maintains his integrity- Job uses this word about himself in Job 27:6. On one hand we could argue that Job is unaware of God's high view of his integrity. Or we could argue the opposite; that this adds to the impression that he had been present at these discussions between the Satan and God; and the view of the Satan was in fact the view now of the friends, who effectively acted as the Satan figure who had influenced their thinking. His argument against the friends, that he did maintain his integrity still, was effectively arguing back against this position of the Satan. "Hold fast" or "maintain" is the appeal of the prophets to the exiles (s.w. Is. 27:5; 35:3; 56:4). But sadly there were none who really followed Job's example at that time. None maintained or took hold of Yahweh's righteousness (Is. 64:7 s.w.).

Although you incited Me against him, to ruin him- This is not really a rebuke; for the Satan is carefully portrayed as not actually sinning. Because God did in fact "ruin him". This 'inciting' of God reveals the sensitivity of God to human desires to understand and their wish that He would act. This is exactly what happens in our wrestlings in prayer with God. If God agrees, He "performs the counsel (advice) of His messenger" (Angels; Is. 44:26). That is in a restoration context- to encourage the early readership of Job to understand that God can be moved to respond. The Hebrew for "incite" means to prick or stimulate, s.w. "persuade"- God can be moved or provoked to action, He is sensitive to our struggles with 'the problem of evil' and His actions upon earth, just as much as human beings can provoke Him to anger.

Without cause- God acted without cause against Job, for no reason. Job will later rail against God because of this; Job repeats this in Job 9:17. There Job sees this as a reason to think God is unreasonable and uncaring. But the prologue gives us the inside information as to the background for that "without cause" suffering. It was part of God's incredibly high opinion of Job. Or we could argue that here we have the impression that he had been present at these discussions between the Satan and God; and the view of the Satan was in fact the view now of the friends, who effectively acted as the Satan figure who had influenced their thinking. And the point is established- that suffering can come on individuals "without cause". Yet the friends spend their speeches guessing at what the cause was in Job's case. In the restoration context, the suffering servant likewise suffered "without cause" (s.w. Is. 52:3,5). That figure was clearly based upon Job, and speaks of the righteous remnant at the restoration, and finally of the Lord Jesus who was their embodiment. Jeremiah laments that he too had suffered at that time "without cause" (Lam. 3:52 s.w.); failing to perceive the lessons of the book of Job, just as we can whenever we complain that we suffer "without cause". The reality of course was that the judgments upon Judah had not been "without cause" (Ez. 14:23 s.w.). And Job finally comes to realize that although he is right before God by grace, he too is a sinner and there was "cause" in his sufferings.

God's view that Job suffers "without cause" means that the friends are declared wrong ahead of time, when they give all their reasons for Job's sufferings. See on Job 1:6,9. He suffered for no reason, at least, no reason that makes any sense to man- nor even, according to this incredible statement, to God either. "Without cause / reason" is a hugely significant statement from God. It is the word used of how Saul sought to slay David "without a cause" (1 Sam. 19:5). We can also render it "without any achieved purpose". And yet in another sense, James 5:11 says that in Job, we see the "end" or 'achieved purpose' of God. Which in the end, was salvation. In another sense, Job's sufferings were not for any purpose... just as some trials and tribulations in our lives likewise appear devoid of purpose. Of course, not all suffering is in the same category. But we learn here that 'Suffering makes you a better man' is simply not always true. Yahweh is saying that *so far*, the satan has got it wrong. It was not true that Job only worshipped God because he was materially wealthy. He served God anyway. God doesn't as it were get people to serve Him by dangling carrots of material blessing in front of them. And yet the final restoration of Job does look like God operates some kind of reward and punishment system. Despite the book clearly teaching that the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer (e.g. Job 12:6). This tension is intentional. Because we are being shown that all search for logical justice is futile when it comes to God's ways with man. The cosmos is not human centric, and we have no right to even enquire let alone complain. This is the point of the wisdom poem in Job 28- man cannot find it anywhere on earth, cannot somehow locate the

answers he wants, despite sensing they are out there somewhere; and hence the conclusion: "To man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom. To depart from evil is understanding'" (Job 28:28). But in Job we see the end of the Lord, that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy, and saves His people. There is, therefore, no explanation of suffering in the book; rather is man relocated within the vastness of the cosmos and of God's ways. Suffering remains in the foreground, but the horizon is vastly extended. In a sense, we live our lives within mystery; but that is why to believe means to trust. Those with weaker faith seem to be those who demand logical, accessible explanations- and so often get disappointed in God because of this. The book of Job shifts the question from "Why does suffering happen?" to "Who is God, and who am I, and how can man be just with God?". We can note that Paul argues in 2 Cor. 4:17,18 that the sufferings of this present time are unworthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us; he doesn't [at that point] get into theodicy, giving reasons for the sufferings. He simply says, like the book of Job, that the perspective is so much gloriously greater.

Job 2:4 Satan answered Yahweh and said, Skin for skin- We could render this "skin after skin", as if the Satan is inviting God to peel off the skin, the exterior, from Job- and see what he is really made of underneath. And what does the book of Job reveal? On the surface, Job does indeed curse God. But even beneath that, there is a hard core of faith / trust in God which is revealed at the end. He likewise is impatient and says that endurance is futile; but that was short term. The endurance of Job is praised in James 5:11. Whilst there was no wager between God and Satan, Satan's suspicions appear to be true- but only on the short term, surface level. Job's blessing of Yahweh in Job 1:21 was good on the surface level. Peel away the skin and he curses God. Commentators generally don't want to face that, because they tend to focus on the opening and closing of the book, rather than do the hard work of engaging with the dialogues. The words of Job in them show no overall pattern of spiritual growth, suffering didn't make him a better person; admittedly there are some high points, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him... I know that my redeemer lives", but they are quickly subsumed beneath his false accusations against God. But peel away another level, and Job's core faith and loyalty is revealed, despite speaking wrongly about God during the dialogues with the friends. And so, after repentance for that, the Divine blessings are poured out on Job even greater than they were at the start. Or the idea may be that Job was willing to accept the loss of the skin of his children, as it were in exchange for his own skin being saved. But 'Skin for skin' is a human expression- maybe based on trading one animal skin for another. It is appropriate to a human being on earth; and yet as explained on Job 1:6, the human Satan had a representative Angel in Heaven who also used this phrase in reporting the man's thinking before God. This reflects the degree to which God is aware of our language and perceptions.

Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life- This is the basis of the Lord's words "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul / life?" (Mt. 16:26), even if he possesses the whole world, as the mega wealthy Job appeared to. We note that He quotes the words of the Satan with approval; again confirming the impression that the 'Satan' figure is not essentially sinful. Just as the serpent in Eden was an animal making observations, however wrongly; and sin entered the world not by the serpent but through Adam (Rom. 5:12). The serpent was part of a "very good" creation and was a-moral.

Job 2:5 But put forth Your hand now- Satan asks God: "Put forth Your hand". The hand of God is an Angelic phrase. God agrees- "he is in your hand" (:6). Thus Satan's hand is God's hand, which in practice was articulated through an Angel. Job seems to emphasize the place of God's hand in bringing his trials- Job 2:5,6,10; 6:9; 10:7; 13:21; 19:21; 27:11 AVmg; 28:9. Job in Job 12:9 feels that in the same way as God's hand had created the natural creation- and the Angels did this- so that same Angelic hand was upon him for evil. "By His Spirit (God makes His Angels spirits) He garnished the Heavens; His hand formed the crooked serpent" (Job 26:13). Thus Job associates God's Spirit with His hand, which is Satan's hand. It seems far more fitting that this hand and spirit should be Angelic rather than human. For no one human being could bring these sufferings upon Job. The human Satan, the fellow worshipper, was reflected in an Angel in the court of Heaven. Again, it was Angelic work that formed the Heavens. Job recognized that his trials came from the hand of God, but knew that His hand would not kill him- "with Thy strong hand Thou opposest Thyself against me... howbeit He will not stretch out His hand to (bring me to) the grave" (Job 30:21,24 AV). This was exactly the brief given to Satan- to try Job, but "preserve his life". The hand of God creating evil (Job 2:10,11) must surely refer to God's "Angels of evil" (Ps. 78:49) rather than to man- in the restoration context, the people and Cyrus had to be taught that no one except God (including human satans!) created evil (Is. 45:5-7).

And touch his bone and his flesh, and he will renounce You to Your face- In Job 2:4-6 we have the 'Satan' commenting that Job's flesh and skin need to be harmed; but in Job 19:26 we have Job stating his faith that even though *God* destroys his flesh and skin, yet God shall ultimately save him. See on Job 16:14. Adam's wife is called of his bones and flesh in Gen. 2:23, and one path of speculation would be that Job's wife is here referred to. Hence her absence at the end of the book.

Job 2:6 Yahweh said to Satan, Behold, he is in your hand. Only spare his life-

The Satan's role, at least in Heaven, is best understood by the concept of "loyal opposition" in British and Commonwealth politics, whereby Members of Parliament or the opposition party can oppose something decided by the sitting cabinet, without being guilty of treason. They remain loyal to the monarch or constitution. This is why the opposition is technically called "His Majesty's Loyal Opposition". The opposition retains deference to the higher authority of the state and the larger framework within which democracy operates. This allows dissent without fear of being accused of treason. As Michael Ignatieff, a former leader of the loyal opposition in the House of Commons of Canada, said in a 2012 address at Stanford University: "The opposition performs an adversarial [we could say 'a Satan-like'] function critical to democracy itself... Governments have no right to question the loyalty of those who oppose them. Adversaries remain citizens of the same state, common subjects of the same sovereign, servants of the same law". There is not a "King's party"; there is a ruling party and a loyal opposition- that is still loyal to the King. Thus in Canada and Australia, the phrase "His Majesty's Loyal Opposition" is also currently used. I suggest this is what was going on with the 'Satan' here. God allows opposition to Him, without accusing us of treason. For He is not the Allah of Islam, merely demanding 'submission' all the time. He is open to dialogue. And this enables the dynamic, two-way relationship that is possible between God and man. It gives real possibility to prayer, it reveals God as emotional and responsive to man's situations as well as his words.

LXX "I hand him to you". God is clearly, again, in control. This LXX reading is clearly alluded to in 1 Cor. 5:5 "you are to hand this man to Satan" and 1 Tim. 1:20 "Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed to Satan, in order that they might be instructed not to blaspheme". Again and again we see that any 'adversary' is under God's control and not radically free from Him. See on :5. In the restoration context, this was to be understood as the promise that no matter how God's people suffered, Israel would be preserved.

Job 2:7 So Satan went forth from the presence of Yahweh, and struck Job with painful sores from the sole of his foot to his head-

Satan now disappears from the book. A fair case can be made that his role is replaced by the friends- they were the "sons of God" who suspected he only believed because he was materially blessed. They will at length repeat the same conviction- that blessing has to be the reward for faith. Alternatively, we can understand that the 'satan' disappears because it is simply a device to make the point that Job suffers because of some issue in Heaven that we the readers are aware of [although Job isn't]- but we don't at all fully get what is going on there.

We have a fair amount of information about the symptoms of what Job was struck with, and it sounds like some form of black leprosy, elephantiasis. Job's disease has some similarities with what in Dt. 28:27 is called "the botch of Egypt". The symptoms mentioned in the book would match it: itchy ulcers (Job 2:8), body and face so disfigured that Job was not recognizable (Job 2:12), ulceration both internally and externally, making Job's breath smell and his whole body to stink (Job 19:17,20). This is why he sought refuge outside the town, on the ash heap which was the Old Testament equivalent of 'gehenna', a figure later to be used for condemnation. The sores bred worms (Job 7:5), appearing like clods of earth, opening and secreting, leaving the body swollen and emaciated (Job 16:8). Nightmares (Job 3:25; 7:4,14) and a sensation of choking (Job 7:15) stopped him sleeping, and his days were spent in exhaustion (Job 7:1-4). His bones were in agony, feeling as if they were on fire (Job 30:30) or as if they were being tortured in the stocks (Job 13:27), or being pulled off (Job 30:17). He was helpless, and the kids from poor families teased his futile attempts to stand up (Job 19:18). The disease was thought to be incurable, and so he longed for death (Job 3:20), actually coming to agree with his wife. Again, Job is cast as receiving Israel's curses for having broken the covenant, a leper doomed to death when he was innocent, in the spirit of the Lord Jesus. He is as Judah in exile. Leprosy was Divine curse, just as was fire and whirlwind in Job 1. He was being treated as a sinner.

Isaiah's description of Israel as "from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness... but wounds, and bruises and putrifying sores" (Is. 1:6) is couched in this picture of Job. As if Job represents apostate Israel, although personally innocent; in the spirit of the Lord Jesus. These types of wounds made them ritually unclean. In Isaiah's first context, the suffering servant was King Hezekiah. Yet all Israel were to see themselves as 'in' him, as spiritual Israel are to see themselves as in Christ. "He was oppressed", as Israel at that time were being "oppressed" by Assyria. As they were covered in wounds and spiritual sickness (Is. 1:5,6), so the suffering servant bore their diseases and rose again in salvation victory. Significantly, Isaiah 40-53 speak of the one servant, whereas Isaiah 54-66 speak of the "servants" who fulfill in principle the work of the singular servant. The suffering servant, based upon Job, was a people embodied in the future Lord Jesus.

Job 2:8 He took for himself a potsherd to scrape himself with- The word for "potsherd", a piece of broken earthenware, is used repeatedly about Judah in exile (Is. 30:14; 45:9; Jer. 19:1; Lam. 4:2; Ez. 23:34). Job is presented as their representative.

And he sat among the ashes- Another similarity with Abraham, whose seed Job is presented as being (Gen. 18:27). The epilogue and prologue to Job are evidently related. Job begins sitting in dust and ashes and ends repenting in dust and ashes (Job 2:8; 42:6). The silence of the friends at the opening of the book is matched by the silence after God has finally spoken (Job 40:4). Job intercedes for his children (Job 1:5) and ends up interceding for his friends. Job begins with the description of being the Lord's servant; and the book concludes on the same note (Job 42:7,8). The question of course is: 'So what's the equivalent of the 'Satan' figure in the epilogue?'. The omission is intended and obvious. Ultimately the answer is the essence of the whole book: the 'Satan', the adversary, is none other than God Himself, in His love.

Job 2:9 Then his wife said to him-

Job's wife was not slain. Although she tells him to "Curse God" just as the satan had pondered whether Job would "Curse God" if he lost everything (Job 1:11; 2:5). Just as Eve repeats the words of the serpent to Adam. Her suggestion that Job commit suicide is hard to make sense of. At best, it is betrayal of her husband in his hardest moment. She was the woman whom he testifies he loved and had never looked upon another woman; but she distances herself from him in his time of greatest need. She doesn't morally or spiritually stand with him and comfort him. She encourages blasphemy of God. We note that Job achieved his great standing before God with a wife who was clearly not a spiritual woman and even a blasphemer, and whose words betrayed him at his time of greatest need.

She has just lost her own ten children, and now she wants her husband to die too. She could be left an economic and social outcast. For women of those days, the purpose of marriage was stability and material provision. Hence the powerful and wealthy males were the most attractive. Now Job had lost everything, she found him unattractive, and may well have wished his death so she could try to find another partner. This is why her advice that he curse God and commit suicide is harsher than even that of Eliphaz, who at least appeals for Job to repent: "Agree with God, and experience peace. This is how good things will come to you. Please receive instruction from His mouth, and lay up His words in your heart. If you return to the Almighty, you shall be built up" (Job 22:21-23). But she remained with Job, and we are left to assume that it is she who is the later mother of Job's further ten children. Given everything went wrong for Job that could go wrong, we almost expect to read of her leaving him. But she doesn't. She has something a bit more to her than her betrayal and foolishness. She spent 180 months, 15 years, carrying Job's children, as well as presumably raising them. Job comments that during his affliction, his wife complained that his breath smelt (Job 19:17). The satan asked that God touch "all that [Job] has" (Job 1:11), but his wife was not slain; although we could argue that he lost relationship with her. But she is blessed with a further ten children at the end. Although Job divided the inheritance between his sons and his daughters (Job 42:15), which was unusual. No provision was made for his wife. And no comment is made about her restored fortunes. Job calls her "foolish" and God uses the same words about the friends in Job 42:8. Finally "all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before" rejoice with Job at his restoration in Job 42:11. But his wife isn't specifically mentioned. There's a lot to ponder here; but presumably we are to

understand that she too is converted by Job, from blasphemy and folly [a "foolish woman"] to wisdom. And she was blessed; for having ten children and a large family was surely seen as Divine blessing.

Jewish thinking came to be influenced by Babylonian ideas of a dualistic cosmos, split between God and some 'Satan' figure. The book of Job is a corrective to this, in that it teaches that evil comes from God, and any Satan figure is under His total control. Yet a mere skim reading of the prologue to Job has led some to the very opposite conclusion. Significantly, the apostate Jewish writing *The Testament Of Job* completely twists the intent of the Biblical record, and adds into it the common misconceptions concerning Satan- e.g. it claims of Job's wife: "Satan followed her along the road, walking stealthily, and leading her astray... [Job warns her] 'Do you not see Satan standing behind you and unsettling your reasoning?'" (23:11; 26:6). These classical images of 'Satan' have to be *added in* to the Biblical record- because they are simply not there in the Biblical text. These ideas of women being easily influenced by a cosmic Satan figure are thereby deconstructed here; Job's wife is presented just as a real woman, making observations which many secular people would make.

Do you still maintain your integrity? Renounce God, and die- "Renounce" or "curse" is a word with two meanings; it can also be translated 'bless'. So she may also have been quipping that blessing God, as Job has done so far in the narrative, all the same leads to death. The Hebrew word translated in NEV "renounce" or AV "curse" is *barak*, the usual word for "bless". It is commonly used in the prologue (Job 1:5,10,11,21; 2:5,9). The ambiguity is intentional. This ambiguity feeds into the overall message- that man cannot in fact discern between Divine blessing and curse. The Lord's final answer is that we only see a fraction of His ways, we have no right to question let alone rail against His ways. If we trust Him, we shall be saved. But that means submitting our sense of right and wrong, fair endings, justice etc. beneath the reality of Him.

All the spiritual and philosophical questions notwithstanding, Job is to be recognized [at least at this point] for realizing that we serve God for nothing, because we are His, and not in view of any personal reward- neither in this life nor beyond. Should we be condemned at judgment day, our attitude should be 'Thank You for the honour of having served You'. He will later say that even though God counts him as His enemy, even if God slays him, he will still trust Him (Job 13:15,24). This is trust, relationship, in the face of every reason to give it up; and in the face of a total lack of explanation from God as to *why*. In the face of every human cry of injustice, deprivation of legitimate rights etc. This is what James calls the patience / endurance of Job. Bearing in mind that at the end of the book, God still gives no reason *why*. There is some human suffering and experience which is not the chastening of a loving Heavenly Father, that is not the discipline that seems unpleasant at the time but later yields the fruit of righteousness. Job's sufferings were "without cause" (:3). And no cause is finally given.

Job does in fact do what she says- he does curse God, and he does seek to die (Job 3:20). Again we see that his initial strong response to the test was good, but he failed to retain it.

The LXX at this point adds a lot more detail, which is very much the language of Lamentations concerning the Jews after the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem: "And when much time had passed, his wife said to him, How long wilt thou hold out, saying, Behold, I wait yet a little while, expecting the hope of my deliverance? for, behold, thy memorial is abolished from the earth, even thy sons and daughters, the

pangs and pains of my womb which I bore in vain with sorrows; and thou thyself sittest down to spend the nights in the open air among the corruption of worms, and I am a wanderer and a servant from place to place and house to house, waiting for the setting of the sun, that I may rest from my labours and my pangs which now beset me: but say some word against the Lord, and die".

Job 2:10 But he said to her, You speak as one of the foolish women would speak- "The foolish" is the term used by the restoration prophets for the unfaithful in Israel; and her perspective is therefore set up as the wrong model which they were following (Jer. 17:11; Ez. 13:3).

What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this Job didn't sin with his lips- The hand of God creating evil (Job 2:10,11) must surely refer to God's "Angels of evil" (Ps. 78:49) rather than to man- Cyrus had to be taught that no one except God (including human satans!) created evil (Is. 45:5-7). See on Job 1:6; 26:13; 30:21. The major theme of the book of Job is that God brought the problems into Job's life and that eventually they made him a more righteous person (Job 2:10; 16:11; 19:21; 23:16; 42:11). Notice that Job did not believe that only good things came from God; he nowhere complains about Satan bringing the problems. Job realized that his sufferings had made him come to know God in practice rather than just in theory - "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee" (Job 42:5). Seeing that problems make us more righteous people if we respond correctly to them (Heb. 12:5-11), why would a sinful, wicked being, who wants to turn us away from God, bring these things into our lives, when actually they only make us more righteous and closer to God?

I have pointed out that Job all through rejects the ideas promoted by the friends, the view of traditional wisdom (especially emphasized by Bildad, Job 8:8-10), that various supernatural 'Satan' monsters and figures were responsible for his experiences. Job began by saying that we receive both good and evil from God's hand (Job 2:10 cp. Is. 45:5-7). And he ends saying the same - that the Lord brought the trouble upon him (Job 42:11). He repeatedly sees God as the source of all his affliction. Hence God can say that Job has spoken about Him that which is right (Job 42:8). But Job came to realize the massive practical extent of what he had previously known in theory, what he had "by the hearing of the ear". Now his eye saw / perceived that truly no plan of God can be thwarted, by any of the various 'Satan' monsters imagined by men (Job 42:2). We too may say that we believe in the omnipotence of God; but such a belief requires us to throw out all beliefs in supernatural Satan figures. And that's not a merely intellectual exercise; to see the tragedies and cruelties of our lives as being ultimately from God and under His control is something which shakes us to the core. See on Job 41:1.

I discuss on Job 1:21 whether the comment that Job didn't sin "with his lips" could imply he was responding in a standard, formulaic way, when his heart was not matching his spoken words. Possibly we are to infer that Job did curse God in his heart- exactly what he feared his children were doing.

We wonder whether Job is not starting to slip when instead of blessing Yahweh as he did previously, he instead argues that any blessing from God must also have evil along with it. God's blessings, however, are never articulated in that way. The promised blessings to Abraham and his seed hint at no accompanying evil. God's blessings have no curses added to them (Prov. 10:22 "The blessing of the Yahweh makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it"). The blessing of multiplied cattle had no curse of diseased cattle with it (Ps. 107:38). God reverses curses into blessings (1

Sam. 2:7,8), with no suggestion that those blessings still have some negatives attached to them.

Job 2:11 Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that had come on him, they each came from his own place- I have suggested earlier that the friends were influenced by the Satan figure and effectively became the Satan to Job. They "came" to him just as the evil "came" to him.

Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite- These people are traceable in the records of the patriarchs, again suggesting an early date for the historical Job. Eliphaz and Tema are associated with the Idumeans, the people of Esau (Gen. 36:4); Shuah was one of Abraham's children by Keturah. They were all three from various parts of Edom, areas elsewhere noted in the Bible for their pride and wisdom. They were all related to the Abraham family. They act true to type in their pride and appeal to their own wisdom.

And they made an appointment together- They were the "sons of God" who came together on set occasions "before Yahweh" (Job 1:6); so it seems that such meetings were not uncommon for them, and perhaps they came together as it were for an extraordinary meeting, or perhaps the dialogues presented occurred at their next regular meeting.

To come to sympathize with him and to comfort him- See on Job 19:12-14. In 2:11 the friends came "to mourn with him and to comfort him", although Job said he turned to them for comfort in vain (Job 16:2). The Hebrew here in 2:11 is identical to that in Ps. 69:20, describing Christ looking in vain for comforters. Job was the prototype of Isaiah's suffering servant and thereby a type of the Lord Jesus. "Comfort" is the word Job finally uses when he says he 'repents' (Job 42:6). Perhaps their aim from the start was to lead him to the repentance they wrongly imagined he must make for the sins which they mistakenly thought lay behind his sufferings. Judah in exile had none to truly bemoan them, just as Job didn't. The same word is used of this in Is. 51:19; Jer. 22:10.

Job 2:12 When they lifted up their eyes from a distance and didn't recognize him- The friends "knew him not" as the Jews also did not recognize the suffering servant because of the great physical torment (Is. 52:14; 53:3). Like those who crucified Christ "they sat down" watching him; "and sitting down they watched him there".

They raised their voices and wept; and they each tore his robe, and sprinkled dust on their heads toward the sky- The descriptions of the elders of Zion sitting on the ground in mourning for Jerusalem in Lam. 2:10 recalls the friends mourning for Job- thus associating both them and Job with a condemned Israel: "The elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground in silence; they have thrown dust on their heads and put on sackcloth; the young women of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground".

Job 2:13 So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great- This great grief was intended to represent "the day of grief and of desperate sorrow" that was to come upon a condemned Judah (s.w. Is. 17:11; Jer. 15:18). This mourning connects with the mourning of Ezekiel over Judah: "I came to the exiles at Tel-abib, who were dwelling by the Chebar canal, and I sat where they were dwelling. And I sat there overwhelmed among them seven days" (Ez. 3:15). Job clearly is representative both of Judah, and,

through his leprosy, with the suffering, saving servant of Is. 53. Just as the Lord is representative of His condemned people, He who knew no sin "made sin for us".

JOB CHAPTER 3

Job 3:1 After this Job opened his mouth, and cursed the day of his birth- Job although righteous was representative of a condemned Israel, whose "days" were likewise "cursed" (s.w. Is. 65:20). This is the essence of the representative nature of the work of the Lord Jesus, the suffering servant whose description took Job as its prototype. He was ultimately innocent and yet representative of a cursed people, and like Job, through His intercession for sinners He could bring salvation for them.

Job will later lament that he has suffered for "months", so there is a considerable time period referenced by "After this...". I discussed on Job 1:21 how Job begins by blessing God without sinning, and then in Job 2:10 we read that he did not "sin with his lips", implying he maybe did in his heart. Now, we have Job cursing. And his words will later be rebuked by God and Elihu, and he will deeply repent of them.

By so strongly seeking death (:21), Job is in fact going along with the bad advice of his wife in Job 2:9- to curse God and die, to commit suicide. He has cursed the day of his birth- and a curse, once uttered, was considered final and to have somehow achieved what it asked for. His cursing his birth day and night of conception, wishing them to no longer exist in the calendar, is effectively suicide. Likewise he will utter seven curses, four against the night and three against the day, with language continually allusive to the days of creation. In :4 he basically says "Let there be darkness", alluding to God's "Let there be light". Paul says that God "commanded the light to shine out of darkness" at creation; Job says "May light *not* shine..." (:4). There was darkness upon the face of the deep, and God changed that. But Job wants that darkness to return. He wishes to un-create what God has created. This surely is not far off cursing God. The five references to "light" in Gen. 1 are matched by Job's five usages of the word "darkness". Job commands day and night to perish in :3 ["Let the day perish in which I was born, the night in which it was said, 'There is a boy conceived'"], whereas day and night were created in Gen. 1:3-5. God's creative "Let there be..." is matched by Job's "Let there perish / *not* be...".

Job curses his birthday. His children had been judged by God with fire from Heaven for cursing God on their birthdays. Seeing life is given by God, he is getting dangerously close to doing what they did. Job's children were slain by Divine judgment despite his intercession for them. This is another hint that Job was *counted* righteous by God- this is one of the hints that he was not in fact in reality as spotless as God saw him.

Job 3:2 Job responded- "Answered". We could read this as Job's answer to his suffering. But the 28 other occurrences of "answered / responded" in Job are always of a person answering what another has said. Who is in view here, seeing the friends haven't yet spoken, and apparently neither God nor Satan have spoken to Job directly? The only candidate is Job's wife. She has told him to curse God and die. And his speech now pretty much wishes to do that, and he implies that he had indeed tried to commit suicide, but death eluded him. He curses his birth and his whole existence [which was given by God], and wishes to die. This is just what she told him to do- to curse and die. As noted earlier, he initially responds well to her. But over time, he gives in. We recall that when Elijah likewise wanted to die in 1 Kings 19:4 ["I have

had enough, Yahweh; take my life"], God responded by ending his prophetic ministry. So although Job 3 is his response to his wife, it is also surely directed to God his creator, more than lamenting that God had given him life, and wishing God's creation to be reversed, the "Let there be light" to become "Let there be darkness".

Possibly the idea of 'response' is an indication that Job was present at the dialogue between God and the Satan.

Job 3:3 Let the day perish in which I was born, the night in which it was said, 'There is a boy conceived'- Heb. 'the night which said...'. He personifies darkness as a being, and sees himself as having been born out of that darkness. A great theme of the book of Job is that God brings light out of darkness, and is in control of the darkness; see on :4.

Job 3:4 Let that day be darkness. Don't let God from above seek for it, neither let the light shine on it- Job sees a chasmic difference between light and darkness; but the end of the book reveals the truth specifically taught to the exiles in Is. 45:5-7, that both light and darkness were from God. Job is seeking to undo creation, where God said "Let there be light" and created the first day. He is going wrong; this is beyond lament, this is wanting to undo God's creative work.

Job 3:5 Let darkness and the shadow of death claim it for their own. Let a cloud dwell on it. Let all that makes black the day terrify it- An allusion to the blackness caused by the desert sandstorms called "khamsin", which appeared to turn day into thick darkness. God noted that allusion, and appears at the end of the book in such a whirlwind, to reveal the light of His grace. The appearance of the "shadow of death" in the whirlwind shows that God is engaging with Job's words, but not answering. He shows that He in fact is in and through that "shadow of death". Job feels he is facing death, he wishes for the shadow of death to engulf him. But God's later comment is that "Have the gates of death been revealed to you? Or have you seen the gates of the shadow of death?" (Job 38:17). He totally discounts Job's experience, as if to say 'No, in fact you saw nothing'. Not the sympathetic response man looks for at all. But that is the point of the book- that this God is far above us, and in His final end, God taken to the final term, is very pitiful and of tender mercy.

Job 3:6 As for that night, let thick darkness seize on it. Let it not rejoice among the days of the year. Let it not be counted in the number of the months- The "thick darkness" continues the allusion to the "khamsin" whirlwind sandstorm (see on :5), which brings a palpably "thick darkness". As discussed on :5, God will later respond to this desire for "thick darkness" by saying that the darkness is somehow the bound for the seas of chaos, a limit to what evil can do to man. God "wrapped it in thick darkness, marked out for it My bound, set bars and doors, and said, 'Here you may come, but no further'" (Job 38:9-11). The thick darkness which Job thinks is the final end for man, is in fact a limit which is under God's control and used to limit man's suffering.

Job 3:7 Behold, let that night be barren. Let no joyful voice come therein- More than wishing that his existence and birth would be somehow cancelled, the desire that his day of birth be "barren" would suggest "let no one be born in it". The restoration prophecies repeatedly use the word for "joyful voice" to speak of the joy which would again come from the restoration of Zion (Is. 61:7; 65:14; Jer. 31:7 and often). The

blackness of despair which Job experienced was that of the exiles, and yet it could all be turned around, as happened for Job.

Job 3:8 Let them curse it who curse the day, who are ready to rouse up Leviathan-

These very words will be used by God in Job 41:1: "There is none fierce enough to arouse Leviathan". God mocks the idea that man can control Leviathan: "Can you pull in Leviathan with a fishhook or tie down its tongue with a rope? Can you put a cord through its nose or pierce its jaw with a hook?" (Job 41:1,2). The idea was that the mythical dragon, Leviathan, had the power to make some days of the year 'black days', and Job calls on magicians or anyone with powerful curses to get Leviathan on the job and blot out the night he was conceived and the day he was born. But God laughs at this, and says that not even the intensely angry Job was fierce enough to arouse Leviathan to do that job. In fact, God says that He plays with Leviathan as with a bird, and sets a banquet before him, just for fun (Job 40:29,30). Likewise Ps. 104:26 speaks of Leviathan as God's plaything: "this Leviathan You formed to play with". Job 40:19 LXX says the same of Leviathan: "This one is the beginning of the Lord's shaping, made to be played with by His Angels".

Job says that the friends who came to mourn with him were "ready to raise up Leviathan" – or, as it can also be translated with allusion to the friends, "to raise up their mourning" (see A.V.). They thought that Leviathan, the 'Satan' figure they believed was real, could be blamed. But Job continually sees God as the ultimate source of what had happened to him, and understood the whole matter in terms of 'how can a man be just with *God*' rather than 'how can a man get Satan off his back?'. A key passage is Job 9:24: "If it be not he, who then is it?" (R.V.); or as the G.N.B. puts it: "If God didn't do it, who did?". After all the theories of 'Who's responsible for all this evil in Job's life?', Job concludes that the source simply has to be God – and not anyone else. See on Job 1:1; 9:24.

Job 3:9 Let the stars of its twilight be dark. Let it look for light, but have none, neither let it see the eyelids of the morning- The stars of the morning rejoiced for joy at Israel's creation (Job 38:7 s.w. :7). Job wishes this to all be somehow annulled. But God's joy in creating His people would be finally justified in His restoration of them, as happened with Job. Continually in Job 3, he asks for darkness to come upon him. Quite possibly God's response is in Job 38:2: "Who is this one darkening [My] plan with words without knowledge?". To just wish for death is a cop out. By doing so, Job was darkening God's plan. Job wishes that the night never sees the morning stars- that it continues for ever. God's response is that the morning stars sung for joy at creation (Job 38:7). His answers don't at all engage with Job's complaints nor questions, although His responses do allude to them- but in a way that ignores them. He is presenting Himself as so far above Job and his issues... and that is in fact His 'answer'; or shall we say, response.

Job 3:10 because it didn't shut up the doors of my mother's womb, nor did it hide trouble from my eyes- "Trouble" is the word used of Joseph's "trouble" (Gen. 41:51). Job was failing to see that his trouble had marvellously passed away and he was totally restored. God would save Israel from their "trouble" if they repented (Dt. 26:7 s.w.). "Trouble" is the word used in Is. 53:11 of the suffering servant's "travail of... soul". Again, Job was the prototype for the suffering servant.

Job 3:11 Why didn't I die from the womb? Why didn't I give up the spirit when my

mother bore me?- Now begin the "why" questions... and this is exactly what God will refuse to answer, and even criticizes Job for. This whole depressive lament is more or less repeated by Jeremiah when in depression (Jer. 20:17,18). We can learn from that how we should turn to Biblical precedent and example even in the darkest times of depression. But further, we see how Job's experiences are again understood as the prototype for those of the righteous remnant at the time of Judah's sufferings at the hands of the Babylonians.

Job 3:12 Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breast, that I should nurse?- Job in the nadir of depression wishes that his mother had not placed him as her newborn child on her knees, nor offered her breast to him. Job here despises the nurture and nursing he was shown as an infant. God's response will be that He nurtures and nurses all manner of wild animals- baby lions, ravens and other birds, mountain goats... (Job 38:39,41; 39:4,30). And that is the wonder of His greatness. Again, as discussed on :9, this is not an answer to Job, but it is some kind of response and engagement. The simple point is that His horizon is so far wider than that of Job.

Job 3:13 For now should I have lain down and been quiet. I should have slept, then I would have been at rest- If Job had died as a newborn, he felt he would have "slept". He clearly understood death as unconsciousness, which shows that even in those early days, there was a clear understanding of death amongst the believers. For almost everyone else had ideas of an immortal soul consciously surviving death. But his whole argument is that death is unconsciousness.

Job 3:14 with kings and counsellors of the earth, who built up waste places for themselves- This is rather similar to the description of Babylon's king coming to the grave with "all the kings of the nations" in Isaiah 14. The depressed Jews in exile likewise saw their destiny beyond the grave as being identical with that of their Babylonian oppressors.

Job 3:15 or with princes who had gold, who filled their houses with silver- Their houses could refer to their burial tombs.

Job 3:16 or as a hidden untimely birth I had not been, as infants who never saw light- The description of Miriam in Num. 12:12 LXX is quoting from Job 3:16 LXX; as if both Job and Miriam represented apostate Israel.

Job 3:17 There the wicked cease from troubling. There the weary are at rest- Is. 57:20 identifies Job's troubled and 'not at rest' experience with that of the suffering, apostate Jews of the exile: "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt".

Job 3:18 There the prisoners are at ease together. They don't hear the voice of the taskmaster- To liken God to a hard taskmaster with a harsh voice... is surely not far off cursing God. Job in his depression feels as Israel suffering in Egypt (Ex. 3:7; 5:6,13), considering that death was the only way out of the misery of hearing the "voice of the taskmaster". But he fails to see that out of that misery they were redeemed and restored to their land. This is alluded to when attention is drawn to how God's creations "hear not the voice, the shouts and curses of the driver" (Job 39:7).

God's people didn't have to "hear" the voice of the taskmaster; there was a way of redemption offered.

Job 3:19 The small and the great are there. The servant is free from his master- God has repeatedly spoken of "My servant Job". But Job wishes to be free of God his master- surely not far off from cursing God. Job considers God a hard taskmaster (:18), just as the condemned one talent man in the parable does. Job was a master, but he now felt as a servant who wished to be free. Whose servant was he? Surely God's. Job even yearned to be free of God, a feeling he later expresses. But he never attempts to cut the ties totally; for he knows that by the nature of things, he can't. And he is later to be taught that those ties that bind were nothing less than God's love and saving grace.

Job 3:20 Why is light given- Job recognizes that the light is a gift from God, and will be brought to realize throughout the book, and especially in the speeches of God and Elihu at the end, that the darkness likewise is a gift from Him. And this was the truth which the exiles had to learn (Is. 45:5-7 is addressed to them).

To him who is in misery, life to the bitter in soul- Hezekiah, a potential fulfilment of the suffering servant who was based upon Job, was likewise given life when he was "bitter in soul" (Is. 38:15,17).

Job 3:21 who long for death, but it doesn't come; and dig for it more than for hidden treasures- Job's desire for death was not fulfilled. And this stood for all time as a lesson of how the ties that bind in life, the sense of being hedged up and tied down in an unbearable position, are in fact the ties and cords of Divine love.

Job 3:22 who rejoice exceedingly, and are glad, when they can find the grave?- This was in Job's imagination. For nobody surely commits suicide with joy, and a final fear of death is part of the human condition.

Job 3:23 Why is light given- See on :20.

To a man whose way is hidden- see on Job 10:11,12; Is. 40:27. Job pretty much hates God because he cannot see his path forward. Simple trust in final salvation, having a Kingdom perspective, means we will not worry so much about our future in this brief life. "Hidden" is "obscured" / "darkened", "placed under a cloud". Finally the cloud of the whirlwind appears at the end of the book and Job finally realizes that out of that comes the light of God's glory.

Whom God has hedged in?- Job is feeling confined, imprisoned, blocked in. But this was what happened to Judah in their judgment (Hos. 2:6); Job although righteous was the representative of Judah. We know from the prologue that, as Satan observes, God had indeed fenced Job in. But for his good. But Job senses that fencing / hedging in- and sees it as God's unreasonable behaviour towards him. Just as the child sees 'hedging in' as parental heavyhandedness. We, along with Job, consider slaying all your kids with a Divine tornado... as not exactly hedging in. But finally, that was to be Job's path to eternity, hedged in by God.

Job 3:24 For my sighing comes before I eat. My groanings are poured out like water- But Job's "sighing" came to an end when he was restored. The same word is used of how the sighing of the captives in exile (Lam. 1:4,11,21,22) would likewise end when they were restored (Is. 35:10; 51:11).

Job 3:25 For the thing which I fear comes upon me, that of which I was afraid has happened to me- Job seems to be saying that the loss of blessing was what he had always secretly feared. This somewhat nuances his earlier statement that if we receive good from God we must also receive evil. The Satan was again not far wrong. The material blessings did mean a lot to Job and he admits he feared losing them. It was not until he came to see their total irrelevance in the far bigger picture, that they were restored. For in the context of infinity, whether we are rich or poor in this life is of zero account.

Job's sufferings were a type of those of the Lord Jesus; and as for Job, so for the Lord, the sufferings of the cross were the thing which He had greatly feared all his life. Perhaps the thing which the Lord greatly feared, according to the Psalms, was feeling forsaken by God. And true enough to the Job type, this came upon Him.

Job 3:26 I was not at ease, neither was I quiet, neither had I rest; but trouble came- There are some very evident ways in which Job spiritually grew. Here he originally says that his life previous to his afflictions had not been a life of ease; but as a result of his suffering, he realized that actually it had been "at ease" (Job 16:12).

JOB CHAPTER 4

Job 4:1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered-

We now have three cycles of dialogue between Job and his three friends. The book is structured around the number three. After the third cycle, there are three monologues; the poem to wisdom, Job's monologue, and Elihu's speeches. And finally there are three speeches by God, with Job's responses. These things are sandwiched by an epilogue and prologue.

Eliphaz appears to have been the eldest. The friends speak according to age, with Elihu as the youngest coming last. The idea was clearly that the longer you lived, the more wisdom you attained; but this is deconstructed throughout the book.

Job 4:2 If someone ventures to talk with you, will you be grieved? But who can withhold himself from speaking?- Both Job and the friends, including Elihu, so often argue that they cannot but speak. Eliphaz is here saying that whether or not Job agrees that Elihu can talk, he can't withhold himself from speaking; indeed, he argues that nobody could stop themselves from talking. And yet all are brought to silence by God's display of majesty and answers at the end. The drama sets us all up to quip 'If only you had all remained silent as you were at the beginning, when you all sat with Job in silence!'. We *can* control our tongue; but all concerned seemed to think that this was just impossible, and it was part of being human to talk when provoked. But self-control *is* possible.

Job 4:3 Behold, you have instructed many, you have strengthened the weak hands-

Another telling point of contact with Isaiah is found here in 4:3-5. Job had "strengthened the weak hands... and... the feeble knees. But now it (the weakness and feeble knees) is come upon you, and you faint". This is picked up in Is. 35:3,4: "Strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful (Heb. 'hasty'- both are relevant to Job) heart, Be strong... behold, your God will come". Thus Job is representative of the weak-hearted Jews in exile, and his final

deliverance thus points forward to both their restoration and the final coming of the Lord to reestablish God's Kingdom on earth.

Job 4:4 Your words have supported him who was falling, you have strengthened the feeble knees- See on :4. The idea is that now Job himself had weak hands and feeble knees (:3,5), which needed strengthening. This makes him exactly correspond with the situation of the exiles in Is. 35:3,4; the good news of the gospel of restoration was to be experienced by him.

Job 4:5 But now it has come to you, and you faint. It touches you, and you are troubled- "Touch" is the word used by the satan in Job 1:11; 2:5, where satan argues that if Job is 'touched', he will renounce God. This is more evidence that the satan was the friends, on one level. When he fades from the narrative, the friends appear as it were in his place. It may be that Job's satan Angel was the Angel representing the three friends (satans) of Job. Because of His close identification with them, the satan Angel spoke their thoughts as if they were his own- compare Eliphaz's thoughts here with Satan's words of Job 1:9,10. For the connection between the satan and an Angel, see on Job 1:6.

Job 4:6 Isn't your piety your confidence?- The Hebrew can mean both "confidence" and "folly" (s.w. Ps. 85:8). The friends were convinced Job was a fake because he was suffering.

Isn't the integrity of your ways your hope?- Eliphaz seems to be restating Job's convictions, that his upright ways were what his "hope" was predicated upon. But Job through his sufferings comes to "hope" only for death (Job 6:8 s.w.), and feels he now has no "hope" (Job 7:6; 14:19; 17:15; 19:10). Bildad presses the same point as Eliphaz, suggesting that Job had only the "hope" of the hypocrite, and this "hope" would perish (Job 8:13; 27:8). Job had integrity, and on that basis he thought he had "hope". He suffered, and he lost that "hope", because he assumed that his sufferings meant that he was not in fact righteous. He absorbed the false argument of the friends, that he had no hope; whilst at the same time protesting they were falsely accusing him. This is so psychologically credible. And yet he often reflects that he is righteous and is suffering unjustly. And so he is led to the realization that the "hope" of the righteous is by God's grace and not because of the "integrity of [Job's] ways". Judah in captivity likewise lost their "hope" (Ez. 19:5; 37:11). But the message of the restoration prophets was that "there is hope in your end" (Jer. 31:17); they were prisoners or exiles in "hope" (Zech. 9:12).

Job 4:7 Remember now, whoever perished, being innocent? Or where were the upright cut off?- God's opinion of Job was that he was "upright" (Job 1:1 s.w.). But as the drama progresses, the friends argue that if Job were in fact "upright" then God would not be afflicting him (Job 4:7; 8:6 s.w.). Job absorbs this reasoning, and confesses that he is not "upright" and therefore cannot find God (Job 23:7,8 s.w.). He absorbs false guilt and becomes influenced by the guilt placed upon him by his religion and "friends" amongst the "sons of God". It's quite possible that in depression and periods of suffering, we can come to have a lower view of ourselves than that which God has of us; just as at other times we can have a higher view of ourselves spiritually than we ought to. There is true guilt, the guilt which we should take, and false guilt. And Job seems to have picked up the false guilt thrown upon him by Bildad. We too need to learn this difference between false and true guilt. The

language of Isaiah 53 seems to possibly allude here; the Lord was "cut off" and "perished", despite being the ultimately innocent man. This is the ultimate answer to Eliphaz's insistence that innocence and punishment cannot co-exist. And yet his argument is self-contradictory; he says that nobody perishes unless they are guilty; the innocent don't perish. But then, as discussed on :9, he admits that all men perish. All men are made of dust and "they perish forever" (:20).

Job 4:8 According to what I have seen, those who plough iniquity and sow trouble, reap the same- Although the friends are finally rebuked for not speaking rightly about God, Paul quotes these words in Gal. 6:8. This shows that the spirit in the New Testament can at times quote words which may be out of context, and reapply them in a new context. The accusation that Job was reaping the result of his sowing of sin was wrong; but the principle is quoted with approval, that those who sow to the flesh will reap judgment. Eliphaz overlooked the fact that the final reaping was at the last day, and not in this life. Job was driven towards understanding and faith in a "last day" judgment setting things right; for he knew that he was not reaping judgment for some specific sin. He had been righteous- and yet was not reaping the results of it. So he has to conclude that the time of reaping cannot be in this life. And he progressively longs for the coming of that day. Eliphaz may also have in view the fact that it was whilst Job was literally ploughing that the judgment came (Job 1:14). See on :9.

Job 4:9 By the breath of God they perish. By the blast of His anger are they consumed- An allusion to the wind or spirit / breath of God coming from the wilderness and destroying Job's children. See on :8. This is all the language of the destruction of Judah by her enemies (Is. 30:33). Indeed Job's children had sinned, as had the sons [s.w.] / children of Israel. But this didn't mean that Job had personally sinned in such a way as to elicit this judgment. Job is to be understood as representing Judah in captivity. The fact their sons has been destroyed by the invaders was not in fact evidence that all of them had sinned. There was no guilt by association.

It seems Eliphaz is alluding to the creation of man, and arguing that in death, the creation process is reversed. There are many allusions to early Genesis in the book of Job; Job himself has made them in Job 3, where he wishes to be as it were de-created. Eliphaz here surely has in mind Gen. 2:7 where God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being". But now, as we could translate, "By the breath of God they disappear, by the wind of *His* nostrils they come to an end". But Eliphaz is applying the language of the common death of all men to those who are particular sinners. He fails to see that in fact all men are sinners and all must die as a result. Thus his theory is shown to be false- for his argument is that very big sinners get their lives ended and the spirit withdrawn from them. The fact is, this happens to all men. He fell for the [very human] tendency to differentiate between supposedly petty sins, and big ones. The account of Adam and Eve's sin is surely there to warn us against that. They 'only' ate a fruit... and so much judgment happened. Moses 'only' made an angry throw away comment... and he was barred from entry to the land. Ananias and Sapphira 'only' exaggerated their generosity... and were struck dead. And here is the intellectual, theological contradiction in Eliphaz's position. He argues on one hand that Job's suffering is because he has sinned. But on the other, that all men have sinned and must suffer because of it. See on Job 5:6. Likewise he argues here (Job 4:7-11) that God punishes sins like those he supposes Job has committed; but then he goes on to lament man's inability to get right with God (:17-21). And yet it is hard to deny that Job presents us with a man being materially blessed by God for his

righteousness in his life- both before and after his trials. If Job's life shows that there is a relationship between deed and consequence, and his righteousness means blessing- then surely it is not in fact so unreasonable to assume that lack of blessing from God is related to sin and failure? And being struck with leprosy and fire from Heaven is clearly the language of Divine judgment. It is also hard to deny from Old Testament history that God does also punish major sins, and dramatically. We think of the flood, Babel etc. We can easily see the contradictions in Eliphaz's arguments, but those contradictions are in fact tensions which are very real. And God refuses to give answers to them in His final appearance. He makes no comment on the whole [to us] critical relationship between human behaviour and Divine response. He just says that the questions are inappropriate and beyond us. Likewise we note in Job 15:6 that the words of Eliphaz are strangely agreed with by Elihu and God in the end: "Your own mouth condemns you, and not I; your own lips testify against you". Just as the words and suspicions of the Satan are found to be partly true- in that Job does curse God.

Job 4:10 The roaring of the lion and the voice of the fierce lion, the teeth of the young lions, are broken- This and :11 pictures a family of lions perishing. Perhaps Job is the old lion, his wife the lioness, and the cubs are his sons.

Job 4:11 The old lion perishes for lack of prey. The cubs of the lioness are scattered abroad- See on :11. Ez. 19 likes Judah at the time of Babylon's invasion as being like a family of lions which died out. Again we see how the book of Job was reapplied to the situation with Judah at the time of their exile and restoration. Living broadly at the time of the patriarchs, the reference to the scattering of the wicked may also refer to what happened at Babel. This would have been a strong evidence, in their minds, that sin nets Divine punishment in this life.

Job 4:12 Now a thing was secretly brought to me; my ear received a whisper of it- This is typical of the sources of truth many turn to today. A person claims they had a secret revelation, unconfirmed by anyone else, unheard by anyone else, and incapable of any peer review. The contents of the claims are also unverifiable. But that is accepted as 'truth' by many. The book of Job concludes with God appealing to that which is before the eyes of every man- His power in creation, His way in history, the logical implications of the fact the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper, which lead to the conclusion that there must be a day of judgment to come, and that God must finally be revealed openly.

Job 4:13 In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on men- As noted on :12, Eliphaz claims nobody else heard this message, all other men were asleep, and he implies that he must be believed. Simply on the basis of his say so. And so many are eager to do that, rather than lift their own eyes and hearts to the skies and seek God for what and how He is and has revealed Himself.

Job 4:14 fear came on me, and trembling, which made all my bones shake- This language of fear and shaking bones is that used in Ps. 53:5 about the condemned; but Eliphaz presents this as reason to accept him as telling the truth!

Job 4:15 Then a spirit passed before my face. The hair of my flesh stood up- It's unclear whether Eliphaz is making this up (for how can a man living before mirrors

were invented, in the darkness, knows what his hair looked like)- or whether it actually happened. But we will note on :18,21 that what he says is not completely true.

Job 4:16 It stood still, but I couldn't discern its appearance. A form was before my eyes. Silence; then I heard a voice saying- Or, a still voice, recalling the voice heard by Elijah. Eliphaz admits he couldn't discern the form and appearance of whatever revealed truth to him. Yahweh's form appeared to Moses (s.w. Num. 12:8) and indeed to all concerned in the book of Job, in His final theophany in the storm and whirlwind. That was to be the source of truth- and not the vaguely remembered, jumbled claims of a man like Eliphaz which couldn't be corroborated by his audience. The vision contrasts directly with Dt. 4:12, where Israel did *not* see any "form" but only heard a voice, the Divine word, which they were to respond to. But Eliphaz claims he saw the "form" right before his eyes. The form seemed to be more significant to him than the content, the voice of the words.

Job 4:17 'Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?'- Job did justify himself more than God (Job 32:2) and this effectively was to be read as making himself *more* righteous than God. Here we have the essence of the problem in the book of Job- not suffering *per se*, but how can man be just or right with God. The answer is given at length in Rom. 1-8- by faith in God's imputation of righteousness to us, by grace. This is how man can be "pure" before God, by His forgiveness and imputation of righteousness (s.w. Ps. 51:2,7). This question as to how to be pure before God was that asked by David, after his sin for which there was no sacrifice. And the answer was the same- to confess sin, and throw ourselves upon the grace which brings imputed righteousness to us. Job was not perfect, as he himself comes to admit; and yet he was counted righteous by God, both at the start and the end of the book. But any attempt to make ourselves righteous without this Divinely provided mechanism- is effectively to raise ourselves up above God. And that is the problem and failure of all works-based religions. The offer of being cleansed (s.w. "pure") by their maker was what the exiles were offered in the new covenant (s.w. Jer. 33:8; Ez. 36:25,33; 37:23; Mal. 3:3).

Job 4:18 Behold, He puts no trust in His servants. He charges His angels with folly- It can be argued that the book of Job is a dialogue concerning evil and suffering, with three popular views being represented by the three friends. These views are examined and corrected by the personal history of Job, as well as by the epilogue and prologue to the book. Eliphaz seems to be representative of the idea that Job is being hit by supernaturally controlled evil- Eliphaz speaks of a force of darkness (Job 22:10,11) and sinful or faulty Angels living in an unclean Heaven (Job 4:18; 15:15). Yet the *answer* to all this is that the Satan figure is under God's control, all Job's misfortunes come from *God* and His Angels- one of whom may have been called 'the adversary' ('Satan')- are in fact all perfectly obedient to Him and not disobedient. And finally, Eliphaz and the friends are rebuked for their various wrong understandings, with God declaring Himself supreme and ultimate sovereign. Likewise Bildad's view of Angels in Job 25:5 "The stars are not pure in God's eyes" is corrected by God in Job 38:7, when He says that "the morning stars sang together and all the Sons of God shouted for joy".

Job 4:19 How much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in

the dust, who are crushed before the moth!- Eliphaz seems to be saying that there is no way that man can ever be right with God; because, as noted on :17, he was still ignorant of the wonderful truth of imputed righteousness and justification by grace through faith. He has a very low view of human nature. Although we are indeed dust and crushed by moths as our bodies decompose, all that we posit about human nature is true of the Lord Jesus- who fully shared our nature, and yet was holy and undefiled. The Bible in fact has a far higher view of the possibilities inherent within human nature than many do today, represented as they are by the false reasoning of Eliphaz.

Job 4:20 Between morning and evening they are destroyed. They perish forever without any regarding it- Again, Eliphaz is wrong to assume that all men "perish forever". Job correctly reasons himself towards a belief in the resurrection of the body at the last day (Job 19:25-27). And God does indeed "regard" the death of His precious ones (Ps. 116:15). It's because Eliphaz has no sense of a future judgment and reward that he assumes all Divine reward and judgment must be in this life- for he sees death as an eternal perishing, which God isn't much interested in. Quite possibly Job initially had the same belief. But he is led by the experience of suffering "without cause" in this life to grasp that there must surely be a resurrection, judgment and eternal reward at a future point (Job 19:25-27). Likewise he apparently believes in Yam and Tannin the sea monsters- who have no real existence. Job later pretty well repeats the reasoning of Eliphaz here, that man perishes forever: "You prevail forever against the hope of a mortal. He passes away; You change his face, and send him away. His children are honoured, and he does not know; they are humbled, and he does not perceive it" (Job 14:20,21). Job will respond angrily to Eliphaz, but he often pretty much says the same things.

Job 4:21 Isn't their tent cord plucked up within them? They die, and that without wisdom'- LXX "For he blows upon them, and they are withered"- the language of Isaiah concerning the perishing of the glory of Judah at the hands of the Babylonians. These words are true for the unbelievers, but are not universally true; indeed Peter appears to allude to this verse by saying that once his tent has been taken down, yet he still has the hope of eternal life at the resurrection of the body at the last day (2 Pet. 1:13,14).

JOB CHAPTER 5

Job 5:1 Call now; is there any who will answer you? To which of the holy ones will you appeal?-

"Answer" and "appeal" is legal language. Eliphaz rightly guesses that Job wants his day in court with God. Job says as much in Job 13:22: "Then make a plea and I will certainly be a respondent; or let me make a charge and You reply to me!". This 'having your day in court' is so important to people in our age. But we have no case at all, no matter how insistent we are that our version of justice is on our side, no matter how persuaded we are that we suffered wrongly and unjustly. We have no case and no valid complaint; man cannot legitimately put God in the dock. In the bigger picture of things.

Eliphaz appears to believe that there are Angels or holy ones around God, but Job cannot get sympathy from any of them. This indicates that the idea of a 'court of

heaven', with Angels watching events upon earth, was appreciated by these people. See on Job 1:6.

At that moment, there was indeed nobody who would answer Job nor hear his appeal. Job's desire for these things, for real spiritual friendship and an advocate in Heaven, grew so intense that he comes to visualize an ideal friend, who would not only appreciate his every grief, but who would offer more than commiseration. He came to long for one who would reconcile him with the righteousness of God. Naturally, he would have had in mind Abraham's promised seed. His mind was therefore being prepared to desire the coming of Messiah; in prospect, he was developing a personal understanding and appreciation of the Lord Jesus. In all this, Job is our glorious example. There can be very few who have not experienced the terror of complete spiritual isolation, longing for understanding and true appreciation, but finding none within the ecclesia whom they can turn to. As we look back from our traumas to the glorious reality of Christ's existence, so Job looked forward to it.

Job 5:2 For resentment kills the foolish man, and jealousy kills the simple- "Resentment" is AV "fury"; and the Hebrew translated "jealousy" is also translated "zeal". The idea could be that it is God's fury and jealousy which slays the fool, as happened in the judgment of Judah and her enemies (s.w. Is. 42:13; 59:17; Ez. 5:13; 16:38). Eliphaz sees the "fire of God" which struck Job's family as a sign that they were spiritually foolish. And he continues his allusions to Job's family in :3 and :4.

Eliphaz now assumes Job must be a 'simple fool' for not agreeing with him (also :3). He slips into *ad hominem* reasoning, going for the man not the ball. We notice that- and yet God's engagement with this is to make a massive *ad hominem* attack on Job, as discussed on Job 38:1. We as readers are led to dislike the friends' *ad hominem* attacks on Job. But then God does just that to Job. Again we see how God demonstrates that He is so far above all our reasoning and demands for what we consider 'reasonable' engagement. And yet the end of the Lord in all this is that He is so pitiful and of such tender mercy (James 5:11).

Job 5:3 I have seen the foolish taking root, but suddenly I cursed his habitation- "The foolish" refers obliquely to Job, spreading out as a tree in his prosperity, and then having his "habitation" cursed. It was God through the Satan figure who apparently cursed or judged Job's habitation; but here Eliphaz says that he personally had done so. This continues to strengthen the hints that the friends were connected with the Satan and their forces may have been those which attacked his family. GNB makes the connection clearer: "I called down a sudden curse on their homes".

Job 5:4 His children are far from safety. They are crushed in the gate. Neither is there any to deliver them- Job prayed God would forgive his children in case they sinned. The friends mocked this in Job 5:4; 8:4; 17:5 and 20:10, saying that the children of the foolish die for their *own* sins, whereas, by implication, Job had figured that *his* prayers and sacrifices could gain *them* forgiveness. Yet in the end, Yahweh stated that Job had understood Him and His principles right, whereas the friends hadn't. "Safety" is literally 'salvation', and Eliphaz taunts Job that those who truly seek God (:8) will indeed be saved (s.w. :11). There was none to "deliver" Job, so far as Eliphaz could see by his naked eye; but he was sure that such "deliverance" would be given to those who sought God (:19 s.w.). The exiles sought such 'salvation' or "deliverance" (s.w. Neh. 9:28), but there was "not any to deliver them" (Is. 42:22 s.w.). Job represents them; but as the story unfolds, we see that if they like Job were to resign their own

righteousness, confess their sins and throw themselves upon God's grace- amazing restoration would come from the result of the "Chaldeans" who had devastated them as they had Job. The exiles too would be "delivered" (Jer. 20:13; Ez. 34:12 s.w.).

But with Rashi we can read the grammar here as jussive, a wishing of these things upon Job by Eliphaz: "May his sons distance themselves from salvation... And may they be crushed...". As if to say, 'This is the curse with which I cursed him'. This is all sounds like the death of Job's sons was as a result of a curse from Eliphaz. He, therefore, was the Satan of Job 1, or the Satan was the representative of the friends.

Job 5:5 whose harvest the hungry eats up, and take it even out of the thorns. They snare gapes for their substance- Here again Eliphaz wanders in his logic, assuming that Job's children had not shared their harvest with the hungry, nor allowed the poor to live by picking up stray grapes from their vineyards (as later required by the law of Moses). He assumes these sins must have happened, and likes to imagine that the invaders of Job's lands were disgruntled, hungry people. And many similar false suppositions are made by people today as they grapple with the problem of evil and personal suffering.

Job 5:6 For affliction doesn't come forth from the dust, neither does trouble spring out of the ground- The idea is that affliction doesn't come about as part of natural process, like plants spring out of the dust / ground. "Dust", humanity, isn't naturally born to the kind of affliction Job had experienced- according to Eliphaz. Whereas the Genesis record appears to teach the opposite; that we live in a fallen world where indeed affliction does arise as part of natural process. Eliphaz struggled to accept this, as many do today, assuming that all suffering must be the direct result of personal sin. That is simply not true to observable fact and basic human experience.

As discussed on Job 4:9, there is a clear contradiction in Eliphaz's argument. He argues here that Job's suffering is because he has sinned. But in the next verse (:7), that all men have sinned and must suffer because of it. The idea of "man is born to trouble" seems to be that man gives birth to trouble- trouble doesn't just spring up (:6), it is man's fault. Eliphaz alludes to the curse in Eden, but he fails to see the true implications of it.

Job 5:7 but man is born to trouble, as the arrows of the sons of Resheph fly upward- Significantly, it is the friends who make allusion to the 'Satan' figures and gods as if they are real, whereas Job in his responses always denies their reality and sees God as the direct source of His sufferings. Bildad speaks of how Job's troubles are to be associated with "the king of terrors" (Job 18:14); Eliphaz blames them upon the "sons of Resheph" (Job 5:7); but Job's response is that the source of the evil in his life is ultimately from *God* and not any such being. Eliphaz there speaks of how man's trouble comes "as the sons of Resheph fly upwards". Resheph was known as "the lord of the arrow" and the Ugaritic tablets associate him with archery (William J. Fulco, *The Canaanite God Resep* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1976)). We would therefore be justified in reading in an ellipsis here: man's trouble comes "as the [arrows of] the sons of Resheph fly upwards". Job's response is that "The arrows of *the Almighty* are in me" (Job 6:4), and he lament that God is an archer using him as his target for practice (Job 7:20; 16:12,13). Job refuses to accept Eliphaz's explanation that Job is a victim of Resheph's arrows. For Job, if God is "the Almighty" then there is no space left for Resheph. Each blow he received, each arrow strike, was from God and not Resheph.

Or we can read: "Man is born unto trouble, as the sons of the burning coal lift up to fly" (AVmg.). This would be using Angel-Cherubim language to say that it is inevitable that our Angels will bring trials into our lives.

Job 5:8 But as for me, I would seek God. I would commit my cause to God- Job did indeed seek God. But the friends assume that they can infer from the reality of Job's sufferings that therefore he didn't really seek God. This is to become a major theme in the book, so relevant to those Jews in exile who struggled with the problem of evil. Experience of suffering is not to say that therefore we have specifically personally sinned, and the sufferings of the suffering servant, who was Job and ultimately the Lord Jesus, are proof enough of that.

Job 5:9 who does great things that can't be fathomed, marvellous things without number- Job was one of the earliest books of the Bible, and these words are alluded to or even quoted with affirmation by other believers (Ps. 40:5; 72:18; 77:14; 136:4). There was some truth in the words of the friends, therefore, although the problem was that they mixed aspects of truth with much wrong interpretation. But the parts which are true are shown to be so by the way the book is used in later scripture.

Job 5:10 who gives rain on the earth, and sends waters on the fields- The way that God is essentially a giver, as witnessed throughout His creation, is a reason to turn to Him. That is a truth, but Eliphaz is wrong to reason that Job has not thus turned to God because Job is suffering. See on :9.

Job 5:11 so that He sets up on high those who are low; those who mourn are exalted to safety- The idea of setting the low up on high is definitely applied to the exiles who would repent in Is. 57:15. Those who mourned for Zion would be delivered / 'saved'. All this came true in the experience of Job, and it could have done so for the exiles had they humbled themselves as Job did.

This is also quoted in Prov. 3:11, which is a prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Prov. 3:13-15 describes our Lord's successful finding of wisdom in the language of Job's unsuccessful search for it in Job 28:16-19, implying He found what Job and the friends did not (cp. Rom. 9:31,32). As explained on :9, the 'true' elements in the friends' speeches are confirmed as true by their usage in later scripture.

Job 5:12 He frustrates the devices of the crafty, so that their hands can't perform their enterprise- Eliphaz clearly understands Job as "the crafty", as stated explicitly in Job 15:5 (s.w.). As explained on :9, the true elements in the speeches of the friends are quoted in later scripture, although the friends misuse the 'truths' they held to condemn Job. This therefore is quoted with approval in 1 Cor. 1:19. Eliphaz is explaining why he thinks Job and his view of life have been brought to nothing, and Paul uses these words about the bringing down of legalism and the Judaists. Thus Paul read Job as representative of those who were influenced by the legalism of the Judaizers. Paul continues: "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world?" (1 Cor. 1:20). Job's constant desire to dispute with God and the friends, and the claims both he and they made to possessing wisdom, show Job was clearly in Paul's mind. "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" he concludes, maybe thinking of the humbled Job and his friends.

Job 5:13 He takes the wise in their own craftiness; the counsel of the cunning is carried away headlong- This too is quoted in 1 Cor. 3:19; see on :12. We note that Paul here quotes the Hebrew text and not the LXX, even though most of his quotations from the Old Testament seem to prefer the LXX over the Hebrew (Masoretic) text. It wasn't that Paul personally picked and chose which version fitted his line of thought; he was a Divinely inspired writer, and God chose to interpret His word as He knew most appropriate.

Job 5:14 They meet with darkness in the day time, and grope at noonday as in the night- Eliphaz considers that Job was experiencing darkness at noon. And indeed he was. But in this Job looked ahead to the sufferings of the Lord Jesus on the cross. He like the Lord suffered as a sinner without having personally sinned. Job was representative of sinful Israel under judgment, for to "grope at noonday" was their punishment for breaking the covenant (s.w. Dt. 28:29).

Job 5:15 But He saves from the sword of their mouth, even the needy from the hand of the mighty- This again is directly relevant to the exiles in Babylon; if they accepted the new covenant and repented as Job did, they too would be saved "from the hand of the mighty" (s.w. Jer. 31:11).

Job 5:16 So the poor has hope, and injustice shuts her mouth- Again this was true for the exiles, "the poor", who had "the hope of Israel"- restoration and deliverance from those who had abused them as Job had been abused. Only then, in that final experience of deliverance at the restoration of the Kingdom, would injustice finally be answered. Everyone in the drama of Job, as in the world today, wanted an immediate answer and resolution of injustice. But that was not to be; it was only in the final realization of the hope of Israel that injustice would be silenced.

Job 5:17 Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects! Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty- As noted on :9, the true parts of the friends' words are confirmed in later scripture. These ideas are alluded to in Prov. 3:12; Heb. 12:5; James 1:12. But again, whilst the friends have some truth, they misuse it; for Eliphaz wrongly assumes that Job is despising God's hand, and ought to be "happy" if he were a true believer. But the nature of suffering is not like that, and the picture is not so simple. The 'happiness' of God's people is only at the end, in the Kingdom, when all things are resolved (s.w. Dt. 33:29; Dan. 12:12). Or in the restoration context, when Babylon fell and God's people were restored from exile (s.w. Ps. 137:8), after they had repented- for the positive effect of "chastening" is only experienced upon repentance (Job 36:10 s.w.). Judah in exile didn't repent, and so they were left with the problem of having been 'chastened' apparently in vain. The friends also fail to realize that "chastening" may not necessarily be for our own personal sins; the suffering servant was 'chastened' not for his own sins, but to achieve our peace with God (Is. 53:5 s.w.).

Job 5:18 For He wounds, and binds up. He injures, and His hands make whole- LXX "for he causes a man to be in pain, and restores him again: he smites, and his hands heal". This is relevant to the restoration of Judah which was possible at the restoration. Judah were like Job, covered in sores, but they refused to be 'bound up' by God (Is. 1:6 s.w.). At the restoration, through the promised suffering servant, this

binding up was envisaged (Is. 61:1; Ez. 34:16 s.w.)- if they "returned to the Lord" (s.w. Hos. 6:1). This is why the book of Job is really a call to repentance, and his very name is a form of the Arabic word for 'repentance'. God's ability to "make whole" and heal therefore depended upon human acceptance of it. Judah's refusal to repent precluded all this. "Make whole" is the word for "physician", and Job came to realize that his friends, his fellow worshippers, were in fact physicians of no value who could not make him whole (s.w. Job 13:4). His disillusion with the members of his religion, his brethren, led him to seek the more earnestly to God as the only one whose hands could "make whole" (s.w. "physician").

Although elsewhere Eliphaz reveals his belief in cosmic, supernatural evil, he is driven here by his own logic to accept that the source of both injury and healing is God.

Job 5:19 He will deliver you in six troubles; yes, in seven no evil shall touch you-

Eliphaz is again ignorant of the prologue. Job was touched even though he had not sinned. "Touch" is the word used by the Satan in Job 1:11, again suggesting that Eliphaz and the friends were connected with the Satan, or were in fact the Satan. Ps. 91:10 seems to look back to this passage in Job 5:19: "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling". Ps. 91 is Moses' encouragement to Joshua that the destroying Angel in the wilderness would not harm him, but he would be protected by the Angels who would "keep thee in all thy ways" (Ps. 91:11). Thus Moses may have seen Job 5:19 to be talking about evil brought by Angels of evil (Ps. 78:49 shows his appreciation of these)- i.e. Job's Satan Angel who brought the trials.

Job 5:20 In famine He will redeem you from death; in war, from the power of the sword-

Job's calamities may well have driven him to literal famine or lack of food. And again there appears to be an oblique reference back to the "war" upon Job's home encampment. Eliphaz therefore wrongly concludes that Job has not turned to God, or else he would be redeemed from the death that surrounded him. The phrase "redeem from death" is only used elsewhere in Hos. 13:14, where again we have the hope of redemption which was placed before a suffering Judah if they repented. Although Job had not personally sinned, he was representative of his suffering, sinful people. All his struggles with the injustice of it all were because he failed to realize that; and thus the representative nature of the work of the Lord Jesus is one of the major teachings of the book.

Job 5:21 You shall be hidden from the scourge of the tongue, neither shall you be afraid of destruction when it comes-

As noted on :9, the true elements in the speeches of the friends are alluded to in later scripture, in this case in Ps. 31:20. But as with many today, the friends misused what truth they held in their mistreatment and judgmental attitude towards Job. We can observe that the calamities listed by Eliphaz in :21-23 include many of the judgments which the prophets threaten upon Judah, and which were fulfilled at the Babylonian invasion (famine, war, devastation, wild animals). Job is presented as Judah's representative, and his repentance and restoration could have been theirs.

Job 5:22 At destruction and famine you shall laugh, neither shall you be afraid of the

animals of the earth- LXX "wild beasts", as in :23. These are symbols of the enemies of Judah who devoured her (Ez. 14:15). The repentant daughter of Zion could have laughed at them (Ps. 2); but she failed to follow Job's path.

Job 5:23 For you shall be allied with the stones of the field. The animals of the field shall be at peace with you- The reference may be to how invaders, the wild beasts, spoiled the land by dropping stones throughout it. The idea is of peace with the natural creation as well as the invaders. This was the ultimate prophetic picture for Judah in their restored kingdom- if they repented.

Job 5:24 You shall know that your tent is in peace. You shall visit your fold, and shall miss nothing- LXX "and the provision for thy tabernacle shall not fail", perhaps connecting with how there was no provision for the temple services until the restoration under Ezra and Nehemiah. In the immediate context, Eliphaz has in view how the tents of Job were afflicted and the animals of his fold were stolen.

Job 5:25 You shall know also that your seed shall be great, your offspring as the grass of the earth- The way Eliphaz speaks of how Job's seed or offspring could be many or "great... as the grass of the earth" suggests the people of Job's time were familiar with the promises made to Abraham, and the concept of their being applicable to them too. Eliphaz therefore suggests that Job is not in fact a true seed of Abraham because the promises were not having fulfilment in him; see on :26. But those promises have their ultimate fulfilment in the future Kingdom; whereas the friends, like many today, thought that the promised Divine blessings have to be fulfilled immediately, in this life. And if they aren't, then we must have sinned. But the promised blessings were all of grace, of faith and not works; and would be fulfilled in the future.

Job 5:26 You shall come to your grave in a full age, like a sheaf of grain comes in its season- This and :25 did come ultimately true for Job, and Eliphaz lived to see it, and to realize he had been wrong in his judgment of Job. The allusion is clearly to Abraham, whose seed Job was (Gen. 15:15; 25:8). See on :25, where Eliphaz has implied Job is not the seed of Abraham.

Job 5:27 Look this, we have examined it, so it is. Hear it, and know it for your good- GNB "we have learned this by long study. It is true, so now accept it". LXX "but do thou reflect with thyself, if thou hast done anything wrong". The friends speak as if *they* are the final court – Eliphaz speaks of how the judges and elders of their day, the "holy ones", had concluded Job was guilty, and that they, the friends, were right: "To which of the holy ones will you appeal [legal language]?... we have [legally] examined this, and it [Job's guilt] is true" (Job 5:1,27). But we learn by the end of the book that it is God's judgment in the court of heaven which is the only judgment worth paying attention to. This is of great comfort to those who feel misjudged by man – above them in Heaven the ultimate Heavenly court is considering our case, and that is all that matters. Job appeals for 'witnesses' (Job 9:33–35; 16:18–22; 19:20–27), an advocate in Heaven (Job 9:33), denies his guilt and demands a legal list of his sins (Job 13:19), he wishes for God to come to trial (Job 9:3), and thus Job is described as a man who has taken out a 'case' with God (Job 23:4; 40:2). Job 29–31 is effectively Job's declaration of legal innocence and an appeal to God to hear his case more sympathetically (Job 31:35). And of course God pronounces a final legal verdict at the very end (Job 42:7), in response to Job's earlier plea: "Sleeplessly I wait for His reply" (Job 16:22). It's as if the whole experience of Job was [at least partly] in order to test out the Canaanite theories of 'Satan', suffering and evil in the court of Heaven;

and also the various theories which arose to explain Judah's captivity in Babylon. The friends represent the traditional views of evil, and often make reference to the myths of their day about 'Satan' figures.

JOB CHAPTER 6

Job 6:1 Then Job answered- Every time we read or hear this in the drama, we almost wish him to remain silent as the Lord did at His trial. His final silence and laying his hand upon his mouth is what the drama wishes us for him to do the longer it goes on.

Job's response in chapters 6 and 7 are two acrostic poems, of 22/23 lines each. Clearly this is not strictly what he said, but the historical essence of it is being repeated in the drama (see on Job 1:1). His response to Eliphaz begins with a monologue, complaining about his situation, addressed to nobody (Job 6:2-13). He then addresses himself to the friends in Job 6:14-30. And then rants against God in Job 7.

Job 6:2 Oh that my anguish were weighed, and all my calamity laid in the balances!- LXX "Oh that one would indeed weigh the wrath that is upon me". This was the feeling of the exiles; that the wrath upon Israel, the "sand of the sea" (:3), was heavier than it ought to have been. And they like Job were brought to realize their sinfulness and the lightness of their judgment, having been punished, as Ezra reflected, in fact less than their iniquities deserved (Ezra 9:13). Job looked in vain for someone to understand and evaluate his sufferings. The friends had come to him to do this, but had failed. We too may tell our life story to another person for days or weeks- but they will never quite understand. Job's disappointment with human relationships led him to throw himself finally upon God; for the only one to weigh accurately his calamity was of course God.

Job 6:3 For now it would be heavier than the sand of the seas- Job feels that his suffering outweighs that of the whole world, or at least, of all Abraham's seed. This of course is a quite natural response- that nobody has been through what I have. But it is also a sign that we are undervaluing the suffering of others and are totally concerned with our own pain. God's answers to Job are effectively saying: 'You in fact are not at all the centre of the universe. You and your pain and your complaints are nothing in the bigger picture of things'. But God says it in such a way that the spiritual man is not offended, doesn't stomp off muttering about 'cold comfort', but actually 'gets it'. God brings "rain on a land where no one lives, on the desert, which is empty of human life" (Job 38:26)- to make the point that man does not in fact hold the central place in the universe which he imagines he does. Job is restored when he prays for his friends / enemies (Job 42:10)- the proof that he had now moved out of his self centredness. See on Job 1:6.

I have noted several times Job's presentation as the seed of Abraham and allusions to the promises to Abraham. We have another one here. He considers that the promises of seed like the sand of the seas were somehow outweighed by his sufferings. He felt perhaps that he was not going to inherit the promises because of his sufferings; as if they were somehow indicative that he was not the seed of Abraham. This meant that he had yet to learn that the promises to Abraham, which were the basis of the new covenant offered to the exiles, were based upon grace; and they had

their ultimate fulfilment in the restored Kingdom of God on earth and the blessing of having Yahweh as a personal God- and not in the blessings of secular life.

Therefore have my words been rash- Presumably Job refers to his words recorded in Job 2 and 3. But he uses a situational ethic here- as if rash language is excusable because of the weight of suffering. When he finally places his hand upon his mouth, Job realizes that such rationalization of poor language use was inappropriate.

Job 6:4 For the arrows of the Almighty are within me. My spirit drinks up their poison. The terrors of God set themselves in array against me-

LXX "For the arrows of the Lord are in my body, whose violence drinks up my blood: whenever I am going to speak, they pierce". This is pretty much cursing God, just as his wife urged him too and just as Satan predicted he would.

Eliphaz blames Job's troubles upon the "sons of Resheph" (Job 5:7); but Job's response is that the source of the evil in his life is ultimately from *God* and not any such being. Eliphaz there speaks of how man's trouble comes "as the sons of Resheph fly upwards". Resheph was known as "the lord of the arrow" and the Ugaritic tablets associate him with archery (William J. Fulco, *The Canaanite God Resep* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1976)). We would therefore be justified in reading in an ellipsis here: man's trouble comes "as the [arrows of] the sons of Resheph fly upwards". Job's response is that "The arrows of *the Almighty* are in me" (Job 6:4), and he laments that God is an archer using him as his target for practice (Job 7:20; 16:12,13). Job refuses to accept Eliphaz's explanation that Job is a victim of Resheph's arrows. For Job, if God is "the Almighty" then there is no space left for Resheph. Each blow he received, each arrow strike, was from God and not Resheph. The "terrors" he felt in nightmares (s.w. Job 7:14) were ultimately from God. These "terrors" appear to be psychological trauma, parallel with his "spirit" being wounded by God's arrows (Job 13:21).

Job 6:5 Does the wild donkey bray when he has grass? Or does the ox low over his fodder?- Job fell into the trap of thinking that his terrible situation somehow allowed him to speak whatever words came into his head. Job felt he hadn't been 'fed' and so he was entitled to "bray" and "low" over his misfortune (Job 6:5). Because of the weight of his sufferings, he thereby justified the fact that "Therefore have my words been rash (Job 6:3). Likewise "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit" (Job 7:11). "I will give free course to my complaint. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 10:1 RV). Zophar criticizes Job being "full of talk" and speaking "the multitude of words", "for you say, My doctrine is pure" (Job 11:1-4)- as if Job felt that because he held true doctrine he was justified in pouring out words as he did. "Why should I not be impatient?" (Job 21:4 RV). "Today is my complaint bitter. My stroke is heavier than my groaning" (Job 23:2)- i.e. his complaining was due to his sufferings. "If I hold my peace, I shall give up the spirit" (Job 13:19 RVmg.). Job felt that the situation he was in *forced* him to use the words he did, and certainly justified it [we may well have used this reasoning ourselves when justifying the use of bad language]. But in the end, Elihu on God's behalf rebuked him for his wrong words. And Job himself recognized: "I am vile. I will lay mine hand upon my mouth" in regret of his words (Job 40:4). "Wherefore I loathe my words and repent" (Job 42:6 RVmg.). He realized his mistake: he had thought that the situation justified his words. Now he hung his head and admitted that there was no justification for speaking in the way he had. Especially in the matter of the tongue, we

can so easily justify ourselves; 'I only said / did it [or didn't do it] because...'. And it is all so child-like. Once we leave off *all* attempts at self-justification, we will face up to our sins. See on :11,26.

Job 6:6 Can that which has no flavour be eaten without salt? Or is there any taste in the white of an egg?- As noted on :5, Job seems to be saying that just as you can't expect a person to eat the white of an egg without salt, so his outbursts are justifiable. But of course one can eat eggs without salt. Job at this point comes over as a spoilt child refusing any food which isn't exactly to his taste. Finally he breaks down in self-realization and repentance, realizing his words have indeed been intemperate (see on Job 40:4; 42:6).

Job 6:7 My soul refuses to touch them. They are as loathsome food to me- As explained on :5,6, Job comes over as a spoilt child refusing any food which isn't exactly to his taste. He may be twisting the Divine command to only offer sacrifice, His "food" upon His table or altar, with salt. But Job is twisting scripture.

Job 6:8 Oh that I might have my request, that God would grant the thing that I long for- This desire for death, effectively suicidal, continues the pouting and egoistic attitude noted on :6,7. This is Job's response to Eliphaz's advice to repent and pray to God for restoration (Job 5:8 "I would seek God. I would commit my cause to God"). Job is sarcastically replying that his request to God is to die- and God isn't granting it.

Job 6:9 even that it would please God to crush me; that He would let loose His hand, and cut me off!- Job is careful not to speak of ending his own life, but he asks God to. Job appears to allude to the dialogue between God and Satan in the prologue, for he references the source of his sufferings as God's hand. The LXX makes the allusion to the prologue (Job 2:6) even clearer: "Let the Lord begin and wound me, but let him not utterly destroy me". In this case, if only Job knew the conversation in Heaven, he would have known that his strongest desire [at the time] had in fact already been considered and agreed by God. This would then read as if Job doubted whether God would keep His side of the agreement made with the Satan- if indeed Job knew of the conversation. But it seems he was unaware. We know from the prologue Job will not be destroyed. But we know there has been discussion about him in the court of heaven, and he will not be destroyed. So much that we fear has already been discussed and vetoed by God in Heaven.

Job 6:10 Be it still my consolation, yes, let me exult throughout my unending pain, that I have not denied the words of the Holy One- The idea seems to be that Job longed for his death because he was comforted by the fact he had not hidden God's words; likewise he exalts in Job 27:11 (s.w.) that he has not hidden God's words. Job was a prophet and is quoted as one in James 5. He had perhaps heard God's words from a "holy one", an Angel, and had taught them to others. By implication, he assumed that after death he would receive some credit for his righteousness. He had moved on to this from a simple desire for death. But aware of his righteousness, he reasons towards a belief in some future point of reward, as this was clearly not happening in this life. This becomes developed into a belief in a day of judgment and the final manifestation of God. And this happens ahead of time, as it were, in Yahweh's final manifestation at the end of the book; but this lead Job to resign all his own righteousness. See on :13; Job 7:2.

Job 6:11 What is my strength, that I should wait further? What is my end, that I should be patient?- The LXX here is definitely alluded to in James 5:11 [the same word for "patient" is used], which speaks of the endurance / patience of Job in the end, despite his impatience in the short term; and "the end" of the Lord [cp. "What is my end?"]. Likewise James surely has in mind Job 7:16 LXX "For I will not live forever, that I should be patient [s.w.]; withdraw from me, for my life is empty". And his speeches are hardly patient: "I loathe my life; I will give free utterance to my complaint" (Job 10:1 LXX). But Job is definitely impatient and justified it as he justified his rash speaking (see on :5,12). And yet the patience of Job is quoted as proverbial (James 5:11). This may reflect how he was accounted righteous by God, and this final status was accepted by others. Or perhaps his patience refers to his endurance in faith, despite the fact that he was impatient during that endurance. He hardly comes over as patient in his speeches, but this was maybe seen as cosmetic failure compared to his final overall endurance in faith.

Job 6:12 Is my strength the strength of stones? Or is my flesh of brass?- His argument is that he can't be perfectly patient because that would require superhuman strength. He blames the construction of his nature for his impatience (see on :11). And finally is led to repentance for this. It's rather like an alcoholic blaming his sin on his human nature.

Job 6:13 Isn't it that I have no help in me, that wisdom is driven quite from me?- LXX "Or have I not trusted in him? but help is far from me". If the LXX is correct then we see an extension of the argument developed on :10; he is confident that he has trusted in God, and yet no "help" from Him is forthcoming; and so he is driven to belief in a future day of Divine help, at some point after his death. That point becomes more developed in Job's understanding, as the day when God's appointed mediator shall stand upon the earth- the return of the Lord Jesus.

Job 6:14 To him who is ready to faint, kindness should be shown from his friend; even to him who forsakes the fear of the Almighty- We can limit God's plans to save others in the ecclesia by our attitude to them- even if they become atheists we are not to withdraw human friendship from them. We can make others stumble from the path to His salvation. If a brother doesn't show pity to his fellow brother, this can make the afflicted brother "forsake the fear of the Almighty" (Job 6:14 RVmg.). Or we can read with GNB "In trouble like this I need loyal friends— whether I've forsaken God or not".

Job 6:15 My brothers have dealt deceitfully as a brook, as the channel of brooks that pass away-

At this point, only Eliphaz has spoken. But Job assumes the other two will reason as he has done. He assumes he knows their positions; and they likewise assume they know his position. And so the dialogues fade away, Bildad's final speech is very short and Zophar never gives his expected third speech. This is the problem with communication and dialogue- we enter it with the assumption we know it all, without truly open ears and minds to what the other may say.

Job is to be commended at this point for refusing to take false guilt; although at other times, he does take it. It is in fact far easier than we think to accept the false guilt that is placed upon us. One lesson of Job is the difference between true guilt, put

on us by God for our actual sins- and the false guilt society and friends / "brothers" are so eager to place upon us. So often, 'blaming the victim' is used to focus attention away from the real issues. And that is what the friends are doing, by blaming Job as the victim. The bigger issue they were deflecting attention away from was the fact a) that they too were sinners and b) that God still remains the author of evil and suffering. Realities they didn't want to engage with. "Deceitfully" is the word used about the exiles in Babylon (Is. 48:8) and how they treated their God and His servant (cp. Job). Job is as the righteous remnant, and the friends, the other "sons of God", as the apostate Jews, who could be saved by the intercession of the righteous.

Job 6:16 which are black by reason of the ice, in which the snow hides itself- "Black" is 'turbid'. As in winter the rivers flowed freely, so the friends had promise of help, but when the heat came, they disappeared and were nowhere to be found (:17).

Job 6:17 In the dry season, they vanish. When it is hot, they are consumed out of their place- See on :16. In Job 24:19, Job later sees the melting of the snow waters as representing the destruction of the wicked; he comes towards the conclusions that his friends, his fellow "sons of God" of Job 1:6, were in fact sinners. Job, the righteous remnant amongst the captives, were to pray for and save the unspiritual majority; but they had to be convinced of how far astray their brethren really were.

Job 6:18 The caravans that travel beside them turn aside. They go up into the waste, and perish- "Caravans" and "paths" are the same word (:19). The idea is that these friends were like caravans of travellers diverting to follow tracks towards water sources but not finding the water, because they had dried up; and they perished. This is how Job came to see the friends. The idea is that they were travellers who had lost their way in the desert and were about to perish. They were no better than Hagar, who was broadly contemporary with Job and his friends.

Job 6:19 The caravans of Tema looked. The companies of Sheba waited for them- The friends would have travelled to Job with caravans. He associates his deceitful brethren (:15) with the troops of Tema and the companies of Sheba which had fallen upon his cattle at Satan's behest (Job 1:15). Job knew that the friends had power over his persecutors (:24). They, Job said, had caused calamity to fall upon him, and thereby overwhelmed their one-time friend (:27 AV mg.). They thought, as Satan did, that Job's spirituality was only a sham (:28). For more evidence that the friends were the satan, see on Job 1:6. There is reason to think that Eliphaz, the leader of the friends, may have been the specific individual referred to as 'satan' in the prologue. God singles him out for especial condemnation at the end (Job 42:7). After one of Eliphaz's speeches, Job responds with what appears to be a comment upon him, rather than God: "He has made me weary: you have made desolate all my company. And you have filled me with wrinkles... he tears me in his wrath, who hates me (surely Job speaks here about Eliphaz, not God): he gnashes upon me... my enemy (satan) sharpens his eyes upon me. They (the astonished friends?) have gaped upon me with their mouth, they have smitten me... they have gathered themselves together (as the friends did to Job) against me" (Job 16:9-11). Eliphaz was a Temanite, from where Job's afflictors came. See on :22.

Job 6:20 They were distressed because they were confident. They came there, and

were confounded- LXX "They too that trust in cities and riches shall come to shame". But see on :18.

Job 6:21 For now you are nothing. You see a terror, and are afraid- LXX "But ye also have come to me without pity; so that beholding my wound ye are afraid"; GNB "You are like those streams to me, you see my fate and draw back in fear".

Job 6:22 Did I say, 'Give to me?' or, 'Offer a present for me from your substance?' - Perhaps there was the idea that Job had obtained his wealth from the friends and they were justified in seeking to take it back; see on :19.

Job 6:23 or, 'Deliver me from the adversary's hand?' or, 'Redeem me from the hand of the oppressors?' - I suggested on :19 that the friends themselves were involved in the work of the hand of the satan / adversary. But Job never asked them to 'stop'.

Job 6:24 Teach me, and I will hold my peace. Cause me to understand wherein I have erred- Job's sacrifice of a truly broken spirit was worth more than thousands of apposite words. Job had dimly imagined that this would be so: "Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; and cause me to understand wherein I have erred" (6:24). When Elihu *did* teach him and show him that he was erring by *nature* rather than specific sin, Job truly held his tongue: "I will lay mine hand upon my mouth... I will not answer... I will proceed no further" (Job 40:4,5; notice the threefold repetition). This is one of several examples of Job knowing the truth in abstract theory, but not appreciating it until the mixture of reflection on his trials and Elihu / Jesus, brought it home.

Job 6:25 How forcible are words of uprightness! But your reproof, what does it reprove? - This experience led Job to long for "words of uprightness", and thereby he came to be ready for the final revelation of God's words at the end of the book. Likewise our disillusion with human words and relationships leads us to be the more eager and ready for God's revelation. The very phrase "words of uprightness" are only found when Elihu appears and claims to speak "words of uprightness" (Job 33:3). And the words of uprightness were to absolutely condemn Job, although not as the friends did.

Job 6:26 Do you intend to reprove words, since the speeches of one who is desperate are as wind? - Job seems to here place himself beyond reproof; as if he considers his desperation to mean that therefore whatever he says can't be reproofed, because the weight of his sufferings meant that he was justified in saying anything. This is discussed and exemplified more on :5, and it is this continual self-justification which has to be humbled in God's final appearance at the end of the book.

Job 6:27 Yes, you would even cast lots for the fatherless, and make merchandise of your friend- See on :19. Job had worked his way up in the world (perhaps from being an orphan, "fatherless", parallel with "your friend") without consciously seeking prosperity (Job 1:10 AVmg.; Job 8:7; 31:25), and had shared his blessings with others; he realized at least in theory the weakness of his nature; and yet when he examined himself, he really didn't think he was too monstrous a sinner. The Lord Jesus likewise, the ultimate "suffering servant", was humanly fatherless.

Eliphaz has uttered one speech; the other friends haven't yet spoken. Eliphaz was coming out with the standard line that 'Your suffering is because you've sinned, so, you need to repent'. But Job makes a clearly *ad hominem* attack without engaging what he has said: "You would even roll dice for orphan slaves and make yourselves rich off your closest friends!" (GNB). And they end up doing the same to Job. Job feels he has been falsely accused of being a sinner- and so he falsely accuses Eliphaz of being a gambler and swindler. So easily, the victim of false accusation can end up falsely accusing others. This is all a pattern of how communication fails.

Job 6:28 Now therefore be pleased to look at me, for surely I shall not lie to your face- GNB "Look me in the face. I won't lie". As discussed on :27, Job is turning this into a very personal fight- when the disagreement at best was about theology. It seems the friends could not look Job in the face. That may not just have been because of the awful nature of his disease, but because of a bad conscience, seeing perhaps they were behind the things which came upon Job; see on :19. This is the very picture of the suffering servant in Is. 52:14, upon whose faces men could not look.

Job 6:29 Please rethink. Let there be no injustice. Yes, think again. My cause is righteous- This again is legal language, Job wanting his day in court. He will indeed get it, at the end- and be condemned. Job implies they were being unjust. The issue of who was "just" or not is a major theme in Job (continued in :30). In this lies the significance of the Lord's final appearance, to convict all of their sin, and teach that only His justification of men is worth anything. All self-justification is meaningless at best, and effectively putting man above God.

Job 6:30 Is there injustice on my tongue?- See on :29. Job does later repent of his words and place his hand upon his mouth. But these words on another level make him a type of the Lord Jesus, the ultimate "suffering servant", who could ask "Which of you convinces me of sin?", whose words were perfect.

Can't my taste discern mischievous things?- This could be implying that his sufferings had not robbed him of his ability to sense right and wrong. If indeed the friends were connected with the Satan figure, and were responsible for the sufferings which came upon Job (see on :19), then he may be implying that despite his illness, he is quite aware of what is going on.

JOB CHAPTER 7

Job 7:1 Isn't a man forced to labour on earth? Aren't his days like the days of a hired hand?- LXX "Is not the life of man upon earth a state of trial?"; GNB "Human life is like forced army service, like a life of hard manual labor".

Isaiah's prophecies of the restoration and the Kingdom are shot full of allusions back to Job. The cry that Zion's warfare or "appointed time" is now ended (Is. 40:2) is taken straight out of Job 7:1; indeed, Job 7:3-7 describes Job's haggard life in the same terms as Israel in dispersion are described in Isaiah 40. The point being, that Job's eventual re-conversion and salvation is a pattern for that of all God's people. Job came to recognize that every moment he existed was a trial to him, sent by his satan-Angel. Thus he complained "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of an hireling?" (7:1). The Hebrew for "appointed

time" is exactly the same as for "host" as in hosts of Angels. This neatly connects the idea that the exact duration of his life was controlled by God's Angel-host, as was every trial which he experienced. This would be the work of the "wonderful numberer" Angel of Dan. 8:13 who controls all time periods. Job 14:13,14 says the same: "O that Thou wouldest hide me in the grave... if a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come". "What is man that Thou dost magnify him? and that Thou shouldest set Thy heart upon him? (lit. 'consider him')" (7:17). Thus Job sees God- whom he probably conceived of as an Angel- as considering him, whilst we are told earlier that satan was told to do this. A human satan considering Job would not in itself have brought the trials, and Job would not have complained so bitterly about a human being considering him. An Angelic satan setting his heart upon Job would account for this 'considering' alone leading to the trials. If it is argued that it is a human satan who set his heart on Job here in Job 7, then the context is hard, though not impossible, to square: "Thou dost magnify man... Thou preserver of men" (v. 20,21). There is some hint of physical movement by 'God' which would seem applicable to the Angel too: "Thou shouldest visit him... depart from me... let me alone" (v. 18,19).

Job 7:2 As a servant who earnestly desires the shadow, as a hireling who looks for his wages-

We have the advantage of having read the prologue. Yahweh is very proud of His servant Job. But Job doesn't know that, and presents himself as an abused, unpaid servant who just wants to end the misery of his servanthood by suicide. His payment was months of misery, sleepless nights and agony (:3). Just as Joseph put on a hard face to the brothers, but behind that had a heart that wept and broke in love for them- so it can be between God and man. Job was indeed Yahweh's servant, but His beloved and favourite one. But He acted in a way that left Job thinking he was the most abused of all Yahweh's servants. But the end of the Lord... is that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy to Job (James 5:11). The rejected servant in the Lord's parable considered Him a "hard man". He is anything but a hard taskmaster. It is those who refuse to see behind the veil, who create their own narratives about God which are so wrong, those who see life only on the surface level... who end up not knowing God and rejecting themselves from His purpose with them. Those who cannot move beyond the fact God slew their 10 beloved kids with a tornado...

I noted on Job 6:10 that Job felt that he was owed wages for his good works and teaching of God's word before his calamities began. He moves on from just wanting death to concluding that righteousness must have a reward; and if not in this life, then it must come at some point after life ends. This becomes developed into a belief in a day of judgment and the final manifestation of God. And this happens ahead of time, as it were, in Yahweh's final manifestation at the end of the book; but this lead Job to resign all his own righteousness.

Job 7:3 so am I made to possess months of misery, wearisome nights are appointed to me- It is unlikely that Job's period of affliction lasted more than a year or so, and yet this is the part of his life and spiritual growth that is presented to us in such detail. At times Job thinks that he is likely to die that night; here he seems to imagine death coming after "months" of such nights. This is a realistic psychological picture of a suffering man. And it is likewise psychologically credible that the suffering person in one sense feels that time is dragging, and yet in Job 9:25,26 he feels that his time on this earth is racing by: "My days are swifter than a runner; they flee away; they see no

good. They go by like skiffs of reed, like an eagle swooping on the prey". The same contradictory feelings are seen in how on one hand he believes in a resurrection from the dead, but at other times he has no hope for any life after death. In Job 21:7-9 he feels that the wicked are blessed; in Job 27:13-17 he is sure that the wicked must some day be punished. But it was out of this dialectic that he came to truth.

Job 7:4 When I lie down, I say, 'When shall I arise, and the night be gone?' I toss and turn until the dawning of the day- LXX "Whenever I lie down, I say, When will it be day? and whenever I rise up, again I say when will it be evening? and I am full of pains from evening to morning". This is clearly the spirit of Dt. 28:67 "In the morning you will say, I wish it were evening! and at evening you will say, I wish it were morning! for the fear of your heart which you shall fear and for the sight of your eyes which you shall see". Job is clearly representative of Israel in their suffering.

Job 7:5 My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust. My skin closes up, and breaks out afresh- The crusts forming over the sores appeared as "clods of dust", driving Job to appreciate his humanity as mere dust and ashes. The disease sounds like leprosy or elephantiasis, and connects him with the suffering Judah of Is. 1:6. Worms are typically associated with the decaying of a dead body, so it was as if Job experienced a living death.

Job 7:6 My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope- Originally, Job believed that his "hope" was predicated upon his upright ways (Job 4:6). But Job through his sufferings comes to feel he now has no "hope" (Job 7:6; 14:19; 17:15; 19:10). The friends suggest that Job had only the "hope" of the hypocrite, and this "hope" would perish (Job 4:6; 8:13; 27:8). Job had integrity, and on that basis he thought he had "hope". He suffered, and he lost that "hope", because he assumed that his sufferings meant that he was not in fact righteous. And yet he often reflects that he is righteous and is suffering unjustly. And so he is led to the realization that the "hope" of the righteous is by God's grace and not because of the "integrity of [Job's] ways". Judah in captivity likewise lost their "hope" (Ez. 19:5; 37:11). But the message of the restoration prophets was that "there is hope in your end" (Jer. 31:17); they were prisoners or exiles in "hope" (Zech. 9:12).

Job 7:7 Oh remember that my life is a breath. My eye shall no more see good- It's unclear whether this is addressed to the friends or to God, although I suggest on :8 that it is primarily God whom he has in view. Whatever, he is asking for pity to be shown to him because he has no "good" in front of him and his life is so short. See on Job 8:2.

Heb. "my eye will not return after death" (Rashi). This is one of many times that Job is clear that he doesn't believe in an afterlife. This is why he and the friends were so concerned about suffering and blessing in this life, because they had no belief in anything further. But Job is forced by his circumstances to conclude that there must in fact be a future day of judgment and justice, involving God somehow coming to earth as judge; and although Job felt at the point of death, he therefore assumed there had to be a resurrection of the body (Job 19:25-27). But even that faith expressed in Job 19 was flakey, for after stating that he also says the opposite. We note that despite what we would consider his major doctrinal deficit, God has expressed in Job 1,2 how He was still thrilled with how he was faithful to Him within the frames of his current understanding.

Job 7:8 The eye of him who sees me shall see me no more. Your eyes shall be on me, but I shall not be- Again it is hard to know whether Job addresses God, "Him who sees me", or the friends, "your eyes...". He goes on to address God in :12. He thinks that because his own eye shall no longer see (:7), therefore their eyes would not see him. Job often refers to God's eyes, perhaps a reference to the Angels, who I suggested were representing the satan figure (the friends?) in the court of heaven; see on Job. 1:6. But he was to be taught that God doesn't see as man sees; our vision is not His. And his assumption that God will not see him again after death... is going to turn into a strong conviction that at some point after death, he will see God (Job 19:25-27).

Job 7:9 As the cloud is consumed and vanishes away, so he who goes down to Sheol shall come up no more- That was how he felt, although already he has hinted that there must be a day of future reward after his death; and this becomes developed into a belief in a day of judgment and the final manifestation of God (Job 19:25-27). And a man who oscillated so much in his faith and verbal behaviour is seen by James 5:11 as an example of patient endurance... not being derailed, ultimately, by his failures.

Job 7:10 He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more- That is true, in that there is no disembodied existence after death, and the dead don't return to haunt where they had once lived. This belief in the mortality of man was in sharp distinction to the beliefs of the primitive people amongst whom Job lived, and such understanding of death as unconsciousness and inactivity has always been characteristic of God's true people.

Job 7:11 Therefore I will not keep silent. I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul- Job fell into the trap of thinking that his terrible situation somehow allowed him to speak whatever words came into his head. Job felt he hadn't been 'fed' and so he was entitled to "bray" and "low" over his misfortune (Job 6:5). Because of the weight of his sufferings, he thereby justified the fact that "Therefore have my words been rash (Job 6:3). Likewise "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit" (Job 7:11). "I will give free course to my complaint. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 10:1 RV). Zophar criticizes Job being "full of talk" and speaking "the multitude of words", "for thou sayest, my doctrine is pure" (Job 11:1-4)- as if Job felt that because he held true doctrine he was justified in pouring out words as he did. "Why should I not be impatient?" (Job 21:4 RV). "Today is my complaint bitter. My stroke is heavier than my groaning" (Job 23:2)- i.e. his complaining was due to his sufferings. "If I hold my peace, I shall give up the spirit" (Job 13:19 RVmg.). Job felt that the situation he was in *forced* him to use the words he did, and certainly justified it [we may well have used this reasoning ourselves when justifying the use of bad language]. But in the end, Elihu on God's behalf rebuked him for his wrong words. And Job himself recognized: "I am vile. I will lay mine hand upon my mouth" in regret of his words (Job 40:4). "Wherefore I loathe my words and repent" (Job 42:6 RVmg.). He realized his mistake: he had thought that the situation justified his words. Now he hung his head and admitted that there was no justification for speaking in the way he had. Especially in the matter of the tongue, we can so easily justify ourselves; 'I only said / did it [or didn't do it] because...'. And it is all so child-like. Once we leave off *all* attempts at self-justification, we will face up to our sins. See on :20.

Job 7:12 Am I a sea, or a sea monster, that You put a guard over me?-

God will later engage with this when He talks of Leviathan the sea monster and Behemoth the beast. Clearly God sees Job as like them- thick skinned and stupid, made as His plaything, teased by His Angels. If anything, God is saying 'Yes Job, that's who you are'. And all within us as humans cries out against this. But as ever, the end of the Lord is that He was very pitiful and of tender, saving mercy to Job (James 5:11). For now, Job is asking: 'Am I Yam or Tannin?', the monsters hunted and slain by Baal. God's answer is also that no, I am not going to slay you and triumph over you. I am here to save you. But yes you are like the sea monster, that stupid and dumb, who faces a surging flood of Jordan head on and opens his mouth thinking he can swallow it all up. God will reply that He does indeed put a guard over "the sea", Yam, the sea god. And it is a band of "thick darkness", which Job complained had come upon him from God (Job 38:8-11). The "guard" or band was in fact for his salvation; the word is used in Neh. 4:9 for a "guard of protection". Job complains that he is under constant surveillance; but we know from the prologue what he doesn't. That surveillance was from a God who loved him and had a hugely positive view of him. Even though He slew his ten kids with a tornado... Job argues that he can understand God keeping a close check on Yam and Tannin, the sea monsters. But he is just a mere man- for we must read :17 in this context: "What is man, that You should magnify him, that You should set Your mind on him". Why would God so bother with him... And that is the point of God's response, in likening Job to Leviathan and "the sea". Job is even more important to God than they are. These monsters didn't exist- but, as with the issue of demons, God reasons along as if they do. The point being, that He is way above them and is all powerful. And all loving. Sure, there is no restoration of justice, justice being done and being seen to be done etc. He gives no justification for His ways. For He is not a man that this should be appropriately demanded of Him.

There are several allusions in Job to Babylonian legends concerning Marduk – indicating that the book must have been re-written in Babylon with allusion to these legends. Thus the *Enuma Elish* 4.139,140 speaks of how Marduk limited the waters of Tiamat, and set up a bar and watchmen so that the waters wouldn't go further than he permitted. But this very language is applied to God in Job 7:12 and Job 38:8–11. One of the purposes of Job was to urge Judah that Yahweh was greater than Marduk, He and not Marduk was to be Israel's God.

Job 7:13 When I say, 'My bed shall comfort me. My couch shall ease my complaint'- Sleep was no way of temporary relief. If indeed he had elephantiasis as suggested on :5, then this sleeplessness and psychological disturbance was associated with that disease.

Job 7:14 then You scare me with dreams, and terrify me through visions- "Scare" is the word elsewhere translated 'dismay', and is used of how the exiles were urged not to be dismayed but to believe that God would indeed bring them from exile to restoration in His restored Kingdom (Is. 51:7; Jer. 30:10; 46:27). Job begins by being dismayed / scared (Job 7:14), but develops to not be dismayed (Job 31:34 s.w.), following the example of the Lord's battle horse (Job 39:22).

Job 7:15 so that my soul chooses strangling, death rather than to see my bones- Clearly Job was suicidal although he later keeps himself in check, and instead pesters

God to take his life. The agony in Job's bones looked forward to the experience of the Lord on the cross, where He saw His bones sticking out as He looked down upon them (Ps. 22:17). But Job is now blaming God for his suicidal thoughts; his claim is that God has 'scared' him (:14), and now he wants to die when he looks at his body. And the desire to end mortal life leads on to a desire not to have eternal life ["I don't want to live forever", :16].

Job 7:16 I loathe my life- This is the same word as "cast away". The grace of it all was that although he wanted to cast away his life (Job 7:16; 9:21), just as God's people cast away His covenant (Is. 8:6; 30:12; Jer. 6:19), God would not cast away His people in their exile and depression (s.w. Lev. 26:44), even if they cast him away. Job felt despised or cast away by God (Job 10:14) just as the exiles did, but this wasn't the case; God will not despise or cast away His servant people (Job 36:5; Is. 41:9; Jer. 31:37; 33:26).

I don't want to live forever. Leave me alone, for my days are but a breath- Continually, Job sees God and not any cosmic, evil 'Satan' figure as responsible for his sufferings. His momentary desire not to live forever suggests he knew that eternal life was on offer, but like the exiles, the weight of his sufferings caused him to lose interest in that hope. However we can understand him as meaning that he didn't want to live forever in this life, as he was.

Israel in Egypt told Moses to leave them alone to serve Pharaoh; the Psalms marvel, therefore, at God's grace in still bringing them out of Egypt. And likewise Job, the man who didn't want to live for ever, will live for ever. God doesn't pay ultimate attention to every word... and neither should we. LXX "I shall not live for ever, that I should patiently endure: depart from me, for my life is vain". As discussed on Job 6:11, this is alluded to in James 5:11 where we are told that Job was in fact 'patient' [s.w.]. Job did not see the point of patient endurance because he didn't believe he would live for ever. But James 5 says that he did patiently endure. God sees our endurance over the long term, overlooking the times we did not endure in the short term.

Job 7:17 What is man, that You should magnify him-

Ps. 8:4,5 clearly alludes to these words, but concludes that despite man being so small, he is to be "crowned with glory and honour"- and this elicits praise of Him. Whereas Job is saying that because man is so small, why will God not just leave him alone and let him die. Clearly Ps. 8 is a correction of Job here: "What is man, that You are mindful of him, and the son of man, that You care for him? For You have made him a little lower than the Angels, and crowned him with glory and honour. You make him ruler over the works of Your hands... Yahweh our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!". As noted on Job 6:1, the precise words of Job 7:17-19 didn't fall from Job's mouth. They are placed in his mouth by an inspired author, quite possibly writing during the exile, well after Psalm 8 was written and had become well known. He may be making the point: 'Job would've been better to have the view of the psalmist in Psalm 8. Instead he has quite the opposite, and wrong, view'. We can see man's smallness positively- as a sign of God's amazing grace (Ps. 8); or, as Job wrongly did, a sign of His disinterest in man and how He treats men as if they are slaves to be used and abused at will. Truly, we make of God, and of life, what we will.

Job was aware of the promises to Abraham, and he uses the same word used of how the name of Abraham and his seed would be magnified (Gen. 12:2; 19:19). But

in his depression and suffering, he didn't want this, just as the exiles didn't. They too had to be reminded that God would magnify Himself through them (s.w. Ez. 38:23; Joel 2:21; Mal. 1:5) just as He finally did through Job.

That You should set Your mind on him- "Hast thou considered (lit. 'set your heart upon') My servant Job..?" (Job 2:3 AV) God asked satan initially. Later Job complains to God "what is man, that You should magnify him? that You should set Your mind on him? (lit. 'consider him')". Thus Job sees God- whom he probably conceived of as an Angel- as considering him, whilst we are told earlier that satan / the adversary was told to do this. The human satan considering Job would not in itself have brought the trials, the Angel representative of the Satan did; Job would not have complained so bitterly to God about a human being 'considering' him. See on Job 1:6.

These words are quoted and reinterpreted by David in Psalm 8. Instead of remaining awed by man's smallness, David sees the huge potential that there is in being man- to be lord of all creation. Just as he had been exalted through his faith that he could conquer Goliath, so could all men be, if they are men as God intended. And as Paul shows, this has already been exemplified in the glorification of the Lord Jesus. We are not therefore to wallow in the smallness of humanity but to glory in our potential. We who are "babies and sucklings", so weak and vulnerable, gurgling and muttering incoherently, can utter perfect praise; and be lords of heavens, sea and earth. The Son of Man has shown us the path to that glory, having been one of us, of our nature. That fact shows us what it is and what it can be to be human, and for all time shows the potential within man. This is the answer to the question "What is man?". This is not so much a lament of man's smallness, weakness and vulnerability, although on one level it is that; rather is it a rhetorical question, the answer showing us what great potential there is for man who believes as David did. Likewise "What [or 'who'] is... the Son of Man...?" is answered in the achievement and person of the Lord Jesus. "What is the Son of Man?" leads to the answer: "The son of God". David's question is in fact a reply to Job's depressed statements about man in Job 7:16,17: "I loathe my life. I don't want to live forever. Leave me alone, for my days are but a breath. What is man, that You should magnify him, that You should set Your mind on him". David is showing that man is so much more than Job's view here, in depression, that man is nothing and better off dead than alive.

Job 7:18 that You should visit him every morning, and test him every moment?- God is involved "every moment" in the life of His people; Job, presented as the suffering exiles, came to realize this (Is. 27:3 cp. Job 7:18 s.w.). God watered His vineyard "every moment" (Is. 27:3 s.w.). The testing "every moment" was the struggle of the exiles, resolved in the promise of Is. 54:7 "For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you". But even in this small moment, He was watering them and caring for them.

The Hebrew for "visit" is literally 'to take special note of, hence GNB "inspect". We know from the prologue what Job doesn't know. That indeed God has taken special note of him, in a positive sense. But he complains that all men receive the same treatment, and this 'inspection' results in God mercilessly afflicting men. Again we see how there is a massive silver lining to what Job thinks is happening.

Job 7:19 How long will You not look away from me, nor leave me alone until I swallow down my spittle?- Again Job connects the eyes of God with his sufferings, asking God to look away from him, to thereby end the sufferings. And the eyes of God were His Angels, representing the Satan in the court of heaven (Job 1:6).

Job 7:20 If I have sinned, what do I do to You, You watcher of men?- GNB "Are you harmed by my sin, you jailer?". This isn't far from cursing God as his wife advised and as Satan predicted he would. We know from the prologue that God watched Job so carefully and positively. But Job sees those eyes as the eyes of a cruel jailer. Job is full of self justification, as noted on :11. He now argues that the vastness of God means that He shouldn't be so sensitive to human sin. We marvel at God's total justification of Job, His imputation of righteousness, when He later states that Job had spoken rightly about Him (Job 42:7,8; although that statement may simply refer to Job's repentance). "You watcher of men" is yet another reference to God's angel-eyes ever watching and noting sin; see on :19. But the idea is equally as AV "preserver" or 'keeper'. He didn't want that preserving or watching in his depression, as the exiles didn't; but the promise of the prophets was that God was indeed watching / preserving, in order to restore them- just as He did with Job (s.w. Is. 42:6; 49:8; Jer. 31:6).

Why have You set me as an archer's target for You, so that I am a burden to myself?- Eliphaz blames Job's troubles upon the "sons of Resheph" (Job 5:7); but Job's response is that the source of the evil in his life is ultimately from *God* and not any such being. Eliphaz there speaks of how man's trouble comes "as the sons of Resheph fly upwards". Resheph was known as "the lord of the arrow" and the Ugaritic tablets associate him with archery (William J. Fulco, *The Canaanite God Resep* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1976)). We would therefore be justified in reading in an ellipsis here: man's trouble comes "as the [arrows of] the sons of Resheph fly upwards". Job's response is that "The arrows of *the Almighty* are in me" (Job 6:4), and he laments that God is an archer using him as his target for practice (Job 7:20; 16:12,13). Job refuses to accept Eliphaz's explanation that Job is a victim of Resheph's arrows. For Job, if God is "the Almighty" then there is no space left for Resheph. Each blow he received, each arrow strike, was from God and not Resheph.

LXX "Why hast thou made me as thine accuser, and why am I a burden to thee?". We know from the prologue that the opposite is true. God loved him, and Job was not the Satan / accuser. So often, what Job feels, says and concludes is contrary to what we know from the prologue. Just as so much of how we feel about life, in our low moments, is quite opposite to how things are in the ultimate reality of God's heavenly judgment.

Job 7:21 Why do You not pardon my disobedience, and take away my iniquity?-

Job has picked up false guilt from Eliphaz. He initially denied he had sinned. Now he assumes that he must have sinned. So he asks God to forgive him. He began to feel before God how Eliphaz wrongly thought of him. We know from the prologue that God considered that Job hadn't sinned. We too can so easily take on false guilt and live unaware of how God counts us as righteous by grace. And there is such a thing as a man admitting he has done things he was accused of, when in fact he was innocent. Not as part of a 'deal', but because he genuinely is overcome by false guilt that has been laid upon him. This is now being increasingly recognized within the judicial system. Job's response is so psychologically credible. On one hand, he responds strongly against the friends' claim he is suffering because he has sinned. He insists this isn't the case. He is innocent. He shouts "Rubbish!" at them. But in the next breath, he is coming before God and telling Him that he is indeed a terrible

sinner. When we know from the prologue that that wasn't what God thought of him. We see it in life, all the time. And probably in ourselves at some points in our lives. The New Testament teaching of justification by faith through grace ought to save us from this. And the Holy Spirit convicts us of our actual sins, and that alone is the conviction we must respond to.

Job argues as if God can just do this anyway; but he fails to appreciate the role of repentance. And this is a major theme of the book, and a meaning of the very name "Job".

For now shall I lie down in the dust. You will seek me diligently, but I shall not be- Job expected his death to come at any moment (AV "Thou shalt seek me in the morning"). He felt that death would mean that no matter how hard God searched, He would not find Job. But Job was to be taught that God is the God of resurrection and final judgment, and therefore death is no escape from Him.

JOB CHAPTER 8

Job 8:1 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered- Bildad largely repeats the arguments of Eliphaz, although more crudely, and with more appeal to the weight of past wisdom (:8-10).

Job 8:2 How long will you speak these things? Shall the words of your mouth be a mighty wind?- This may be commentary upon Job's complaint that his life is but a breath which will soon pass (Job 7:7). The idea may be that indeed Job will soon die and will not be speaking these things for much longer; although Job considered himself just a temporary breath, his words were a mighty breath / wind because they were so serious in their accusations against God. And we learn from this that despite the frailty of the human condition, this doesn't justify wrong speaking.

Job 8:3 Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert righteousness?- The drama is set in patriarchal times, and so the allusion would be to the belief of Abraham that God as judge shall do right (Gen. 18:25), and Job was wrong to imply otherwise. Job was implying otherwise, and so we conclude that God's later statement that Job had spoken right about Him (Job 42:7,8) must simply refer to Job's repentance.

We see here the problem of using the "it logically follows" argument, rather than humbly accepting things as they are. Job has protested his innocence and insists he is suffering for no good reason. Bildad assumes all suffering is due to sin. Therefore, if God gives suffering when someone hasn't sinned, He would therefore be unjust. And so he accuses Job of having called God unjust and of having perverted the course of justice in the court of Heaven. We know from the prologue that Job has suffered "without cause"; and therefore indeed He will *appear* unjust. And we shall finally see that God makes men suffer, even slaying all their children, absolutely "without cause", but absolutely with justice and integrity. Just as His command to exterminate the entire population of Canaan and His destruction of people at the flood was all perfectly just, right and true. The over entitled and over privileged will stamp their baby feet about this. But relationship with God is clearly only for the humble. The Lord taught likewise that suffering isn't always because of personal sin. The man born blind was not blind because of his son nor that of his parents. The Siloam tower fell

upon some men and killed them not because it was a judgment for some specific sin (Lk. 13:4).

Job 8:4 If your children have sinned against him, He has delivered them into the hand of their disobedience- LXX "Sent them away to the place of their disobedience". This clearly has relevance to the exiles of Judah being sent off to Babylon, whose idols they had worshipped. Clearly Job's children had indeed sinned and been judged appropriately, and Job is here accused of wrongly justifying them- although so far, he has complained only of the injustice of his own judgments. We can perhaps see Job as a representative of the faithful minority amongst the exiles, and his children as the Jews who had sinned. Ezekiel had told the Jews in exile that even Job could not mediate for them to get forgiveness for them. Bildad may be mocking the way that Job's sacrifices for his children hadn't in fact brought about their deliverance from the judgment for their disobedience.

Job 8:5 If you want to seek God diligently, make your supplication to the Almighty-

The stress may be on "you", the contrast is with "your children" (:4). Bildad is implying Job's children were struck because they were sinners who would not repent. Whereas Job has been struck in the hope he would repent; and so Bildad urges him to speedily do so. That is his sense in :6, that if Job becomes pure through repentance, then God will as it were awake for him. We know from the prologue that God has not at all turned off from Job, He is watching very closely. And Job has no sin to repent of.

He may be picking up on Job's sarcastic comment that if he died, then God would seek him and not find him (Job 7:21). Instead of thinking like that, Job should have been seeking God- not trying to get to a position where God could not seek him. GNB "But turn now and plead with Almighty God". Bildad, as noted on :1, is just repeating the words of Eliphaz (Job 5:8). Job had turned to God when afflicted, but the friends ignored that. They liked to imagine that was just mere words; for, they apparently reasoned, if someone seeks God and has repented, then God is going to solve their material problems. This is exactly the mistaken view of many within the Pentecostal movement today.

Job 8:6 If you were pure and upright, surely now He would awaken for you, and make the habitation of your righteousness prosperous- The words of the friends suggest that their view was in fact that of the satan in the prologue. Satan obviously quibbled with God's pronouncement of Job as perfect and upright (Job 1:8). And Bildad likewise seems to allude to this when he comments concerning Job's downfall: "If thou wert pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee" (8:6 AV). For more connections between the friends and the satan, see on Job 1:6.

God's opinion of Job was that he was "upright" (Job 1:1 s.w.). But as the drama progresses, the friends argue that if Job were in fact "upright" then God would not be afflicting him (Job 4:7; 8:6 s.w.). Job absorbs this reasoning, and confesses that he is not "upright" and therefore cannot find God (Job 23:7,8 s.w.). He absorbs false guilt and becomes influenced by the guilt placed upon him by his religion and "friends" amongst the "sons of God". See on :20.

LXX "And will restore to thee the habitation of righteousness". Indeed Job was restored. Likewise :7 LXX "Though then thy beginning should be small, yet thy end should be unspeakably great".

Job 8:7 Though your beginning was small, yet your latter end would greatly increase-

The beginning Bildad had in mind is Job's pathetic present state. Repentance of sin would give Job a wonderful "latter end". This is the phrase used of how just such a transformation occurred for Job (Job 42:7 "God blessed the latter end of Job"). But the repentance was not for any previous sins, but for the sins of following Bildad's false claims about God.

Job's "latter end" did increase (s.w. Job 42:12) and Bildad lived to see it, and thereby realized how wrong his judgment had been. Bildad's words may be a recognition of how Job arose to wealth from small beginnings, implying that his "latter end" would only really increase if he were repentant and Godly (:5,6). The fact Job's latter end did increase was therefore evidence that God accepted him as Godly. The same word is used of the "latter end" of Israel, which will likewise be "increased" and blessed; and could have been so for the exiles had they followed the path of Job (Is. 41:22; 46:10; Jer. 29:11; 31:17).

Job 8:8 Please inquire of past generations. Find out about the learning of their fathers-

The research [AV "search"] commended was to be not of Scripture, but of the views of men. This refusal to think outside tramlines is typical of religious people and denominations. The writers and thinkers of previous generations must never be disagreed with.

Bildad stresses the power of traditional understanding (:8-10), and one of the themes of the book is the utter failure of traditional understandings of the time compared to the ultimate reality of God and His hand in human life. Perhaps he has in view the patriarchs, beginning from Abraham. But his fathers were idolaters, and Bildad is missing the point- that the Divine truths revealed to individuals are freestanding and independent of how long they lived or to whom they have listened.

Job 8:9 For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days on earth are a shadow- The final appeal of God demonstrates that any man can at this point know and perceive His Truth, and man is not 'without knowledge' because he is out of step with ancient gurus, or ignorant of them. Perhaps Bildad may have in view the way that lifespans were far longer in the past, and therefore he considered the patriarchs wiser. But so many people live the same year every year, and the number of years lived isn't related to their wisdom.

Job 8:10 Shall they not teach you, tell you, and utter words out of their heart?- This challenge to go and ask the old men of :8,9 may therefore be a reference to old sages who were alive at Job's time; for if the reference is to the patriarchs, then they were dead and could not have spoken to Job.

Job 8:11 Can the papyrus grow up without mire? Can the rushes grow without water?-

The idea in :11,12 is that if water is removed from the papyrus plant, it immediately wilts and dies. Now suffering has come to Job, he has immediately stumbled. This is exactly the same reasoning as the Satan, again encouraging us to see the friends as effectively the satan.

Bildad's idea is that Job's prosperity was like a quick growing papyrus which would soon wither (:12) because it had not enough water or mud. Bildad's reasoning is wrong, but clearly the Lord quarried His parable of the sower from parts of these

ideas (see on :16 also). For He speaks of the man who has no "depth of earth" as the one who responds eagerly to the word sown, but falls away "when affliction of persecution arises for the word's sake" because he has 'no root in himself' (Mk. 4:5,17). Bildad was therefore not simply saying that Job's persecution was because he had sinned; but rather he implies that Job had lost his faith after the persecution arose, because he had no real root in faith. In this Bildad was also wrong, for Job continually seeks to God in his tribulations. Behemoth was quite at home in the "mire" (s.w. Job 40:21); and the connection is in order to demonstrate that even the "mire" was created by God and just as He saved Jeremiah out of the mire of the dungeon, so He could save Job and the exiles. And the only other usage of the word is in the description of the healing of the "miry places" (Ez. 47:11) if the exiles were responsive to the prophetic call to restore the temple and city made in Ez. 40-48. But like Behemoth, whom God will paint as Job, so Job ought to be quite at home with how his situation was. Although what he suffered would have caused any man PTSD for life and can hardly be met by the passing comment "Just take it easy, son".

Job 8:12 While it is yet in its greenness, not cut down- "Not cut down" suggests that Job had withered even before he was "cut down", just like the papyrus which is without mud and water to sustain it (:11). The word for "cut down" is used of the cutting down of Judah (Ez. 17:4,22); Job is clearly the suffering servant who represents God's suffering people.

It withers before any other reed- "Withers" is literally 'dried up'. The theme of 'drying up' is significant. Bildad considers Job to have been 'dried up' by God's judgment (Job 8:12), and the word is used of how God withered or dried up Judah at the hands of their invaders (Jer. 12:4; 23:10; Ez. 17:9,10,24; Zech. 11:17; Lam. 4:8; Is. 40:7,8- although the prophetic word of God requiring their restoration would endure, despite their drying up). The dry bones of Judah in captivity were withered or dried up (Ez. 37:11). So Job's 'drying up' was again, a sharing in the representative suffering of God's people. Job's personal response to his 'drying up' was to reflect that God dries up waters and also sends them forth as floods (Job 12:15 s.w.); He can give and He can take, just as Job had initially realized (Job 2:10). Just as He dried up Job / Israel, so He could abundantly send forth waters; just as He did at the Red Sea. Restoration and salvation was just as easy for Him as destruction, to put it another way. The drying up of Job was also understood by him as referring to his death (Job 14:11), but God could raise him from the dead and have a desire to him again (Job 14:15). Eliphaz wrongly argues that the Divine 'drying up' of a person means permanent extinction (Job 15:30), as does Bildad (Job 18:16); but Job always sees the 'drying up' as part of a Divine action which also has a counterpart, the pouring out again of waters, or resurrection of the dried up, withered bones. Likewise Judah in captivity thought that their drying up, their dry bones, were incapable of revival (Ez. 37:11); but the message is that they could indeed be revived, and their drying up was but a presage to their eternal revival.

Job 8:13 So are the paths of all who forget God. The hope of the godless man shall perish-

Job has often lamented that his hope has perished, and Bildad says that this is evidence that he is "godless" or a hypocrite. And yet the theology of the friends is that we have "hope" only in this life; the "hope" is of God giving you a materially blessed life now.

Given all Job's references to God, it is patently wrong to assume he was "Godless" and had 'forgotten God'; we are hereby warned as to the dangers of assuming someone is not 'of God' because of the path of logic which our theological positions have led us down. And yet there is still some truth in what Bildad says; those who "forget God" will indeed perish, and the phrase is used about Israel in Dt. 32:18; Ps. 106:21. Job was experiencing the sufferings of those who "forget God" even though he himself had most clearly not done so. In this we see the nature of representational suffering and intercession, which came true in its ultimate term in the Lord Jesus, the "suffering servant" based upon Job.

Job 8:14 whose confidence shall break apart, whose trust is in a spider's web- LXX
"For his house shall be without inhabitants, and his tent shall prove a spider's web"- a reference to the collapse of the tent / house of Job's sons, killing them all.

Job 8:15 He shall lean on his house, but it shall not stand. He shall cling to it, but it shall not endure- To 'lean upon' is to trust; Job was accused of leaning upon his own large "house", his family and literal home, which had now been taken away from him. That may have been partly true; but now he 'leaned' upon God alone. And the same was intended to be true of the exiles, who had 'leaned' upon human strength, Egypt especially (Is. 30:12; 31:1 s.w.), desperately clinging on to it; but when that was removed, they were to 'lean upon' God alone (Is. 50:10 s.w.). Again, Job is Judah.

Job 8:16 He is green before the sun. His shoots go forth over his garden- The picture is of a plant which initially grows quickly and prolifically, but is planted upon rocks (:17) and the sun will soon smite it. Again, as noted on :11, the Lord constructed His parable of the sower from this. The seed sown on stony ground was the man who responds enthusiastically initially, but then fades away once persecution arises (Mk. 4:5,16,17). This was a picture of what happened to Israel; and Job was their representative, even though in the end, he was the good ground and did not faint under persecution.

Job 8:17 His roots are wrapped around the rock pile. He sees the place of stones- Roots upon stones rather than earth continues the connection with the parable of the sower; see on :16.

Job 8:18 If he is destroyed from his place, then it shall deny him, saying, 'I have not seen you' - Judah in exile felt 'destroyed from their place', but the lesson of the dialogues in Job is that the friends were seeing things as they were at the moment, and failing to understand that God had a longer term program of restoration. Job would be the pattern for the exiles to follow- and they would return to their "place".

Job 8:19 Behold, this is the joy of his way: out of the earth, others shall spring- The idea of others springing up in the place of the withered papyrus, also by the waterside, is to be found in the prophecies of the exiles' restoration (s.w. Is. 44:4; 42:9; 43:19 etc.). Bildad was wrong to think that the cut down Job could never spring up again; he would, just as the exiles likewise could have sprung up to new life in the restored kingdom. The reasoning of the friends was that of the faithless Jews in exile.

Job 8:20 Behold, God will not cast away a blameless man-

Bildad assumes God has "cast away" Job. And Job absorbs this false guilt, for he will later say that God has cast him away (Job 10:3, AV "despise"). Job 36:5 uses the word to say that God doesn't cast anyone away, because He is so mighty. Likewise Lev. 26:43 promises that even in their exile for despising / casting away God, He will not cast them away (s.w.). God doesn't treat man as man treats God.

Job appears to argue with this in his reply, insisting that he is not "blameless" or (AV) "perfect" (Job 9:20,21). He realizes through this false statement of Bildad's that in fact God cannot require utter perfection in order to save a man; and at the same time, He clearly blesses the sinful and brings calamity to the righteous. The conclusion therefore is that there is no direct connection between sin and present suffering; and the salvation of the righteous, none of who are "perfect", is by grace. And the narrative of the book of Job takes us beyond even that, suggesting that being blameless or perfect is only by God imputing that status to believers. For God's opinion of Job was that he *was* "blameless" (Job 1:1). But as the drama progresses, Bildad argues that if Job were in fact "blameless" then God would not cast him away (Job 8:20 s.w.). Job absorbs this reasoning, and confesses that he is not "blameless" (Job 9:20,21 s.w.), and yet he is driven to the conclusion that the "blameless" and sinner are "destroyed together" by God (Job 9:22 s.w.). It's quite possible that in depression and periods of suffering, we can come to have a lower view of ourselves than that which God has of us; just as at other times we can have a higher view of ourselves spiritually than we ought to. There is true guilt, the guilt which we should take, and false guilt. And Job seems to have picked up the false guilt thrown upon him by Bildad. We too need to learn this difference between false and true guilt. See on :6.

Neither will He uphold the evildoers- Heb. 'hold the hand of evil-doers'. And yet this was exactly what God did to sinful Judah in captivity (Is. 41:13; 42:6). That was all by grace, and grace is something which Bildad knew nothing of.

Job 8:21 He will still fill your mouth with laughter, your lips with shouting- The language of the restored exiles having their mouths filled with laughter and singing when Yahweh brought again Zion- not because they were technically righteous, as Bildad reasoned, but by His grace. Bildad's words are far too simplistic; a man who has suddenly lost all his children from a Divine tornado will have PTSD issues for the rest of his life, and will hardly spend the rest of his life in laughter and joy. We immediately feel this as we read these words. But in fact they came true for Job, or at least, we are invited to see things that way. Which means that Divine restoration is psychological and emotional, and not just a material restoration of prosperity.

Job 8:22 Those who hate you shall be clothed with shame. The tent of the wicked shall be no more- This was what ought to have happened to the friends, at the end. But it didn't, again by grace, because God accepted Job's intercession for them.

JOB CHAPTER 9

Job 9:1 Then Job answered- The interpretation of this chapter depends upon discerning connections with the previous speech of Bildad.

Job 9:2 Truly I know that it is so, but how can man be just with God?-

Job 9:2-24 is a poem of 23 lines each beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Clearly this is poetry rather than the words that came out of Job's mouth; see on Job 1:1.

We naturally enquire what Job is agreeing with when he says "I know that it is so". In :10 he will quote verbatim Eliphaz's words of Job 5:9. From his arguments now, it seems Job is responding to Bildad's question, "Will God pervert right?". To which Job replies: 'Of course— but how shall man ever be right with a God who behaves as He does, how can I get God to see all the righteousness I have done?'. We know from the prologue that God was intensely aware of Job's righteousness. Job doesn't know that, and assumes God is treating him as if he is not right with Him, because God's hand on Job is wrongly seen by Job as condemnation for sin. He would then be concluding that God is impossible to please. Job has in fact totally absorbed the reasoning of the friends, much as he claims it is rubbish. He assumes he is not right with God, when in fact he was. And this is something we can wrongly feel for much of our lives. The glorious truth is that through being in Christ, we are right with God! He is not in fact continually disappointed in us. Job is not right to assume that God is condemning him and seeking an argument with him (Job 10:2). This is a transforming truth. Job's loss of his family, and the inexplicable nature of his sufferings, distracted him from this wonderful truth; as it so often does for us. God's ways are high above ours; we may think we have the right theology about Him, but we all misunderstand Him in that we fail to see ourselves as He does. We see ourselves through the lens of our failures and inherent weaknesses, and we reflect onto ourselves how others see us. Because we struggle to forgive and find it so hard to see others positively... we assume God looks at us the same way. Because we spare just a few passing thoughts for God in the course of the day... we think God treats us the same. No. He is on fire for us, 24/7. You don't give your son to die for a man you don't much think nor care about. The gift of the Spirit enables us to see what unredeemed man cannot see- something of the extent of God's love for us: "... strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, to the end that you... might be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height, and to truly know and understand the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge" (Eph. 3:16-19). No smart philosopher, powerful business man or physically stunning man or woman can ever get this. This ability to perceive something of God's huge love for me, His positivity about little me, is the greatest and most transforming gift. The book of Job brings it out so clearly- we see in the prologue how God views Job. And then we see him in the mire of depression, not knowing the prologue, unable to see himself as God sees him, and reflecting back onto God how he sees himself, and how the friends see him. How true were Simon and Garfunkel in their song about the otherwise mundane, council estate girl Mrs. Robinson: "Mrs Robinson, Jesus loves you more than you will know".

Indeed it seems to me that much of Paul's reasoning in Romans about righteousness and justification is alluding to the book of Job, even if there are few direct quotes. Indeed these are wonderful, deep things out of darkness. It is why I beg men and women to be baptized into Christ, to be counted right before God, so they can live in all joy and peace through believing these things. Tragically, like so many, Job will go off at a tangent in :3, assuming God is implacable, is against him, and needs bringing into court to be judged for His behaviour.

Or perhaps what Job is agreeing with are the statements immediately preceding this, that God will not cast away the blameless [AV "perfect"] and will judge sinners (Job 8:19-21). But Job has been driven further in his thinking- as an imperfect but

relatively righteous man who is suffering the apparent judgment of God. And so he asks the question which is at the root of the book: "How can man be just with God?". Paul spends Romans 1-8 discussing this question, because it is at the heart of the Christian Gospel (see on :10). His answer is that which Job finally reasons himself towards, and which is finally revealed at the end by God's answers: by God's grace, through faith in imputed righteousness.

Job 9:3 If He wishes to contend with him, he can't answer Him one time in a thousand-

This is legal language. But the Hebrew is ambiguous as to whether it is God wanting to contend with man with 1000 questions, or Job wanting to contend with God. LXX assumes the latter. Job wants a court case with God, wants God in the dock, but he is frustrated that God will not respond. Depending on translation, Job may even be saying that God "cannot answer" man, and so He refuses to attend court, and the chapter goes on to show how God is so powerful and thus can get away with not answering. Job here and later will thus accuse God of abuse of power on a cosmic level. No wonder Job is condemned for blasphemy. He does indeed curse God as his wife told him to, and as the satan predicted he would.

Or we can read that Job complains that God is contending with him, picking a legal case against him (Job 9:3; 10:2). But it is in fact Job who contends with God and is condemned for it (Job 33:13; 40:2). What we think God is doing to us, we are in fact doing to God.

The idea of God in legal contention is quite a theme of the restoration prophets. And the story of Job was, I have suggested, rewritten (under inspiration) for the exiles. God had contended with Judah and found them guilty (Is. 3:13; Jer. 2:9), but He would not contend for ever (Is. 57:16). All contention or answer back against Him, counter accusing Him, placing God in the dock, was clearly wrong and useless (Is. 45:9). Instead He by grace would contend legally against the abusers of His people (Is. 49:25; 51:22; Jer. 50:34), so that the suffering servant would be justified / counted righteous by God, so that all legal contention against him was powerless (Is. 50:8). But this contention by God against Israel's enemies depended upon their repentance (Mic. 7:9). All this was finally seen in Job's experience; he was set up as a pattern for the exiles to follow, although ultimately they didn't follow it to the end.

LXX "God would not hearken to him, so that he should answer to one of his charges of a thousand". Job appeals for 'witnesses' (Job 9:33-35; 16:18-22; 19:20-27), an advocate in Heaven (Job 9:33), denies his guilt and demands a legal list of his sins (Job 13:19), he wishes for God to come to trial (Job 9:3), and thus Job is described as a man who has taken out a 'case' with God (Job 23:4; 40:2). Job 29-31 is effectively Job's declaration of legal innocence and an appeal to God to hear his case more sympathetically (Job 31:35). And of course God pronounces a final legal verdict at the very end (Job 42:7), in response to Job's earlier plea: "Sleeplessly I wait for His reply" (Job 16:22). It's as if the whole experience of Job was [at least partly] in order to test out the Canaanite theories of 'Satan', suffering and evil in the court of Heaven; and also the various theories which arose to explain Judah's captivity in Babylon. The friends represent the traditional views of evil, and often make reference to the myths of their day about 'Satan' figures. They speak as if *they* are the final court – Eliphaz speaks of how the judges and elders of their day, the "holy ones", had concluded Job was guilty, and that they, the friends, were right: "To which of the holy ones will you appeal [legal language]?... we have [legally] examined this, and it [Job's guilt] is true" (Job 5:1,27). This is of great comfort to those who feel misjudged by man – above

them in Heaven the ultimate Heavenly court is considering our case, and that is all that matters.

Job 9:4 God who is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who has hardened himself against Him, and prospered?- As explained on :3, all attempts to put God in the dock by refusing to repent, or by simply accusing Him of injustice against sinners, were therefore inappropriate and pointless. Job is effectively denying Bildad's implication that Job had "hardened himself" against God. The same word is used of Pharaoh hardening himself against Yahweh (Ex. 7:3). It was Israel who hardened themselves against God (Dt. 10:16), leading to their exile (2 Chron. 36:13; Neh. 9:29; Jer. 19:15). Job was accused of having done this and was apparently treated as if he had done so; again in the spirit of the Lord Jesus, being treated as a sinner, experiencing the judgment for sin, when personally innocent.

Job 9:5 He removes the mountains, and they don't know it, when He overturns them in His anger- Job claims that God gets angry for no reason with mountains who "don't know it", who have no idea or ability to understand what's happening, overturning them by volcanoes just for the sake of it. And likewise He treats Job. God's final reply doesn't much disagree with this view. "Mountains" plural can be read as an intensive plural; the one great mountain which was to be removed into exile was as it were mount Zion; and it was the house of Judah which was to be overturned- but until "He come whose right it is" (Ez. 23:25-27). The friends only dealt with present realities before their eyes, as did the exiles- they failed to see the longer term perspective. What was removed and overturned could be returned and revived. That was the Divine plan. See on :6.

Job 9:6 He shakes the earth out of its place. Its pillars tremble- Language used of the shaking of the earth and heavens of Israel and Judah at the hands of their invaders. See on :5. The idea of "place" occurs often in Job. The sinner is removed from his place, death removes man from his place. There was a strong perception that the physical earth, along with society, had a structure. Everything and every man had his "place". But Job notices that God has a way of upsetting the order which He created, moving men, rocks and mountains out of their established place. And in a random way. Job sees God turning creation into chaos, just as the Genesis record described Him turning chaos into order, through His creative words. God's final response is going to speak much about His creation, but He will give no comment on His way of apparently de-creating men and the world into chaos. The truth is that be that as it may, His saving love, His love shown in His eternal salvation of man, is the constant that shines through it all. We in the new creation still experience the sense of chaos insofar as we are not completely out of this present system. But the same guiding, constant light shines through. For in Job we see the end of the Lord, that He is very pitiful, and of tender mercy (James 5:11).

We note that elsewhere in scripture, earthquakes, mountains being cast into the sea etc. do not harm or faze the faithful (Ps. 18:8; 46:3,4; 75:4; 97:4; 114:5-7). Quite possibly we are meant to deduce that Job's fear of these things suggests a lack of faith at this point. He doesn't have the peace predicted of the believer. The dimming of sun and stars (:7) is likewise the language of Divine judgment, and Job is clearly scared by it. His theology is limited to the understanding that serving God leads to blessing in this life. He has little conception of a future day of reward and judgment. He isn't holding on to faith in God's purpose to save him despite passing through all that in the

turning upside down of his life. Job in this sense represents the exiles in Babylon. The language of earthquake, mountains moving, sun and stars darkening... is all used of the Babylonian invasion and destruction of the Mount Zion temple and the deportations of Jews into exile. Through all that, the faithful were intended to perceive God's love and final purpose to save His people. Like Job, they failed in that; but they were to follow his pattern of repentance and final blessing.

Job 9:7 He commands the sun, and it doesn't rise, and seals up the stars- Language used in the apocalyptic message of darkness and destruction of the kingdom of Judah (e.g. Is. 13:10). The simple point is that all that was done by the hand of God and His word of prophetic command, and not because of supernatural forces of radical evil in the cosmos.

Possibly Job is sarcastically alluding to creation, where God commanded "Let there be light", and created the sun and the stars. Now, Job is saying God has a way of just annulling His creation- which is what he feels God has done to him, creating and blessing him, and then turning him upside down in random anger.

Job speaks of God's destructive, judgmental power against the mountains (9:6), earth, pillars (9:7) sun, stars (9:8), heavens (9:9) and the constellations. He sees God revealed as violent in the natural world, and He sees this violent God as violating him. In Job 38,39 God will speak of the same categories in the same order- to demonstrate His greatness, His total control, and He cites all this as evidence that Job is wrong. In the end, at "the end of the Lord" (James 5:11), God is love and salvation, not condemnation, and His control of all natural processes reveals that.

Job 9:8 He alone stretches out the heavens, and treads on the back of Yam- God is therefore seen as far greater than the legendary sea monster Yam; see on :24. "He alone" has power; He doesn't share power with any cosmic 'Satan' being, all is under His control.

Job 9:9 He makes the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades, and the rooms of the south- The surrounding culture believed (as many do today) that the stars influence life upon earth; Job emphasizes that God is the creator of the stars, and the present tense "makes" suggests that Job even perceived that the stars were not fixed but are part on an ongoing creation- something modern cosmology has finally come to realize. "The bear", Heb. 'the fool', alludes to the myth that there had been a rebellion against God in Heaven, and 'the bear' had been chained up in the sky for all to see. Job is deconstructing these myths; quite simply, God had "made" these constellations and placed them as they are by His sovereign power. The Hebrew *keseel*, "Orion" is indeed always translated 'fool' in its other 70 occurrences in the Bible. The idea is that the rebellious foolish bear has been strung up in the sky by God for all to see. The context is as discussed on :3, Job's accusation that God abuses and treats as a fool any who disagree with Him. The friends may have the same idea in view when they say that He charges His Angels with folly.

Job 9:10 He does great things past finding out; yes, marvellous things without number-

Job here quotes verbatim Eliphaz's statement in Job 5:9, where Eliphaz there argues that all God does has meaning and is for good; and therefore Job's sufferings are intentioned by Him as judgment. But Job quotes this fact that God does "great

things" in the context of his argument that God misuses His power to do great things without any meaning (see on :3).

Job is moving closer to the great truths which God Himself will make explicit at His appearance at the end of the book. The friends assumed that meaning could easily be attached to event by "the wise"; whereas Job is driven to conclude by his sufferings that God's ways are "past finding out", and yet all of His ways are wonderful. I suggested on :2 that Paul's arguments in Romans 1-8 about 'how a man can be just with God' are consciously based upon the book of Job. In Romans 9-11 he cites Israel as the parade example of what he has been saying in chapters 1-8. And so it is appropriate that he concludes that section by quoting these words of Job: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past tracing out!" (Rom. 11:33). The "marvellous things" which Job sensed were somehow going on are verbalized and made explicit in Romans- they are the things of God's saving grace.

Job 9:11 Behold, He goes by me, and I don't see Him. He passes on also, but I don't perceive Him- This is not so much a glum lament as an extension of the argument of :10; God is doing wonderful things, things connected with His grace, which are beyond human comprehension. And Job cites his own lack of perception as proof enough of that.

And yet from the context discussed in :3, it seems that :12-24 is Job's description of God's huge power in order to back up His conclusion- that God as it were throws His power about, in order to crush and paralyze those He chooses to. Without any moral restraint and paying no attention to human suffering and experience in this life.

Job 9:12 Behold, He snatches away-

The idea is that God 'carries off' as a hunting animal carries off its' prey. His idea is that God uses His great, irresistible power in an irresponsible way. He cannot be hindered, and His power is such that [according to Job] He refuses to be questioned nor to give any legal account of what He is doing. This is the kind of crude atheistic blasphemy that believers just turn their eyes and ears away from when they hear it. And yet here it is coming out of Job's mouth; and he is the hero of the story. Specifically this is perhaps a reference to the snatching away of Job's cattle. He doggedly insists that all his sufferings were from God.

Who can hinder Him?- The dramatic story of Job thrice uses the same phrase as in Is. 43:13, concluding that "who can hinder...?" God's way (Job 9:12; 11:10; 23:13). The exiles were to understand that no human opposition or discouragement can turn back or hinder God's purpose to save His people, even if they are as Job in suffering. His saving and restorative purpose will not be hindered, if we wish to identify with it.

Who will ask Him, 'What are you doing?' - It is for God to ask this of sinful man (s.w. Gen. 3:13; 4:10); but not for man to demand this of God. It is for man to ask himself "What have I done?", and repent (s.w. Jer. 8:6). And yet it could be argued that Job does indeed ask this of God, and has to lay his hand upon his mouth at the end. In the restoration context, Israel as the clay were not to ask the Divine potter "What are You doing?" (s.w. Is. 45:9). To do so would be to strive with our maker.

Job 9:13 God will not withdraw His anger. The cohorts of Rahab stoop under Him- "Rahab" is a symbol of both Egypt and Babylon. GNB "God's anger is constant. He crushed his enemies who helped Rahab, the sea monster, oppose him". This language

is clearly alluding to the helpers of Tiamat in the Babylonian myth; see on :24. Job's argument is that even the sea monster has to submit and collapse, God is so powerful. God lashes out in a random way, and abuses His power. So Job feels. We note that Job clearly believed in sea monsters. His theology was wrong, but he still hugely pleased God despite that.

Job 9:14 How much less shall I answer Him, and choose my words to argue with Him?- Job argues that God is sovereign in Heaven, with no evil rival (contrary to the view of the friends, and of many today). Therefore, who is a single man like Job to argue back with God? He would love his day in court with God, but he knows that however well he argues his case, God is so powerful that He will do what He wants anyway and so the whole legal case he fantasizes about would be a waste of time. Again, Job is accusing God of an abuse of power. God's response will be to talk even more of His vast power, picking up many of the aspects of creation which Job here touches on. And He leaves it at that. That is His response.

Job 9:15 Though I were righteous, yet I wouldn't answer Him. I would make supplication to my judge-

Job feels overpowered by the irresistible and awful might of his opponent. His righteousness means nothing [although we know from the prologue how much it meant to God his judge!]. He felt just one little guy in a legal case against the big business corporation. LXX "For though I be righteous, he will not hearken to me: I will intreat his judgment"; GNB "Though I am innocent, all I can do is beg for mercy from God my judge". The ambiguity of the original is perhaps intentional; for Job teeters between accepting his sinfulness, and yet claiming he is without sin. See on :35 for another example.

Job 9:16 If I had called, and He had answered me, yet I wouldn't believe that He listened to my voice-

The legal language continues. Job says that even if he had managed to call God to account in court, and God had responded- he says that God wouldn't listen to him, and nobody could make God engage with him. He will repeat this desire to get God in court in Job 23:3-9: "Would that I knew where to find Him that I might come to his tribunal. I would lay my case before Him, would fill my mouth with [legal] arguments. I want to know what words He would answer me. I want to consider what He would say to me... and I could carry my case through successfully". If only he had known the prologue, and known how constantly high was God's impression of him and His feelings towards him!

Here is spiritual depression in its classic form. The cup is always seen as half empty rather than half full. Even answered prayer is seen as irrelevant and no proof that the God who appears so distant has in fact responded to little me. The weight of suffering and the sense that we are suffering at God's hand "without cause" (:17), with no discernible meaning attached to event, outweighs all the evidence of His intense love and interest in us.

Job 9:17 For He bruises me with a storm, and multiplies my wounds without cause-

We know from the prologue that indeed Job's wounds are "without cause". But he draws a terribly wrong conclusion about God from that. We can translate "He would bruise me...". Even if, as described in :14-16, he managed to get God in court- God would just lash out at him again. What follows now in :17-21 is not so much a

description of Job's present suffering, but rather his imagination of what God would do to him even if he ever did manage to get God into court to answer for His behaviour.

"Bruises" is the same word translated "bruise" in Gen. 3:15, thus implying that he is receiving the result of the covenant in Eden for no reason. Therefore he is finally led to acceptance of his sinfulness. The Lord Jesus must have been sorely tempted to adopt the same false reasoning of His great antitype, but He surely had learnt the lesson that Job like Himself was suffering as representative of God's people and not as a consequence of personal sin. The references earlier in Job 9 to God spreading out the Heavens and creating the stars show Job's mind at this time was set early in Genesis (:8-10). See on Job 10:9; 13:20-22. This is yet another lesson which comes out of Job- we are suffering the results of living in a fallen creation. The only ultimate answer to that is through the work of the seed of the woman, the Lord Jesus, and the resolution is not going to come completely in this life.

God had accused the Satan figure of wanting to have Job suffer "without cause" (Job 2:3 s.w.). And here Job repeats this. The Lord Jesus likewise suffered "without cause" (Ps. 69:4; 109:3 s.w.). Israel did suffer for a "cause" or reason- they had indeed sinned (s.w. Ez. 6:10; 14:23). Job as their representative, like the Lord Jesus, suffered those same judgments but *without* a cause.

Job 9:18 He will not allow me to catch my breath, but fills me with bitterness-

"Catch" is the usual word for "return"; the complaint is that God doesn't allow Job to die, to return his breath or spirit to Him in death. The suggestion is that because God has total control over the moment of human death, there is absolutely no point in arguing back with Him. On this reading, he argues that God is a sadist because He won't let Job die. But as God didn't listen to Israel's words to Moses, wanting to remain in Egypt, so He doesn't do what Job asks- because He has a far more glorious "latter end" for him. It's no bad thing to list all the prayers of ours that were never answered.

Or we could read this as perhaps Job's response to Eliphaz's claim that God both wounds (:17) and heals (Job 5:18). Job's comment is that God wounds without cause- and keeps on doing so, not healing, not even a chance to catch his breath. Again, he presents God as a sadist, mercilessly chasing a panting man. He is cursing God.

Job 9:19 If it is a matter of strength, behold, He is mighty! If of justice, 'Who', says He, 'will summon me?' - Job has been fantasizing about calling God to judgment. But he realizes that God would just flatly refuse. He is above the legal process of man, and Job is angry about this. Finally of course God will appear, and summon Job to judgment and condemn him.

No human strength or argument about justice is relevant; God cannot be summoned to court by man and placed in the dock. Therefore, one can only accept His ways and trust that He is ultimately right. That isn't what Job explicitly says nor wishes to recognize at this point, but his sufferings and reflections upon them lead him to be just moments away from this conclusion. And when God expresses this more specifically at the end of the book, He is only verbalizing what Job has already come to tacitly realize. And for us too, God's revelation in His word often simply confirms the understandings He has led us to through our sufferings in life.

Job 9:20 Though I am righteous, my own mouth shall condemn me. Though I am blameless, it shall prove me perverse-

The Hebrew is difficult. We could read: "If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall prove me perverse". But God considered him "perfect", despite those imperfections. Job didn't get to read the prologue that we readers have read. He failed to know how high was God's opinion of him; just as we can labour under false guilt, and consider that because man no longer loves us, then neither does God.

The implication might be that Job considers that God will make him say the words confessing guilt, even though he feels none.

This can as well be rendered as AV "Though I be blameless", i.e. 'even if I were blameless', and likewise in :21. The ambiguity of the original is perhaps intentional; for Job teeters between accepting his sinfulness, and yet claiming he is without sin. See on :11,15 for other examples. God's opinion of Job was that he was "blameless" (Job 1:1). But as the drama progresses, Bildad argues that if Job were in fact "blameless" then God would not cast him away (Job 8:20 s.w.). Job absorbs this reasoning, and confesses that he is not "blameless" (Job 9:20,21 s.w.), and yet he is driven to the conclusion that the "blameless" and sinner are "destroyed together" by God (Job 9:22 s.w.). It's quite possible that in depression and periods of suffering, we can come to have a lower view of ourselves than that which God has of us; just as at other times we can have a higher view of ourselves spiritually than we ought to. There is true guilt, the guilt which we should take, and false guilt. And Job seems to have picked up the false guilt thrown upon him by Bildad. We too need to learn this difference between false and true guilt.

Those who are sure they won't be condemned, taking the emblems with self-assurance, come together unto condemnation. Job knew this when he said that if he justifies himself, he will be condemned out of his own mouth (Job 9:20- he understood the idea of self-condemnation and judgment now). Isaiah also foresaw this, when he besought men (in the present tense): "Enter *into the rock*, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty", and then goes on to say that in the day of God's final judgment, "[the rejected] shall go *into the holes of the rock... for fear of the Lord and for the glory of His majesty* when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth" (Is. 2:10,11,19-21). We must find a true, self-condemning humility now, unless it will be forced upon us at the judgment.

Job 9:21 I am blameless. I don't respect myself- LXX "For even if I have sinned, I know it not in my soul" may be alluded to by Paul in 1 Cor. 4:4. Even if we have a good conscience, it is not our conscience which will stand and judge us at the last day. It is before God's word that we stand or fall. Or perhaps along with GNB we can read this as simply the nadir of spiritual depression: "I am innocent, but I no longer care. I am sick of living. Nothing matters; innocent or guilty, God will destroy us".

Here and by implication in other places, Job effectively says that there is no point in serving God or striving for obedience to God. This is what the priests of Israel later said after the restoration, to whom this book was partly addressed in its later rewriting: "It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance?" (Mal. 3:14). Elihu claimed that Job "has said, It profits a man nothing that he should delight himself in God" (Job 34:9)- i.e. keep the commands of God, seeing that the Hebrew for "delight" often occurs in the context of obedience to the word. The Malachi passage is more specifically alluding to Job 21:7,15: "What is the Almighty that we should serve Him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him?". These are the words of Job, complaining about the prosperity of the wicked who had such an attitude, and the carefree happiness of their lives: "Their children

dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ" (Job 21:11,12). It is in this that the Malachi context is so significant, for Mal. 3:15 continues: "We (the Israelites) call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up". This was also Job's view. Notice that Job is probably implying that his prosperous three friends were among the wicked whom he is describing, thus associating them with the corrupt Jewish priesthood.

I despise my life- The grace of it all was that although he wanted to cast away his life (Job 7:16; 9:21), just as God's people cast away His covenant (Is. 8:6; 30:12; Jer. 6:19), God would not cast away His people in their exile and depression (s.w. Lev. 26:44), even if they cast Him away. Job felt despised or cast away by God (Job 10:14) just as the exiles did, but this wasn't the case; God will not despise or cast away His servant people (Job 36:5; Is. 41:9; Jer. 31:37; 33:26). Again and again, we who have read the prologue know that Job thinks God thinks about him in a negative way, when this was not at all the case. His great sin, for which he must repent, was in not seeing God for who He was, and not wanting to still see that God did love him.

Job 9:22 It is all the same. Therefore I say that He destroys the blameless and the wicked- Here we have another example of Job's disbelief in any future judgment. And yet these dialogues are an example of what happens when theology fails. Their theology was that obedience to God brings blessing, and disobedience results in curse. But that theology had failed. Job is driven to the understanding that there must surely be a future day of judgment, which meant resurrection, which meant God somehow revealed on earth at some latter day, when justice would finally be done. Likewise, he is increasingly driven to the reflection that life for all men, the good and the bad, is very brief- and for good and bad alike, ends in death: "together in the dust [all men] lie, and the worm will cover them" (Job 21:26). This clearly alludes to the curse upon man in Eden. All have sinned, and whether some sin more than others they all alike come to dust. Job suffered "without cause" and I don't discern any spiritual growth in him within the dialogues; but it would be true to say that his theology developed. And we are possibly intended to discern that.

This and :21 are in response to the statement in Job 8:20 "Behold, God will not cast away a blameless man". Job appears to argue with this in his reply, insisting that he is not "blameless" or (AV) "perfect" (Job 9:20,21). He realizes through this false statement of Bildad's that in fact God cannot require utter perfection in order to save a man; and at the same time, He clearly blesses the sinful and brings calamity to the righteous. The conclusion therefore is that there is no direct connection between sin and present suffering; and the salvation of the righteous, none of whom are "perfect", is by grace. And the narrative of the book of Job takes us beyond even that, suggesting that being blameless or perfect is only by God imputing that status to believers. For God's opinion of Job was that he *was* "blameless" (Job 1:1). But as the drama progresses, Bildad argues that if Job were in fact "blameless" then God would not cast him away (Job 8:20 s.w.). Job absorbs this reasoning, and confesses that he is not "blameless" (Job 9:20,21 s.w.), and yet he is driven to the conclusion that the "blameless" and sinner are "destroyed together" by God (Job 9:22 s.w.). It's quite possible that in depression and periods of suffering, we can come to have a lower view of ourselves than that which God has of us; just as at other times we can have a higher view of ourselves spiritually than we ought to. There is true guilt, the guilt which we should take, and false guilt. And Job seems to have picked up the false guilt thrown upon him by Bildad. We too need to learn this difference between false and true guilt. See on Job 8:6.

Job 9:23 If the scourge kills suddenly, He will mock at the trial of the innocent-

The scourge had indeed killed suddenly for Job and his family, and Job considers that God laughed or mocked at it. And he claims God would mock any trial, any court proceeding, even though Job is innocent. This is all blasphemous and God and Elihu will sharply reprove him later.

What began as what I called "the nadir of spiritual depression" in :21 now moves beyond that to outright false accusation towards God. For He does not mock at the "sudden" suffering of His people, such as Job experienced in the sudden loss of all he had. We marvel the more at God's final statement that Job had spoken rightly about Him (Job 42:7,8). That Divine comment may indeed simply be upon Job's statement of repentance. But all the same, we would expect God to clarify that was what He intended, and to offer some note that Job has indeed falsely accused Him. But God doesn't. He doesn't need to. He has completely justified Job by faith, clothing him with imputed righteousness. And His demonstration of His ways has in any case made the required point, and Job recognized that.

Job 9:24 The earth is given into the hand of the wicked. He covers the faces of its judges-

Job claims that God wants the wicked to prosper, and just as He Himself is [according to Job] totally lacking in integrity and has ignored the legal system, so, Job says, He has blinded the eyes of human judges.

Or we could argue that again Job is driven towards an understanding that God will finally bring about a day of justice when He gives the earth into the hands of the righteous. He realizes that all creation is to some extent in his situation- groaning for the manifestation of the sons of God, as Paul puts it.

If it be not He, then who is it?- I noted on Job 1:1; 3:8 that a major theme in the book of Job is the deconstruction of the 'satan' myth. A key passage is Job 9:24: "If it be not he, who then is it?" (R.V.); or as the G.N.B. puts it: "If God didn't do it, who did?". After all the theories of 'Who's responsible for all this evil in Job's life?', Job concludes that the source simply has to be God – and not anyone else. If He truly is all powerful, then who else could ultimately be responsible? Job states that "the cohorts of Rahab [a Canaanite 'Satan' figure] shall stoop under [God]" (Job 9:13), clearly alluding to the helpers of Tiamat in the Babylonian myth. "God *alone* stretches out the heavens, and treads on the back of Yam" – the sea, or sea-monster (Job 9:8). See on Job 10:8.

Job 9:25 Now my days are swifter than a runner. They flee away, they see no good- Seeing no good was the punishment upon God's exiled people because of their sins (s.w. Jer. 17:6; 29:32). Again we see Job suffering the judgment of sinners when he himself had not sinned. This was exactly what happened to the Lord on the cross.

Job 9:26 they have passed away as the swift ships, as the eagle that swoops on the prey- Heb. "ships of reed", alluding to the swift skiffs on the river Nile. Perceiving how quickly life has sped by is typical of the thoughts of dying men. I argued on Job 1:1 that Job was indeed a historical person, and the language he uses in his depression and illness is poetically formulated, but all the same has absolute verisimilitude to the thoughts and feelings of an actual person in his situation.

Job 9:27 If I say, 'I will forget my complaint, I will put off my sad face, and cheer up'-

As noted on :26, these thoughts are exactly true to life of a real historical person. He realizes that putting on a brave face and forgetting his sufferings for a moment- is just not going to work. He still suffers from a nagging sense of being wrong before God (:28), and it is this which is preparing the way for his final repentance at the end of the book.

Job 9:28 I am afraid of all my sorrows, I know that You will not hold me innocent-

Job works himself up deeper and deeper into a position that is opposite to what is in fact God's position on him. Just as so many can do today. LXX "I quake in all my limbs". That quaking was apparently in prospect of the future judgment which he feared, although at other times Job longs for that judgment day to come. This again as noted on :26 is absolutely psychologically credible. Job may be using the term translated "innocent" in the sense of 'acquitted' as it is in Job 10:14. He fears God will not forgive him at the final judgment; and this is all part of the build up towards the final bursting of the tension at the end of the book, when God appears, condemns Job and then justifies and restores him. And all Job's fears are proven ultimately unnecessary- but only because of God's grace.

Job 9:29 I shall be condemned. Why then do I labour in vain?- Job sees no point in the court case with God he dreams of, because he feels God will condemn him whatever. We of course know from the prologue that God had a very high opinion of him. He is so not getting God's view of him...

Job asks a total of 122 questions throughout his speeches. God responds by asking him 61 questions, exactly half the number Job asks Him. The correspondence is perhaps God giving a nod to the fact He knows Job has asked the 122 questions. He doesn't specifically answer any of them.

Job's reliance on works to bring justification with God is clearly seen here, as if to say 'If I've been condemned, all these good works I've done are vain- they won't give me the salvation I thought'. This again is part of the build up towards the final declaration of salvation by grace which we find in God's final revelation at the end.

Job 9:30 If I wash myself with snow, and cleanse my hands with lye- This was apparently the attitude of the exiles. The question "How can a man be just with God?" is the same question as 'How can a man ever be clean before a perfect God?', and is repeated in this form in Job 15:15; 25:5. They had considered themselves cleansed whiter than snow because of their obedience to some parts of the Mosaic law (Lam. 4:7), but failed to accept that such cleansing to be whiter than snow is only possible by doing what David did, and casting ourselves upon God's grace outside of justification by works (Ps. 51:7). Job was to learn this lesson at the end. It was this offer which was made to Job just as it was to Judah under judgment (Is. 1:18).

Job 9:31 yet You will plunge me in the ditch. My own clothes shall abhor me- This again is Job allowing his depression to lead him to unreasonable statements about God, and not speaking right about Him. The fact we are sinners doesn't mean that God makes us dirty; we make our own clothes dirty. The word translated "ditch" is usually used in Job about the grave or "pit" (Job 17:14; 33:18,22,24,28,30); so the idea may be that all the same, for all his efforts to be righteous and cleanse his own sin, God will plunge Job into the grave at the end.

Job 9:32 For He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer Him, that we should

come together in judgment- Job in his own righteousness and amateur attempts to fix up his own sins was unable to come "together" or "at one" with God in judgment. Job is driven to realize his need for outside help (:33), but by the nature of his situation that help needed to be somehow also "a man" who still could approach to God as his advocate. He was driven to his need for the Lord Jesus, who is presented as the ultimate answer to this need- a man of human nature, but sinless Son of God.

Job says that he can't get God to come to judgment. But God will bring him to judgment!

Job 9:33 There is no umpire between us, that might lay his hand on us both- The word for "umpire" suggests 'one who is right', a reasoner, an advocate, one who pleads (s.w. Job 16:21), a reprover (Job 40:2 s.w.). Job's request is not simply for a mediator; he would have used a different word if so. He seems to want to put God in the dock, but knows this is not appropriate; he wants someone else to do this who can legitimately do it. And he is rebuked for this in Job 40:2.

But to lay the hand means to impose his power and authority on both parties, and do justice between the two. Job wants someone more powerful than God. This isn't necessarily a prophecy of Jesus nor a desire for a mediator- it is a desire for someone more powerful than God. Yet there is nobody like that. And yet in another sense, Job is at least being driven to seek a mediator. But God will appear in person at the end of the book, directly to Job, without any mediator.

Job 9:34 Let Him take his rod away from me- "Take His rod away" is the very same phrase used in Gen. 49:10, promising that the sceptre (s.w. "rod") would *not* be taken away (s.w.) from Judah. Judah would always have God's rod or sceptre with them; David likewise takes comfort from the fact that God's "rod and staff" remained with him and were not taken away from him (Ps. 23:4 s.w.). We see here God's grace in not in fact answering every prayer of a depressed or misunderstanding believer; we can likely look back in our own lives and see examples of this. The exiles experienced God's "rod" (s.w. Lam. 3:1), and only those who passed beneath it could enter the restored Kingdom (s.w. Ez. 20:37). The desire to not experience the rod was therefore precluding a necessary step towards entrance into the Kingdom.

Let His terror not make me afraid- Job repeats this fear in Job 13:21, and Elihu alludes to it when he uses the same phrase in assuring Job that *his* terror will not make Job afraid (Job 33:7). The terror is perhaps "the terror of the Lord", the fear of condemnation at the last day (so Paul uses the phrase, 2 Cor. 5:11). That terror should "persuade men" to accept grace, Paul argues. To have that terror unexperienced by men would mean they had no persuasion toward grace. Job is saying that God is intentionally terrifying him by throwing His power around. He is accusing God of bullying and abuse of power...

Job 9:35 then I would speak, and not fear Him; but I am not in such a position within myself- LXX "So shall I not be afraid, but I will speak: for I am not thus conscious of guilt". The ambiguity of the original is perhaps intentional; for Job teeters between accepting his sinfulness, and yet claiming he is without sin. See on :15 for another example.

JOB CHAPTER 10

Job 10:1 My soul is weary of my life. I will give free course to my complaint. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul- Job fell into the trap of thinking that his terrible situation somehow allowed him to speak whatever words came into his head. Job felt he hadn't been 'fed' and so he was entitled to "bray" and "low" over his misfortune (Job 6:5). Because of the weight of his sufferings, he thereby justified the fact that "Therefore have my words been rash (Job 6:3). Likewise "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit" (Job 7:11). "I will give free course to my complaint. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 10:1 RV). Zophar criticizes Job being "full of talk" and speaking "the multitude of words", "for thou sayest, my doctrine is pure" (Job 11:1-4)- as if Job felt that because he held true doctrine he was justified in pouring out words as he did. "Why should I not be impatient?" (Job 21:4 RV). "Today is my complaint bitter. My stroke is heavier than my groaning" (Job 23:2)- i.e. his complaining was due to his sufferings. "If I hold my peace, I shall give up the spirit" (Job 13:19 RVmg.). Job felt that the situation he was in *forced* him to use the words he did, and certainly justified it [we may well have used this reasoning ourselves when justifying the use of bad language]. But in the end, Elihu on God's behalf rebuked him for his wrong words. And Job himself recognized: "I am vile. I will lay mine hand upon my mouth" in regret of his words (Job 40:4). "Wherefore I loathe my words and repent" (Job 42:6 RVmg.). He realized his mistake: he had thought that the situation justified his words. Now he hung his head and admitted that there was no justification for speaking in the way he had. Especially in the matter of the tongue, we can so easily justify ourselves; 'I only said / did it [or didn't do it] because...'. And it is all so child-like. Once we leave off *all* attempts at self-justification, we will face up to our sins.

Job 10:2 I will tell God, 'Do not condemn me. Show me why You contend with me- Job reasons like this because he feels that his sufferings mean that he is guilty. Again, he has picked up the reasoning of the friends and accepted the false guilt they put on him. As discussed on Job 9:2, God is not at all mad with Job. He has a very high opinion of him; just as He does of us, in Christ. If only Job knew and trusted that, he would not have gone off down the rabbit hole of assuming that suffering [even loss of all your children] means that God is contending and condemning us. The truth is that we are just before God... and that wonderful truth makes all struggle with present sufferings irrelevant and inappropriate. It is seen as somewhat commendable to talk of how we 'struggle with God'. The final condemnation of Job for his words show that in fact this is not a cool thing to do. It is deeply inappropriate and is a form of cursing God. Who are we as men to do anything than focus upon God's grace and accept literally all else, even the loss of all your kids, is utterly irrelevant to the wider horizon of God and His saving grace.

On one hand, Job thinks God's condemnation of him is unreasonable because he hasn't sinned. Hence "Far be it from me to say that you are right; until I die I will not put away my integrity from me. I hold fast my righteousness, and will not let it go; my heart does not reproach me for any of my days" (Job 27:5,6). And in Job 31 he calls down a curse upon himself if in fact he has sinned. But elsewhere he does confess he is a sinner (Job 7:20,21; 10:14; 13:26). Especially does this somewhat contradict Job's earlier statements in Job 9 that he is indeed a sinner and therefore fears condemnation. He knows, therefore, why he is worthy of condemnation; but his

underlying sense that he is in fact innocent keeps coming out. And this is something we probably can identify with; it is one thing to admit that "I am a sinner", or "We are all sinners"; but quite another to accept the consequences and meaning of that, when compared to society we may appear very righteous.

Job 10:3 Is it good to You that You should oppress, that You should despise the work of Your hands, and smile on the counsel of the wicked?-

Here we have Job at his worst, accusing God of despising him and favouring the wicked, and getting a kick out of making good men suffer. This surely was one of the sayings he had to repent of at the end. As discussed on Job 1:22, Job initially did not charge God with wrongdoing. But he does do so here and e.g. in Job 9:14-20.

Job felt despised or cast away by God (Job 10:14) just as the exiles did, but this wasn't the case; God will not despise or cast away His servant people (Job 36:5; Is. 41:9; Jer. 31:37; 33:26). The grace of it all was that although he wanted to cast away his life (Job 7:16; 9:21), just as God's people cast away His covenant (Is. 8:6; 30:12; Jer. 6:19), God would not cast away His people in their exile and depression (s.w. Lev. 26:44), even if they cast him away.

Here again we see that Job's depression leads him to charge God foolishly. He clearly does not smile on wicked counsel, nor does He despise people. We marvel the more at God's final statement that Job had spoken rightly about Him (Job 42:7,8). That Divine comment may indeed simply be upon Job's statement of repentance. But all the same, we would expect God to clarify that was what He intended, and to offer some note that Job has indeed falsely accused Him. But God doesn't. He doesn't need to. He has completely justified Job by faith, clothing him with imputed righteousness. And His demonstration of His ways has in any case made the required point, and Job recognized that.

Job 10:4 Do You have eyes of flesh? Or do You see as man sees?- As explained on :5,6, these desires Job had were in a sense legitimate; and they set him up to yearn for a person exactly like the Lord Jesus. The exiles' demand that God be like this was partly answered in the vision of the cherubim, which were covered with a body or "flesh" full of "eyes" (Ez. 10:12). This was to teach that God was in fact legitimately aware of the human perspective of His people in exile.

Job 10:5 Are Your days as the days of mortals, or Your years as man's years- LXX "Or is thy life human?". It was to be, in the person of His Son. See on :6. Job's argument is that life is brief and we only have this life, so, why is God making his brief life such a misery. This implies Job thought he only has this life, with no sense of eternal life.

Job 10:6 that You inquire after my iniquity, and search after my sin?- The Lord Jesus can execute judgment upon human sin exactly because He is and was "Son of man" (Jn. 5:27); He is the answer to Job's complaint in :5 LXX "Is thy life human?". Job's questions and struggles set him up to need and appreciate the Lord Jesus, although Job died without having seen Him, although probably believing in His future appearance.

Job 10:7 Although You know that I am not wicked, there is no one who can deliver out of Your hand- This appears to contradict Job's apparent awareness of sin in Job 9. He later confesses his sin; but here he seems to expect God to accept his own view of

himself. He was effectively casting God in his own human image and likeness rather than the other way around. Or we could consider the possibility that Job is trying to force a difference between his being a sinner, but not being "wicked", i.e. 'extremely sinful' by the norms of society. This false difference is tackled by Paul in Rom. 1-8 and Job at the end repents, realizing that no such gradation of sin is ultimately acceptable.

Job 10:8 Your hands have framed me and fashioned me altogether, yet You swallow me up- He reasons that he is the clay in the hand of a potter who just created him in order to smash him (:9). GNB "Your hands formed and shaped me, and now those same hands destroy me". This was indeed what happened at the destruction of Judah by God through Babylon; see on Jer. 18:8-10. It was unreasonable of both Job and the exiles to consider that because they were God's created people, therefore they were somehow immune from judgment. Job believed that it was *God* who was seeking to swallow him up in death (Job 10:8 Heb.) – surely alluding to how Mot, the god of death, was thought to have jaws encompassing the earth and swallowing up people at their death into the underworld. But Job rejected that myth – he saw God as the swallower, and death as a return to the dust, albeit in hope of bodily resurrection at the last day (Job 19:25–27). See on Job 26:6.

LXX "Thy hands have formed me and made me; afterwards thou didst change thy mind, and smite me". This is not far off cursing God, just as his wife advised and as satan said he would.

Job 10:9 Remember, I beg You, that You have fashioned me as clay. Will You bring me into dust again?- The idea is that Job has no hope beyond this life and so he thinks God is really unreasonable in not giving him a good life now, seeing he has been so obedient. He fails to factor in that he is under the curse of Eden, to return to dust. As noted on :8, it was unreasonable of both Job and the exiles to consider that because they were God's created people, therefore they were somehow immune from judgment. A connection is made between Job and Adam here. This is Gen. 3:19- the curse upon sinful Adam that he would return to the dust. Job seems to be admitting that he is like Adam in that it appeared God was going to end his life as a result of his sin- return him to the dust. But he reasons that this is unfair, seeing he has not sinned (Job 10:7,14,15). Thus he oscillates between saying he has sinned and is like Adam, and then claiming that although he is being treated like Adam this is unfair. See on Job 9:17; 13:20-22.

Job 10:10 Haven't You poured me out like milk, and curdled me like cheese?- The original is obscure. Hence GNB: "You gave my father strength to beget me; you made me grow in my mother's womb". Again, as noted on :8,9, Job appears to consider that his being human, having been created by God, means that it is unreasonable of God to find fault with him. This again is leading us up to the final revelation of God, where all such justifications of sin and minimalizing of Divine judgment are taken away.

Job 10:11 You have clothed me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews- "Knit me together" is the same word as "hedge" when satan complains that God has made a hedge about Job (Job 1:10). Job sees this hedging in as limitation; but we know from the prologue what he doesn't, that it is actually the sign of God's care for Job and His pleasure in him. Job does not appear to be aware of the conversation between the satan and the Lord. Job is therefore saying that actually the

only hedge or fence he has is his own physical body. In Job 3:23 and Job 19:8 this hedging seems to be interpreted as a feeling of spiritual restriction- as if like Paul, Job yearned to be released from this body of sin and corruption to "the glorious (spiritual) liberty of the sons of God". Job seems to be saying 'You say I'm hedged about with blessings. But now the only hedge I've got is this sick body. The only help you give me now is to give me my spirit to keep me alive, only so you can torment me more'. Understandable, if faulty, reasoning in Job's situation.

Job 10:12 You have granted me life and grace. Your visitation has preserved my spirit- This is the kind of oscillation of feeling which is characteristic of depression. One moment Job sees God as unreasonable, the next, he appreciates the gift of life which he has been saying he doesn't want; and appreciates grace, and that it is God's special and conscious "visitation" which keeps him alive every moment. Divine "visitation" is an idea used for judgment (Jer. 11:23; 23:12; 46:21 etc.). If Job understood it that way, he is coming to see the paradox later made explicit at the end of the book- that the wrath of God is the love of God, His judgment is in fact the preservation of life for those who respond to it; it is in fact His grace. And *chesed* is the word that features in the description of the promises to Abraham as "mercy and truth" (Gen. 24:14,27 etc.).

But seeing Job kept asking for God to end his life, it seems Job is being sarcastic by saying that God has given him the "grace" of a life and preservation of that life- when it isn't what Job wanted. The idea in :12,13 is that Job acknowledges that God had blessed him, but sees this as nuanced because the God who knew the future had also planned all the grief He was to bring upon Job. He had (:13) a kind of hidden agenda to hurt Job, even whilst earlier giving him blessings.

Job 10:13 Yet You hid these things in Your heart. I know that this is with You- LXX "Having these things in thyself, I know that thou canst do all things; for nothing is impossible with thee". Job at the end was to repeat these words in Job 42:2, but really understanding and meaning them as a result of his sufferings.

Job 10:14 If I sin, then You mark me. You will not acquit me from my iniquity- Job feels here like Cain (Gen. 4:15; see on Job 11:15), marked for his sin and unable to just die as he perhaps initially wanted. Still Job is far from the total confession of sin and repentance which he finally comes to; he accepts he is a sinner, but seem to always qualify it, putting it under some question, and accuses God of unjustly punishing him for sin. But the Hebrew translated "mark" is the common word for 'keeping', e.g. "the way to the tree of life" (Gen. 3:24). Perhaps Job is lamenting that God still keeps him alive and doesn't let him die.

Job 10:15 If I am wicked, woe to me. If I am righteous, I still shall not lift up my head, being filled with disgrace, and conscious of my affliction- Perhaps Job has in mind the two possible outcomes of his final judgment; the "woe" of condemnation if indeed he is finally judged wicked, and yet the "disgrace" he would still feel if declared righteous. We see here how he has no clear faith in salvation at this point, and dislikes the way future salvation has to come through accepting "disgrace". The final revelation of God at the end elicits both his disgrace, and also his final acceptance that God has counted him as righteous. "Righteous" is the word for "just", used in the common question and theme of the book: "How can a man be just with God?" (Job 4:17; 9:2). What Job had to recognize was that righteousness was a gift from God by

grace, and by attempting to establish his own righteousness according to his works, he was effectively condemning God (s.w. Job 40:8). We can also reason that Job's confusion is because even if he is personally righteous, he still will feel the "disgrace" or shame of condemnation- the very term used of the "disgrace" of Israel in their condemnation and rejection (Jer. 13:26; Hos. 4:7 etc.). And again we see the representative nature of Job as the suffering servant. He was righteous, but bore the shame / disgrace of Judah's condemnation. This confused and depressed him, but the Lord learnt from this; feeling our condemnation on account of His total identity with us, and yet being personally righteous.

Job 10:16 If my head is held high, You hunt me like a lion. Again You show Yourself wonderful to me- As noted on :15, Job struggles with what seem contradictory movements of God toward him. On one hand, he is hunted as prey being chased by a lion; but then this same God, manifest through the lion, shows tender grace to him. And again, this is how things were to be with the representative suffering servant. It was God's people who were hunted by God, acting like a lion manifest in Babylon / Assyria. And yet that same God was "wonderful to me" personally, for Job was a righteous man. It was only when he was called upon to pray for his friends and to save them that he appreciated this; and thereby became established as a wonderful prototype of the Lord Jesus.

The complaint that 'you love me one minute, hate and abuse me the next' is typical of complaints against those who abuse their power over someone. And Job is saying this to God. Or we can read with GNB "to hurt me you even work miracles".

Job 10:17 You renew Your witnesses against me, and increase Your indignation on me. Changes and warfare are within me- This continues the theme of :16, that one moment God shows Himself "wonderful to me", and the next, He has Job in the dock calling all manner of witnesses against him, and reading out the judgment of His "indignation". And this "change" or tension, this struggle or "warfare", was "within me", deeply absorbed into Job's struggling soul. The Lord Jesus generally appeared to have none of this, until the final struggling appeal "My God, why have You forsaken me?", 'Me, the righteous one' (Mt. 27:46). That struggle is shown resolved in Job.

Job 10:18 'Why, then, have You brought me forth out of the womb? I wish I had given up the spirit, and no eye had seen me- This despising of his own life was because (as explained on :15-18), Job had yet to appreciate that his sufferings were not just for himself; they were because he was representative of others, and his prayer for the friends would be for their salvation. This is Paul's message in 2 Cor. 1- that suffering is in order for us to help others, and to mediate to them the grace God gives us in our sufferings. But without that sharing further, suffering is perceived by the sufferer as solely personal. And they therefore wish to die, because suffering for our own sake seems pointless. And so the simplistic explanation of the book of Job to the effect that 'through suffering Job became a better man' is missing the point, and is a one cent answer to million dollar questions.

Job 10:19 I should have been as though I had not been. I should have been carried from the womb to the grave- Job doesn't wait to hear the answer to his question to God of :18- *Why...?* had he been born. The answer to that was that he was to become a representative sufferer who would be prepared for a point where he could pray for his friends and save them. Without this aspect of evangelism, of pastoral effect upon

others, then all human experience and suffering, even life itself, is ultimately meaningless.

Job 10:20 Aren't my days few? Cease then. Leave me alone, that I may find a little comfort- Job didn't want comfort, he wanted God to leave him alone; and this was just how the exiles felt, in effect. Hence the message of the restoration prophets was that God's people were to be comforted (Is. 40:1 etc.). By grace, God didn't answer Job's request, and pushed forward His saving plan with him, as He sought to do with the exiles. These words were later on the lips of David (Ps. 39:10-13), perhaps at the time of his illness after his sin with Bathsheba. But that period was the one when he wrote the Psalms which are most clearly prophetic of the feelings of the Lord Jesus upon the cross. And Job was being led toward the spirit of Christ.

Job 10:21 before I go where I shall not return from, to the land of darkness and of the shadow of death- At this point Job has apparently no faith in a resurrection. But already he has reasoned that the suffering of the righteous means that there must be a day of future judgment, involving personal resurrection. And by Job 19:25-27 he is clear about this. His faith, like ours, went up and down in the short term, but progressing towards the final acceptance of Divine salvation, grace and restoration at the end.

Job 10:22 the land dark as midnight, of the shadow of death, without any order, where the light is as midnight'- The friends have argued that life is governed by strict principle, whereby God brings suffering upon sinners and rewards the righteous. But Job feels that there is no order in life, all is so random. The lack of "order" and darkness suggests a return to the situation as described before the creation of Genesis 1. Job is failing to perceive that his 'decreation' or 'uncreation', like the destruction of Judah's kingdom and temple, was all a necessary prelude to the new creation promised in the restoration prophecies. And it was the essence of that which Job experienced in his own restoration. And this is why Job 12:22 is such a significant breakthrough in Job's thinking, when he starts to accept that "He uncovers deep things out of darkness, and brings out to light the shadow of death".

JOB CHAPTER 11

Job 11:1 Then Zophar the Naamathite responded- He comes over as angry and arrogant, as if he really hates Job. He doesn't specifically answer Job's arguments nor even cite them very much. I noted on Job 1:6 that Job's "friends" appear to become associated with the actual actions of the "Satan", and Zophar's anger with Job would confirm that conclusion.

Job 11:2 Shouldn't the multitude of words be answered? Should a man full of talk be justified?- The idea may be that Job was wrong to justify his much talking by saying that it was inevitable because of the greatness of his suffering; see on Job 10:1. Job was not to assume that his wild talking was simply not culpable, just because he was suffering and depressed. And again, there is some abiding truth in that. And God finally demonstrates that Job is "justified" by grace, and not by his words. But again, we see all of them feeling that they *must* speak. There are too many words in Job... "A

man full of talk" is literally 'a man of lips'. Perhaps the contrast is with the words of the wise which came from their hearts and whose theology condemned Job: "Shall they not teach you, tell you, and utter words out of their heart?" (Job 8:10). In response to this complaint that Job was talking too much, he responds by launching off into his longest speech, of 75 verses (chapters 12-14). Job clearly felt his much speaking was totally justified.

Zophar like all the friends, like Job and like Elihu, expresses a compulsion that he just has to speak. When it would have been far more helpful if he had not done so. This recalls the experience we surely have all had- when someone says, or we say, "OK fine, but let me just say one thing... I'd just like to say... I feel I must just make the point that...". And it is the words said with those preludes that are often the most damaging, inflammatory and unhelpful.

Job's speeches don't really engage much with what the friends say. The dialogues are in fact a lesson in how relationships break down- the points made [and not all that the friends say is wrong] are not responded to, not engaged with, and the other party goes off on other issues.

Job 11:3 Should your boastings make men hold their peace? When you mock, shall no man make you ashamed?- LXX "Be not a speaker of many words", alluded to by James when he urges is not to be "many teachers" (James 3:1). See on Job 10:1. The friends mix elements of truth (as noted on :2) with unreasonable exaggeration of Job's weaknesses and positions. He has not so far come over as 'mocking', but that was how Job was perceived by the friends; just as our holding of alternative positions can be wrongly read as 'boasting' and 'mocking'.

Job 11:4 For you say, 'My doctrine is pure. I am clean in Your eyes' -

Perhaps, "I was clean"- and despite that, Job suffered. We know from the prologue that Job was clean in God's eyes. Zophar denies this, and Job is sucked in to that false guilt.

As noted on :1, Zophar attacks Job according to Zophar's own perceptions of him, the image of "Job" he had developed in his mind, rather than reality. As noted on :1, unlike Eliphaz he doesn't actually engage with what Job says. And he is typical of many who engage in supposed 'dialogue' today. Job has only said that even if he were to cleanse himself (implying he felt unclean), then God would not accept him (Job 9:30). The friends begin with the suspicion that Job is being judged for sin; and so their wrong theological position [that sin brings immediate Divine judgment and loss of previous blessing] leads them to interpersonal problems, and an overall negative view of their brother Job, seeking to perceive fault in everything he said or had ever done. They are a classic case of confirmation bias in relationships, developing a narrative about a person that has no basis in reality.

Job 11:5 But oh that God would speak, and open His lips against you-

This alludes to Job's request for a court case against God. Zophar wishes that this could happen and that God would indeed pronounce against Job. He is ignorant of the fact that in the court of heaven scene which opens the book, God has spoken for and not against Job.

In the end, all the participants in the dialogue get what they ask for- God's open revelation. But it was not what any of them expected. And the opening of God's lips was against the friends, and not against Job.

Job 11:6 that He would show you the secrets of wisdom! For true wisdom has two sides- This was finally true for them all. Both Job and the friends say many true things, but they fail to see there was 'another side' to those truths; just as so many do today.

Know therefore that God exacts of you less than your iniquity deserves- Connecting with how Ezra confesses that the exiles and all Judah had been punished less than their sins deserved (Ezra 9:13). Zophar likely implies that Job's huge sins (reflected in his massive judgments) really deserved death, and the fact Job was still alive meant that he was being punished less than deserved. And so it was with Judah. God had not destroyed them as a people, He had not taken their collective life; and this meant that they were being punished less than their sins deserved. And yet they, like Job, considered they were being punished and judged disproportionately. The resolution of that was in accepting their sins and the justice and grace of God's judgment of them, as Job finally did at the end.

Zophar is the most aggressive and caustic of the friends. Just a few verses into his first speech, he tells Job that he ought to have been punished far more than he had been. Job had been afflicted to the maximum extent- and Zophar says this was God being generous to Job, exacting less than Job's sin deserved. We wonder how ever he could have said that to the suffering Job sitting before him. Zophar considered that Job had committed such a huge sin- by simply insisting that the traditional view was wrong. This is so psychologically credible; people who are tolerant and permissive can become terribly aggressive when their entrenched belief system is disagreed with. Zophar concludes by saying that Job's best hope is to die (:20). And yet this man was Job's "friend". We see again how different theological views, not agreeing with someone, leads to them tearing up relationships and transforming so quickly from friend to aggressive enemy.

Job 11:7 Can you fathom the mystery of God?- This again is true so far as it stands, but Zophar uses this truth wrongly. He implies that any attempt to understand God's ways was therefore wrong; and yet he dogmatically proceeds with his own attempts to fathom the mystery of God. Paul has this verse in mind in Rom. 11:33, where he declares that the "mystery of God" (Rom. 11:25) is in His saving grace which cannot be fathomed by us. And that was the declaration of the "mystery of God" which is finally made at the end of the book of Job.

Or can you probe the limits of the Almighty?- Job sought to "probe" (AV "find out") the Almighty (Job 23:3; 28:12), whereas Elihu appears to agree with Zophar that "the Almighty" cannot be 'found out' (Job 11:7; 37:23). God's own appearance at the end is perhaps an answer to this. He cannot be 'found out' by intellectual argument or personal righteousness. Instead, He 'finds out' people and saves them by grace. Paul expresses the same idea when he writes that it is not so much a case of man 'knowing God', but rather of being "known of God" by grace (Gal. 4:9).

Job 11:8 They are high as heaven. What can you do? They are deeper than Sheol. What can you know?- As discussed on :7, it is indeed true that we cannot "know" God by intellectual argument or personal righteousness. And that lesson abides. And yet on the other hand, 'knowing' God in the Hebraic sense of 'having a relationship with' is absolutely possible, and is what God seeks with men. However it is possible that Zophar uses the idea of 'heaven and sheol' as it is used in the only other two Biblical occurrences of the phrase (Ps. 139:8; Am. 9:2)- where it means that one cannot escape

God by going above heaven or deeper than *sheol*. Jonah, representative of the exiles, tried to do this and failed.

Job 11:9 Its measure is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea- God's ways are further or longer than the *eretz*, a word often used specifically of the land promised to Abraham. There is the hint here that the final wisdom of God was connected with a plan of global salvation, and was not limited to any single territory. This had special relevance to the captives in Babylon and Assyria, some of them now outside the *eretz*; and it also speaks to their tendency towards racial elitism, as if Israel were the only people God was willing to have relationship with. The prophets therefore speak of the restored people of God as being multiethnic, and His kingdom as universal and not any longer only based in the *eretz* of Israel.

Job 11:10 If He passes by, or confines- "Confines" is the word used of the shutting up or confining of the exiles in captivity (Jer. 13:19; Lam. 2:7; Am. 6:8).

Or convenes a court, then who can oppose Him?- This again has abiding truth- because we cannot simply get out of our relationship with God by as it were not turning up in court.

The dramatic story of Job thrice uses the same phrase as in Is. 43:13, concluding that "who can hinder...?" God's way (Job 9:12; 11:10; 23:13). The exiles were to understand that no human opposition or discouragement can turn back or hinder God's purpose to save His people, even if they are as Job in suffering. His saving and restorative purpose will not be hindered, if we wish to identify with it.

There may be reference here to the court of Heaven which God had convened to consider Job's case. And that cannot be resisted. But both Job and the friends are ignorant of how in that court, God had argued passionately for Job and not against him. Time and again, we find all of them out of sync with what God really thought, and assuming His positions are the very opposite of what they actually are.

Job 11:11 For He knows false men. He sees iniquity also, even though He doesn't consider it- AV "will He not then consider it?", as if God is aware of all sin, and will "consider" it in judgment. Zophar and the friends seem to think that this judgment is going on in Job's life, whereas Job is correctly driven to understand that judgment must be yet future.

Job 11:12 An empty-headed man becomes wise when a man is born as a wild donkey's colt- The idea seems to be that a stubborn and untamed man like Job, similar to a wild donkey's colt, can still become wise- if he repents (:13). Zophar is misreading Job, but he is correct to understand the true wisdom as being in repentance. Job's vain search for wisdom in Job 28 finally comes to an end when he repents and thereby 'finds' God. Even wrong argumentation and false accusation can be used by God to bring us closer to His truth, through the process of our working it through and rejecting it.

Or translating slightly differently, this could be one of the sayings of the 'wise' elders whom Zophar took so much notice of: "But an empty man will become wise when a wild ass colt is born a man"- in other words, an empty man will never become wise.

Job 11:13 If you set your heart aright, stretch out your hands toward Him- As noted on :4, Zophar's wrong theology [his assumption that Job must have sinned to be

suffering as he now was] led him to judge the state of Job's heart, as being not "set aright". And it is exactly this wrongful judgment of human hearts which arises from an insistence in believing that we can attach meaning to event in the lives of others; and this is effectively to play God.

Job 11:14 If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away. Don't let unrighteousness dwell in your tents- Clearly an oblique reference to the family "tents" of Job having been smitten because of the unrighteousness there. Job's children were indeed sinners, it would appear. For they were struck down by "the fire of God". But Zophar is reasoning that one man, Job, can be responsible for the sins of his family. But God works with individuals, and all Job's regular sacrifices for the sins of his children were revealed as irrelevant. For God deals with individuals.

Job 11:15 Surely then you shall lift up your face without spot; yes, you shall be steadfast, and shall not fear-

There is surely allusion to the leprosy that disfigured Job's face. This is a push back on Job's comment in the previous chapter that God is so mean, that even if he were righteous, he couldn't lift up his face before God (Job 10:15).

Zophar possibly recognized that Job was like Cain in that his countenance had fallen and he was so angry, although also fearful of God (Gen. 4:5); Job has already seen himself as Cain (Job 10:14). See on Job 13:27; 16:17,18; 31:39. Job has argued that even if he were righteous, still he could not lift up his face without spot and without fear. Zophar fails to realize that it was quite possible for Job to be personally righteous, and yet to experience all the sufferings and feelings of the sinful, condemned people of God. The idea of being "without spot" before God is picked up in the New Testament. We can be like this (Eph. 5:27; 2 Pet. 3:14) but only "in His sight", because the righteousness of His spotless Son has been imputed to us by grace through faith (Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19).

Job 11:16 for you shall forget your misery. You shall remember it as waters that are passed away- Having lost all his 10 children to a Divine tornado, it is insensitive to suggest that Job could just forget all this and then live a great life. Zophar here sees wealth and health as the ultimate offer which God makes to man, rather like prosperity theology and Pentecostalism today. What did Job want? To be right with God, to have relationship with Him, to understand. He puts it clearly in Job 14:15 in his fantasy of how he wished things could be: "You would call, and I would answer You. You would have a desire to the work of Your hands". And that is what the Gospel offers.

The exiles likewise could be restored so that their sufferings were seen as the waters of Noah which had passed away (Is. 54:9), and would forget the days of their misery. "Misery" is the word translated "travail" regarding the sufferings of the suffering servant (Is. 53:11). That figure is undoubtedly based upon Job as prototype.

Job 11:17 Life shall be clearer than the noonday. Though there is darkness, it shall be as the morning- Again, there is some level of truth in all this. This is what repentance could lead to. And the language is exactly that of the joyful dawn which could have come for the exiles, brought forth out of the darkness of captivity in Babylon. Job experienced this in his restoration, but the exiles failed to follow his path.

Job 11:18 You shall be secure, because there is hope. Yes, you shall search, and shall

take your rest in safety- Again, the language of the restoration prophets concerning the lying down of the returned exiles in safety with none making them afraid (Is. 14:30; Hos. 2:18).

Job 11:19 Also you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid- Exactly the language of how Judah could be restored, if they repented and accepted the new covenant (Ez. 34:14,15; Jer. 33:12).

Yes, many shall court your favour- LXX "and many shall charge, and make supplication to thee", the language of later Isaiah of how the tables would turn and the Gentiles would make supplication to the restored exiles.

Job 11:20 But the eyes of the wicked shall fail- Perhaps Job's health issues included failing eyesight. For here when Zophar speaks of the fate of the wicked, he has Job in view. The very language of the curses to come upon Israel for breaking covenant (Lev. 26:16), experienced by them at the Babylonian invasion (Lam. 2:11; 4:17). The suffering servant experienced this (Ps. 69:3 s.w.) as did Job, sharing in the judgment of the condemned although not personally sinning.

They shall have no way to flee- The judgment upon Judah (s.w. Jer. 25:35; Am. 2:14).

Their hope shall be the giving up of the spirit- Zophar is saying that Job's best possible hope was death. A very hard thing to say to your suffering "friend". See on :6. This was what Job so hoped for, and Zophar has Job in view all through his description of the death of the wicked. As demonstrated earlier in this verse, the condemnation of the wicked did indeed happen to God's people, and Job experienced it, whilst being personally innocent. This is the exact situation with the Lord Jesus. He who will dispense condemnation does in fact know what condemnation feels like, because He so identified with condemned humanity.

JOB CHAPTER 12

Job 12:1 Then Job answered- Job now seems angry in this speech, descending at times to sarcasm.

Job 12:2 No doubt, but you are the people, and wisdom shall die with you- Job is responding to the friends' insistence that Job stood condemned according to the wisdom of those who had gone before. Job is saying that he doesn't accept that, and that rather the friends are projecting their ideas onto the previous 'wise men', creating those men after their own likeness and mental image. In fact, Job is saying, the friends consider that they themselves are the source of all wisdom, they see themselves as the unequalled pinnacle of wisdom, so great that when they die, so will their wisdom. In other words, their wisdom was just they themselves.

Job 12:3 But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you. Yes, who doesn't know such things as these?- Job refused to take false guilt and to be pushed down by men. Our opinion is *a priori* as valid as that of any other believer, no matter how they seek to shore it up by allusion to other sages.

Job 12:4 I am like one who is a joke to his neighbour, because I called on God, and He answered. The just, the blameless man is a joke- The restoration prophet Jeremiah quoted this about himself (Jer. 20:7; Lam. 3:14 s.w.), as representative of Judah in

captivity, who were mocked [s.w. 'joked at'] daily (Jer. 48:27 s.w.) by their neighbours, the Babylonians and the peoples of their confederacy.

Perhaps we have sarcasm here. Job is saying that he, the righteous man, called on God- and God answered with all the suffering. As his wife may have said [depending on translation], "Bless God and [you] die". And so he says that he, and his religion, are made a joke to people. This isn't far from cursing God as his wife advised and as satan predicted he would.

Job 12:5 In the thought of him who is at ease there is contempt for misfortune. It is ready for them whose foot slips- Suffering is intended to produce empathy with others; as 2 Cor. 1 makes clear, this is a large reason for our experience of suffering. Job is realizing this; that there can be no empathy with the suffering from those who haven't suffered. And thus he was being led towards realizing that his sufferings were not just for himself, but were to be used to comfort others. And those "others" were the friends, whom he was to save by his forgiveness and prayers for them. LXX "For it had been ordained that he should fall under others at the appointed time, and that his houses should be spoiled by transgressors"- connecting with the destruction of the great houses of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (Jer. 52:13).

Job 12:6 The tents of robbers prosper. Those who provoke God are secure, who carry their God in their hands- Job makes several references to the arguments of the satan in his replies to the friends; as if they were in fact the satan, and as if he knew perfectly well what they had said to Yahweh. Thus he tells the friends that those who provoke God are secure, whereas the satan had suggested that Job would provoke God to His face if his security was taken away. Job says that such people who provoke God have all things given into their hand by Yahweh; and it is hard not to see in this a reference to the satan, into whose hand Job had been delivered. It was as if Job was saying to them: 'You are the ones who have provoked God, you are the ones into whose hand God has delivered me; so actually you are the wicked, not me'. For more connections between the friends and the satan, see on Job 1:6.

Job 12:7 But ask the animals now, and they shall teach you; the birds of the sky, and they shall tell you- At the end of the book, we are told that it is God who not only created Behemoth, but can effortlessly control him in accord with His purpose. That's the comfort of the message. Indeed the descriptions of the natural world which lead up to the Leviathan / Behemoth passages are there to underline this point; and it's interesting that those passages zoom in upon the cruelties and even brutalities within nature. Yet these are all of God's ultimate design and creation, and under His providential control. Job had earlier perceived this; for he responds to the friends' allusions to an evil 'Satan' figure as the source of his suffering by observing: "Ask the animals... The birds of the air... [they show that] the hand of the Lord [and not any supernatural 'Satan'] has done this" (Job 12:7-9). Job himself turned to the natural creation for lessons, and so God's final appeal to that same creation was only really leading him further from where he had already arrived.

Job 12:8 Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach you. The fish of the sea shall declare to you- "Declare" is literally 'to number'. Job's idea was that one had only to look at the natural creation, and they would 'number up' the extent of God's activity. But later Job has to be taught that man cannot number up these things (s.w. Job 38:37; 39:2). They could not be numbered by man, but only by God. This is the same word used in

the restoration prophecy of Jer. 38:22: "As the host of the sky cannot be *numbered*, nor the sand of the sea measured", so God's grace would be poured out in restoring His people. Job was being taught the same lesson. He finally believed it, but the exiles generally didn't, and so their restoration didn't happen after the pattern of Job's. Job is set up not so much as representative of the exiles, but of the righteous remnant and their intended repentance and restoration.

Job 12:9 Who doesn't know that in all these, the hand of Yahweh has done this- Satan asks God: "Put forth Your hand". The hand of God is an Angelic phrase. God agrees- "he is in your hand" (:6). Thus Satan's hand is God's hand, which in practice was articulated through an Angel. Job seems to emphasize the place of God's hand in bringing his trials- Job 2:5,6,10; 6:9; 10:7; 13:21; 19:21; 27:11 AVmg; 28:9. Job in Job 12:9 feels that in the same way as God's hand had created the natural creation- and the Angels did this- so that same Angelic hand was upon him for evil. "By His Spirit (God makes His Angels spirits) He has garnished the Heavens; His hand has formed the crooked serpent" (Job 26:13). Thus Job associates God's Spirit with His hand, which is Satan's hand. It seems far more fitting that this hand and spirit should be Angelic rather than human. For no one human being could bring these sufferings upon Job. The human Satan, the fellow worshipper, was reflected in an Angel in the court of Heaven. Again, it was Angelic work that formed the Heavens. Job recognized that his trials came from the hand of God, but knew that His hand would not kill him- "with Thy strong hand Thou opposest Thyself against me... howbeit He will not stretch out His hand to (bring me to) the grave" (Job 30:21,24 AV). This was exactly the brief given to Satan- to try Job, but "preserve his life". The hand of God creating evil (Job 2:10,11) must surely refer to God's "Angels of evil" (Ps. 78:49) rather than to man- in the restoration context, the people and Cyrus had to be taught that no one except God (including human satans!) created evil (Is. 45:5-7).

Job says that the hand of God has touched and destroyed him. So I would take his words here as bitter sarcasm. He says that all creation will testify to the fact God is destructive. Nature is cruel. His skepticism about God in nature is engaged with by God at the end, although [as ever], not specifically answered. Likewise his statement in :12 that "with the aged is wisdom" is sarcastic, because he often disagrees with the friends' claim that the aged men have wisdom. And so again, his subsequent comment that "With God is wisdom and might. He has counsel and understanding" is followed by his accusation that "breaks down, and it can't be built again. He imprisons a man, and there can be no release" (:13,14). He sees God's 'wisdom' in a very sceptical way. He may even be quoting a wisdom hymn, but sarcastically.

Job 12:10 in whose hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind?- As noted on :9, this alludes to God's command to the Satan: "He [Job] is in your hand". But Job insists that he is in *God's* hand. He is labouring this point (:9), because he is perhaps answering the implication of the friends that he has sinned and is therefore in the hands of some cosmic evil being, out of God's control.

Job 12:11 Doesn't the ear try words, even as the palate tastes its food?- The idea is that truth should not just be accepted because the source is an old or reputedly wise man (:12). For even their wisdom is nothing compared with God's (:13). Job is looking for truth to come from direct revelation from God rather than through the wisdom of men. And that desire appears frustrated by God's apparent silence. But all

this builds up towards the final wonder of God Himself appearing and speaking at the end of the book.

Job 12:12 With aged men is wisdom, in length of days understanding- See on :11. Job may be being sarcastic here, and perhaps we could put a question mark at the end of this sentence. For to predicate wisdom upon years lived becomes laughable compared, therefore, to the wisdom of the God who is from everlasting (:13). Therefore Job is looking for truth to come from direct revelation from God rather than through the wisdom of men. And that desire appears frustrated by God's apparent silence. But all this builds up towards the final wonder of God Himself appearing and speaking at the end of the book.

Job 12:13 With God is wisdom and might. He has counsel and understanding- Possibly this is Job's comment on the idea that wisdom is with the elders (:12); he would be saying that they are claimed to be wise, but wisdom is with God. But I have suggested on :9 that Job is here being sarcastic about God, saying that His wisdom and understanding involve being cruel in the natural world and destroying things there without cause.

See on :11,12. Job has complained about God's apparent silence and failure to speak or dialogue with him throughout all the suffering. But Job doesn't doubt that God does have "counsel and understanding". Again, all this builds up towards the final wonder of God Himself appearing and speaking at the end of the book. Job can be read as implying that he doesn't have "counsel and understanding", but God does. This again makes his representative of Israel under judgment, who were left "without counsel and understanding" (s.w. Dt. 32:28).

Job 12:14 Behold, He breaks down, and it can't be built again. He imprisons a man, and there can be no release- Here Job starts to go wrong. Because he feels that at this moment, he has no hope of restoration- therefore he assumes that this is how God is. But this was how the depressed exiles felt. The restoration prophecies speak of release from the prison of captivity, and the broken down Zion being "built again" (Jer. 24:6; 31:4). The fact Job was 'released' and restored, despite his momentary lack of faith that this were possible, was intended as a pattern for the exiles.

Verses 14 and 15 are Job's comment on the 'dark' side of creation; God destroys His own creation, aimlessly, just as He does to Job, and as He makes whole nations wander aimlessly by removing their leaders (:23-25).

Job 12:15 Behold, He withholds the waters, and they dry up. Again, He sends them out, and they overturn the earth- The theme of 'drying up' or 'withering' is significant. Bildad considers Job to have been 'dried up' by God's judgment (Job 8:12), and the word is used of how God withered or dried up Judah at the hands of their invaders (Jer. 12:4; 23:10; Ez. 17:9,10,24; Zech. 11:17; Lam. 4:8; Is. 40:7,8- although the prophetic word of God requiring their restoration would endure, despite their drying up). The dry bones of Judah in captivity were withered or dried up (Ez. 37:11). So Job's 'drying up' was again, a sharing in the representative suffering of God's people. Job's personal response to his 'drying up' was to reflect that God dries up waters and also sends them forth as floods (Job 12:15 s.w.); He can give and He can take, just as Job had initially realized (Job 2:10). Just as He dried up Job / Israel, so He could abundantly send forth waters; just as He did at the Red Sea. Restoration and salvation was just as easy for Him as destruction, to put it another way. The drying up of Job

was also understood by him as referring to his death (Job 14:11), but God could raise him from the dead and have a desire to him again (Job 14:15). Eliphaz wrongly argues that the Divine 'drying up' of a person means permanent extinction (Job 15:30), as does Bildad (Job 18:16); but Job always sees the 'drying up' as part of a Divine action which also has a counterpart, the pouring out again of waters, or resurrection of the dried up, withered bones. Likewise Judah in captivity thought that their drying up, their dry bones, were incapable of revival (Ez. 37:11); but the message is that they could indeed be revived, and their drying up was but a presage to their eternal revival.

Job 12:16 With Him is strength and wisdom. The deceived and the deceiver are His- Job is poetry, and poetry works by using familiar words and images in new ways. Hence myths can be alluded to and used, but in order to present them in a different context and to achieve more powerfully a conclusion rather than just baldly stating it; i.e. that Yahweh is all powerful and that there are actually no abiding realities behind the myths. Thus poetry is an appropriate medium through which to articulate this message. "The deceived and the deceiver are His" is poetry which even comes through somewhat in translation (Job 12:16). The expectation is that the deceiver is Satan, and God is with or sympathetic to the deceived. But no. Such dualistic expectations are set up, but crushed at the end of the strophe: both deceived and deceiver are God's. For there is no dualistic cosmos out there. Indeed, "the deceiver" may refer to some superhuman tempter, similar to how many today understand 'Satan'. And Job is saying that God is far more powerful than any such being. Or we can note that the words for "deceived" and "deceiver" are usually used about sin and those leading into sin. Despite all that, God is still there, and His people "are His"; the words are used about spiritually "wandering" Judah in their captivity (Ez. 34:6), who were still "His" in that He would never ultimately reject His people.

Job 12:17 He leads counsellors away stripped. He makes judges fools- This was to be seen in the leading away of the leaders of Judah "stripped" in exile, despite their apparent wisdom. Again Job is being driven to the view that God alone has wisdom, as the judges and counsellors represented by the friends simply have no wisdom. As noted on :11-13, all this builds up towards the final wonder of God Himself appearing and speaking at the end of the book.

Job 12:18 He loosens the bond of kings. He binds their waist with a belt- LXX "He seats kings upon thrones, and girds their loins with a girdle", exactly the language used of Cyrus. Being a leader was a gift from God which He could give and take at will, according to the wisdom of His own plans, which as yet Job could not perceive, but which was to be revealed at the end of the book.

Job 12:19 He leads priests away stripped, and overthrows the mighty- LXX "He sends away priests into captivity". So relevant to the leading into captivity of the priests such as Ezekiel. Job appears to have been a priest for his family, and his overthrow was therefore representative of Judah's; and his path to restoration was to be theirs, if they perceived it. He could not of himself save anyone, only show an example to be followed; as stated explicitly to the exiles in Ez. 14:14,20. And this is true of us all.

Job 12:20 He removes the speech of those who are trusted, and takes away the

understanding of the elders- The "trusted" and "elders" are oblique references to the friends. All human wisdom is removed compared to God's wisdom. But that wisdom is only finally revealed at the end of the book. The lesson of Job is to wait patiently for that, suffering when we cannot assign meaning to event for the moment, in the knowledge that finally there is a Divine wisdom at work through it all.

Job 12:21 He pours contempt on princes, and loosens the belt of the strong- Job is starting to perceive that God's style is to radically invert everything. The high are brought low, the humble exalted. This explained why Job had been brought down, and led Job towards an expectation that he the humbled, the weak, would be restored. This theme of radical inversion, the first being last and the last first, is found throughout the restoration prophets, especially Isaiah. The humbled exiles were to see in their humiliation a situation pregnant with hope for restoration.

Job 12:22 He uncovers deep things out of darkness, and brings out to light the shadow of death- Earlier, Job has longed to go to the darkness of death never to return (Job 10:21), where "the land [is] dark as midnight, of the shadow of death, without any order, where the light is as midnight" (Job 10:22). The lack of "order" and darkness suggests a return to the situation as described before the creation of Genesis 1. Job is failing to perceive that his 'decreation' or 'uncreation', like the destruction of Judah's kingdom and temple, was all a necessary prelude to the new creation promised in the restoration prophecies. And it was the essence of that which Job experienced in his own restoration. And this is why Job 12:22 is such a significant breakthrough in Job's thinking, when he starts to accept that "He uncovers deep things out of darkness, and brings out to light the shadow of death".

This bringing things to light from darkness is associated with God raising and destroying nations (:23). There is a clear connection with Dan. 2:22 "He reveals deep and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness and the light dwells with Him". Again we discern relevance to the faithful exiles, like Job suffering from the 'satan', albeit Divinely controlled, having lost all things, and struggling with the whole thing. The engagements of Job with the issue lead him to the conclusion that out of this darkness, Yahweh will bring light, in the very end. And this was what Daniel, one of the faithful exiles, was also led to realize.

Job 12:23 He increases the nations, and He destroys them. He enlarges the nations, and He leads them captive- As noted on :21, Job was beginning to perceive that all goes in cycles of exaltation and humiliation, but he is to finally learn that for God's people, that humiliation is required for them to be exalted and restored as God intends. We too are to humble ourselves under His hand, that we may be exalted in due time. Perhaps Peter had his eye on Job's restoration as he wrote that (1 Pet. 5:6). These things are clearly relevant to the captives who were in Babylon, at the hands of an 'enlarged' Babylon which would also be 'destroyed' in due time.

Job 12:24 He takes away understanding from the chiefs of the people of the earth, and causes them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way- This is quoted in Ps. 107:40 as a summary of the history of Israel, but the Psalm goes on to say that "the poor" of Israel would be "set on high from affliction" (Ps. 107:41). Again Job's experiences were understood by the Psalmist as typical of all Israel.

Job 12:25 They grope in the dark without light. He makes them stagger like a drunken

man- Yet this was in fact the experience of Job himself (see on Job 5:14). Job was experiencing darkness at noon. But in this Job looked ahead to the sufferings of the Lord Jesus on the cross. He like the Lord suffered as a sinner without having personally sinned. Job was representative of sinful Israel under judgment, for to "grope at noonday" was their punishment for breaking the covenant (s.w. Dt. 28:29).

JOB CHAPTER 13

Job 13:1 Behold, my eye has seen all this. My ear has heard and understood it- This may be in direct reference to what Job has just said in Job 12, he is saying that he has worked these things out by his own reflections, and this has led him to an understanding which is no less valid than that of the friends. Job would later confess that he has indeed heard of God by the hearing of the ear; but only at the end did he join the dots, to the point where he could say that "now *my eye* sees You" (Job 42:5).

Job 13:2 What you know, I know also. I am not inferior to you- The way Job reasons suggests he had the same theology as the friends- that sin leads to punishment in this life, and obedience leads to blessing. And here he says as much. As noted on :1, Job is not saying that his knowledge or understanding is identical to that of the friends, but rather that his path to knowledge is no less valid than theirs. "Inferior" is better 'to fall down'. Job may mean that he is not falling down before them, but before God. For he uses the same word in :11 to urge the friends to fall down ['be inferior to'] God, rather than assuming they know His game plan and thereby lifting themselves up above Him.

Job 13:3 Surely I would speak to the Almighty. I desire to reason with God- Job has heard their demand that he turn to God, and he says that indeed he wishes to do so. But he implies that God will not speak to him. All this builds up towards the final wonder of God Himself appearing and speaking at the end of the book. Job here and so often wants his day in court (see on Job 5:1), to have his side heard. But he doesn't get it. And he is driven to repent for even wanting it. This 'having your day in court' is so important to people in our age. But we have no case at all, no matter how insistent we are that our version of justice is on our side, no matter how persuaded we are that we suffered wrongly and unjustly. We have no case and no valid complaint. In the bigger picture of things.

Job 13:4 But you are forgers of lies. You are all physicians of no value- Again we see a lesson in how relationships break down. The friends have argued that sin brings suffering, and therefore Job has sinned. They were not completely wrong in thinking that sin does bring down judgment, and God [at that time] did reward obedience with material blessing. But Job calls them "liars". This is the wrong category; it is calling people with another theology 'liars'. Often this is done in small time, small town doctrinal arguments between immature believers. A strongly held belief is not simply disagreed with, but it is called a "lie" and therefore the mouth that came out with it is a "liar". The friends likewise insinuate that Job is a "liar". "Physicians" is the same word as "make[rs] whole" in Job 5:18: "He injures, and His hands make whole". His disillusion with the members of his religion, his brethren, led him to seek the more earnestly to God as the only one whose hands could "make whole" (s.w. "physician").

Job 13:5 Oh that you would be completely silent! Then you would be wise- This was true, but Job himself was not being silent. At the end, he puts his hand upon his mouth and is silent (Job 40:4). When Job finally lays his hand upon his mouth, he is only doing what he had earlier told the friends to do in recognition of their folly (Job 13:5; 21:5). Through the pain and irritation of their speeches, Job came to value and appreciate the need for silence before God. But it was only when personally confronted by God at the end that he realizes that he too had spoken too much and he repents of that in silence.

Job 13:6 Hear now my reasoning. Listen to the pleadings of my lips- These appeals to hear and listen may not be simply asking them to hear his words; they may be an appeal to them to hear and repent. This desire for their repentance and understanding builds up within Job as the speeches progress. And again, this is preparing him for the Lord's final request to him- to pray for the friends and bring about their salvation (Job 42:8).

Job 13:7 Will you speak unrighteously for God, and talk deceitfully for Him?- LXX "Do ye not speak before the Lord...", another hint that the friends were represented by the Satan figure of the prologue, who likewise appeared "before the Lord". Job warns them as many need warning today- that they were wrong to express their own gut feelings and assumptions in the name of God, as if they were talking on His behalf. Job differs from them in that he makes no claim to be speaking by Divine inspiration; he is simply bemoaning his lot and trying to reason through it, and that record of his words is noted down in the drama by an inspired writer.

Job 13:8 Will you show partiality to Him?- Perhaps the idea is that they were acting as if God were in the dock, and they were being generous to Him in their judgment of Him.

Will you contend for God?- God was not contending with Job through the friends as His representatives. The wonder of the final appearance of God is that He Himself appears and contends directly, not through any representatives such as the friends claimed to be.

Job 13:9 Is it good that He should search you out? Or as one deceives a man, will you deceive Him?- The idea seems to be that if God searched out the friends, they would have to try to deceive Him, lest He find the truth about them. But Job later realizes that God does indeed search out all things (s.w. Job 28:27). He begins here by saying that *if* He were to search things out, He would not find a nice scene in the hearts of the friends. But Job moves on to realize that indeed this is what God is doing, on a cosmic scale- searching out all things.

Job 13:10 He will surely reprove you if you secretly show partiality- "Reprove" is a legal term, used for legal 'pleading' in court (s.w. Job 16:21; 40:2). Job clearly considers the friends to be guilty, and we are set up to expect that therefore God is going to open a legal case against the friends. And this is exactly what happens when God finally appears at the end of the book.

Job 13:11 Shall not His majesty make you afraid, and His dread fall on you?- "Fall" is the same word translated "inferior" in :2: "I am not inferior to you". Job may mean

that he is not falling down before *them*, but before God. For he uses the same word in :11 to urge the friends to fall down ['be inferior to'] God, rather than assuming they know His game plan and thereby are lifting themselves up above Him. At the end of the book, as noted on :10, God does appear in majesty, and they are indeed afraid before Him.

Job 13:12 Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ashes, your defences are defences of clay-

The memorable sayings and defences are what the friends have said so far, suggesting they were often quoting or alluding to traditional sayings which we may not be able to clearly discern from the text before us.

LXX "And your glorying shall prove in the end to you like ashes, and your body like a body of clay". They were bodies of clay; but only through their humiliation at the end of the book would they appreciate this in reality rather than merely as theory. And we see this happening in the events at the end of the book. And it is so with us today; the mortality of man can never be a mere theological proposition. It must be believed and felt, with an appropriate humility, rather than having to be reminded of it through Divine humiliation.

Job 13:13 Be silent, leave me alone, that I may speak. Let come on me what will-

Job now speaks with the reckless bravado of a drunk man, saying that he will speak his case before God come what may, he will put his life in his hand to argue with God (:14), and even though he is sure God will slay him for this, he will still wait [not "trust"] for some future point when somehow he will be justified and will prove God wrong (:15).

LXX "Be silent, that I may speak, and cease from mine anger". In this case Job is wrongly thinking that his anger is legitimate because once he has blown it all out, he will then be silent. This was wrong, because at the end of the book he lays his hand on his mouth and recognizes that he has spoken wrongly. We too can falsely justify sin or unwise talking on the basis that once we've done it, we will then somehow stop being angry and get over our problem.

Job 13:14 Why should I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in my hand?- The simple sense is as in GNB "I am ready to risk my life". That risk of life was in order to justify himself before God (:15). This was demonstrated at the end as being indeed wrong and punishable by death. Job did indeed risk his life, and was saved from condemnation by grace alone. However, taking "my flesh in my teeth" may be a figure drawn from a wild beast taking its prey in its teeth and carrying it off to safety; meaning therefore 'Why should I seek anxiously to preserve my life?'.

Job 13:15 Even if He slays me, still I will trust in Him-

Job is to be recognized [at least at this point] for realizing that we serve God for nothing, because we are His, and not in view of any personal reward- neither in this life nor beyond. Should we be condemned at judgment day, our attitude should be 'Thank You for the honour of having served You'. Even though God counts him as His enemy, even if God slays him, he will still trust Him (Job 13:15,24). This is trust, relationship, in the face of every reason to give it up; and in the face of a total lack of explanation from God as to *why*. In the face of every human cry of injustice, deprivation of legitimate rights etc.

In the context, however, Job is saying that he is going to take God to court, even if he dies. Even if God slays him for doing so, he will "wait" ['trust'] for some future day, when he would defend his ways before God, to God's face (:15). His idea of some future judgment day is developing, although always, immediately after these flashes of insight, he returns to his wrong thinking. In this case, saying that even at that future meeting, he will justify his ways before God. He is confident this must happen and that he must be 'saved' because he is innocent and not a Godless man / hypocrite (:16). Such a person wouldn't even dare to go before God in judgment, but he feels he is innocent and therefore he can do this (:16b). In his legal case with God, Job is confident nobody can enter any plea against him, his case is solid and nothing can be said against it (:17-19). In fact of course, only God can say anything like this (Is. 50:8 alludes here).

The language of 'slaying' takes us back to the Mosaic commands about how a 'slayer' of a man might be killed by the 'avenger of blood'. Job saw God as slaying him; yet he also sees God as the 'witness' in the case (Job 16:19), and the avenger of Job's blood (Job 19:25). Job even asks God to not let the earth cover his blood, so that God as the avenger of Job's blood may avenge Job's death (Job 16:18). Job does not see 'Satan' as his slayer, and God as the avenger of his blood. Instead Job – in a quite breathtaking set of associations – sees God in all these things: the slayer, the legal witness to the slayer, the avenger of blood, and the One who will enforce the doing of justice in this case, the One who will not let the earth cover Job's blood. If Job really believed in a superhuman Satan, in Satan as the bad guy and God as the avenger of the injustice, he surely would've expressed himself differently. As Job imagines God as it were taking vengeance on Himself, so he came to portray for all time the way that evil and good are indeed both ultimately from God.

"Trust" here is the usual Hebrew word translated to wait or be patient (Job 13:15; 14:14; 30:26). Even if God slew him, Job would still be patient or wait (Job 13:15), he would patiently wait for his "change" to come at some point after his death (Job 14:14), and waited for light to somehow come out of his current darkness (Job 30:26). This was the legendary "patience of Job" which we are bidden follow (James 5:11). He was impatient, but he was "patient" in the Hebrew sense of enduring in faith; faith that even if things didn't work out at all in this life, even if God was apparently unfair in this life, he would be finally restored at the resurrection. This was his 'endurance', and it is a parade example for all who struggle with the justice of God and the incomprehensible problem of suffering.

Nevertheless, I will justify my ways before Him- This was what was the matter with Job, and it was this weakness which was removed from him by Yahweh's final appearance. The connection between the two halves of the verse, and the preceding verse, is that Job was willing to be slain by God for justifying himself before God. And he would die, he says, still trusting in God, but willing to die for the sake of self justification. So many are like this today. To accept God's justification of us, His imputed righteousness by grace, is so deeply counter instinctive to men.

Job 13:16 This also shall be my salvation- Maybe we are to understand this as Job saying that if only he could justify his ways before God (:15), he would have to be saved; he would justify his ways "before Him" in that a Godless man cannot come "before Him". We see again Job moving on from his idea that there is no afterlife. He is now talking of 'salvation', however he understood that.

LXX "And this shall turn to me for salvation". See on Phil. 1:19, where this is quoted by Paul. The referent of "this..." is unclear. It could be Job's enduring hope that

he would be saved finally, despite life not working out for him in this life (see on :15). This would fit the context in which Paul quotes this in Phil. 1:19.

In that a Godless man shall not come before Him- Job concludes at this point that he will finally be saved, even though God is apparently against him in this life. And he concludes that therefore he must be Godly and not Godless, seeing no Godless man would be accepted "before Him" finally. Job may be making an oblique reference to how the friends as the "sons of God" came "before Him" in worship (Job 1:6); but Job implies they would not ultimately do this at the last day. As it happened, Job's intercession for them "before Him" was to mean that they did.

"Godless" is 'hypocrite', the same word used by Bildad when he claims that Job is a hypocrite and therefore his hope has come to an end (Job 8:13).

Job 13:17 Hear diligently my speech. Let my declaration be in Your ears- This may not merely be an appeal for them to pay attention to what he is saying; but rather an appeal for them to "hear" him and repent, taking his appeal deeply within themselves.

Job 13:18 See now, I have set my cause in order. I know that I am righteous- Job had judged himself, setting in order his legal case ["cause"], but declaring himself righteous (Job 13:8). By Job 23:4, Job is realizing that he needs to set his case in order before God; but he can't find God, or get God to engage in this game of judgment. He needed the final appearance of God at the end of the book to review his case, and declare that he is in fact wrong and condemned. But by grace, God will count him as right. He was prepared for this by Elihu's speech in Job 37:19: "Teach us what we shall tell Him, for we can't make our case by reason of darkness". "Make our case" is s.w. "set my cause in order".

Job 13:19 Who is he who will contend with me? For then would I hold my peace and give up the spirit- Job is challenging anyone to come forward and contend with him in court by proving him wrong. If they did, then he would be silent ["hold my peace"] and willingly die. This of course is exactly what happens at the end. God does contend with Job, and he is proven guilty. He lays his hand upon mouth in silence (Job 40:4), and we can deduce from his challenge here that he wanted to die. He saw then saved from that position by grace alone. The connection with the exiles is in Is. 50:8, where a similarly convicted Israel would be justified by Divine grace to the point they could again challenge any to convict them of sin, seeing that "He is near that justifies me".

Or we can read this quite differently: "If I hold my peace, I shall give up the spirit" (Job 13:19 RVmg.). Job felt that the situation he was in *forced* him to use the words he did, and certainly justified it [we may well have used this reasoning ourselves when justifying the use of bad language]. Job fell into the trap of thinking that his terrible situation somehow allowed him to speak whatever words came into his head. Job felt he hadn't been 'fed' and so he was entitled to "bray" and "low" over his misfortune (Job 6:5). Because of the weight of his sufferings, he thereby justified the fact that "Therefore have my words been rash (Job 6:3). Likewise "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit" (Job 7:11). "I will give free course to my complaint. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 10:1 RV). Zophar criticizes Job being "full of talk" and speaking "the multitude of words", "for thou sayest, my doctrine is pure" (Job 11:1-4)- as if Job felt that because he held true doctrine he was justified in pouring out words as he did. "Why should I not be impatient?" (Job 21:4 RV). "Today is my complaint bitter. My stroke is heavier than

my groaning” (Job 23:2)- i.e. his complaining was due to his sufferings. But in the end, Elihu on God’s behalf rebuked him for his wrong words. And Job himself recognized: “I am vile. I will lay mine hand upon my mouth” in regret of his words (Job 40:4). “Wherefore I loathe my words and repent” (Job 42:6 RVmg.). He realized his mistake: he had thought that the situation justified his words. Now he hung his head and admitted that there was no justification for speaking in the way he had. Especially in the matter of the tongue, we can so easily justify ourselves; ‘I only said / did it [or didn’t do it] because...’. And it is all so child-like. Once we leave off *all* attempts at self-justification, we will face up to our sins.

Job 13:20 Only don’t do two things to me; then I will not hide myself from Your face- This is so arrogant, to think that he could himself from God. The allusion is to Adam hiding in Eden from God. Job seeks a guarantee from God that he will not be condemned, and then says he will agree to respond to God's call (:22)- another allusion to Adam, who was 'called' to account by God after his sin. It would appear that Job was recognizing that he had sinned, that he knew that the sense of spiritual limbo he was in paralleled Adam's hiding from God in Eden, but that he would only respond to God's call and come out of hiding to confess his sin as he knew God wanted him to, if God withdrew His hand- i.e. relieved him of the immediate trials he was then experiencing. Thus Job was trying to barter with God- wanting Him to withdraw the trials in return for Job making the confession which he knew God wanted. See on Job 10:9; 9:17.

Job 13:21 withdraw Your hand far from me- From here to the end of the chapter could be addressed to God, or to the friends. If the latter, then it would appear that Job considers the friends guilty for bringing his sufferings upon him. This would confirm the connection suggested between the friends and the Satan figure. For as soon as Satan is as it were off the stage, the friends appear. See on :20.

And don’t let Your terror make me afraid- Job repeats this fear in Job 9:34, and Elihu alludes to it when he uses the same phrase in assuring Job that his terror will not make Job afraid (Job 33:7). The terror is perhaps "the terror of the Lord", the fear of condemnation at the last day (so Paul uses the phrase, 2 Cor. 5:11). That terror should "persuade men" to accept grace, Paul argues. To have that terror unexperienced by men would mean they had no persuasion toward grace.

Job 13:22 Then call, and I will answer; or let me speak, and You answer me- See on :20. In the end, God does call Job; and he lays his hand upon his mouth in silence. For he has no answer, nor does he desire to speak. For God has already answered him. This is legal language (see on :3): "Then make a plea and I will certainly be a respondent; or let me make a charge and you reply to me!". This is an inappropriate way to talk to Almighty God. Job allows himself to be driven to this by his misplaced desire for justice and to have his situation 'heard'. God's responses do not 'hear' his situation but provide another perspective altogether. But for now, Job is eager to put God in the dock. Possibly Paul has this in view when he says that God will always overcome when He is put in the dock and judged (Rom. 3:4). But the allusion is also to his fantasy of a restored Eden when God would call him as He called Adam, and Job could answer with a clear conscience, knowing he had nothing to be ashamed of and had not sinned; see on Job 14:15.

Job 13:23 How many are my iniquities and sins? Make me know my disobedience and my sin-

Job goes on to complain that God is holding against him the sins of his youth (:26); so here he must mean that he hasn't done any really big sin which justified his suffering. He fails to realize that the passage of time is not atonement for sin; and he fails to learn the lesson of Adam and Eve, that 'just' one sin leads to eternal judgment and consequence, even if committed [as in Adam's case] in immaturity.

This seems an arrogant denial of sinfulness and a false accusation of God. Job, like the friends, cannot understand suffering as having any reason apart from sin. And he indignantly insists that he has not sinned. This insistence upon never moving beyond the paradigm whereby suffering reflects sin led Job to thereby falsely accuse God. And we can so easily do the same.

Job 13:24 Why do You hide Your face, and hold me for Your enemy?- Quite possibly Job is making a play on words, using the similarity between *iyjob* (Job) and *oyeb* (enemy). These two words are anagrams in Hebrew. Rearrange 'Job' and you get 'enemy'. He really thinks that God hates Job and thinks Job is His enemy. If only he knew the prologue... and had paid less subconscious attention to the position of the friends, that his sufferings meant that God must hate him.

Job feels that God sees him as enemy: "How many are my iniquities and sins? Make known to me my transgression and sin! Why do You hide Your face? Why do You treat me as Your enemy?" (Job 13:23,24). God didn't at all see him that way. And all the more in our case, we who were enemies are now reconciled by the death of God's son, God is not our enemy, and is not hiding from us but rather revealing His glory to us, more and more each day, in the face of Jesus Christ. Likewise Job's desire "conceal me until Your anger relents" (:13) has been met in the Lord Jesus, through whom we have been saved from God's wrath. Indeed, all these aspects of God's wrath that Job so fears recur in Romans and other Pauline writings; and every one of them has been resolved in the Lord's death.

Job could appear to oscillate wildly in his positions, possibly due to his post traumatic stress. He argues his total innocence, and then admits he is a sinner and has sins of youth as well. He considers God a sadist and narcissist, and yet also speaks of how great God is and how man has no valid complaint against Him. He states that man has no afterlife, this life is all there is, and the righteous are blessed and the sinners are cursed- and then he speaks of finally meeting God. He knows there is no mediator between God and himself; but he fantasizes about having one. That fantasy is true in the Lord Jesus. He says on one hand that he wants a day in court with God, and if he can find a decent judge, then he will win the case against God; and then he says that all such ideas of getting God in the dock are futile because God is God and he is only a man. I suggest that reading and re-reading Job's speeches reveals that he was not in fact oscillating between positions. Rather does he hold certain base truths, many of which are wrong- and then he briefly fantasizes about some 'other' scenario, and then returns to his baseline position. His baseline position was that sin brings suffering, and he tells the friends that of course he agrees with them on this, he knows what they know and what everyone knows. But he fantasizes about his being actually totally innocent, and the victim of a horrible God. He states clearly that he is a sinner and also has sins of youth- but then he fantasizes about a God who is actually OK with that. He considers God to be a God of wrath who carefully records all his sins and holds them against him; and then he fantasizes about God calling to him, as He

did to Adam in Eden, and him being able to respond to God and walk with God, seeing His face, despite being a sinner. His baseline position is clearly that there is no afterlife; but he fantasizes about a meeting with God at some point after death, when all the drama connected with sin, suffering, justice, "Why?" questions... is over. He knows as a baseline truth that man can never get God in court nor will God ever answer him- but he dreams, for a moment, of God in fact answering all Job's many questions. If you look at all his brief fantasies, three wonderful things are apparent:

1) We know from the prologue that God actually thinks Job is wonderful and doesn't consider him a sinner, even though he has sinned historically and still does; Job's fantasies were in fact reality at the time, if only Job would know it

2) Paul in Romans does quote the book of Job but not much. But he alludes to the ideas and problems raised in it, repeatedly. We in the Lord Jesus are saved from wrath, counted right, sin is no longer an issue, we who are sinners can in fact walk freely and joyfully with a God who doesn't consider that any issue in His relationship with us. Job's fantasies are in fact true and are our lived experience now.

3) All Job's fantasies, especially of a resurrection and final, eternally lasting peace with God- will come true in God's Kingdom. Job's fantasies are in fact the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

The implication of the argument is that Job had a right to see God's unhidden face, because God (so Job thinks) cannot convict Job of sin. Cain was hidden from God's face (s.w. Gen. 4:14); Job again feels he is being treated like Cain, with a mark set upon him (:27); when he is innocent. He totally failed to perceive his sinfulness, and was convicted of it only by the revelation of God at the end- whereby, by grace alone, God no longer hid His face but revealed Himself. God hid His face from the exiles (s.w. Dt. 31:17,18; 32:20; Is. 8:17; 54:8; 59:2; 64:7; Jer. 33:5; Ez. 39:23), and again, His apparent hiding of His face from Job was not because Job had sinned but because he was suffering as representative of his people.

Job 13:25 Will You harass a driven leaf? Will You pursue the dry stubble?-

Chaff being driven by the wind is the figure for condemnation by God (Is. 40:24; 41:2; 64:5; Jer. 13:24; Ps. 83:14). Job feels God has condemned him because of his sufferings- he has exactly bought in to the position of the friends, and is ignorant of the Prologue. God thinks Job has been wonderful. But Job thinks God hates him and has condemned him. This so often is the tragic disjuncture between God and those who believe in Him. His demand of God, his fantasy, is to live before God without any sense of present nor future condemnation for his sins; and we have been given that experience in Christ. And Job was already there, according to the prologue.

Job argues that he is so dead and insignificant that God should stop bothering with him. But this is exactly the point- that God is indeed to interested in the dead and insignificant. The leaf driven by the autumn wind and the stubble after harvest being blown away are all pictures of judgment, and again connect Job to the judged people of Judah in captivity.

Job 13:26 For You write bitter things against me, and make me inherit the iniquities of my youth- see on Job 29:13,14. Job's denial of sin was to be totally overcome by Yahweh's final appearance. Here he reasons as many do today: 'I am not a sinner, if I did sin, well that was years ago'. We make the passage of years a kind of pseudo

atonement for sin. But sin needs atoning, and "just" one sin means death. That is the lesson of Eden.

Job 13:27 You also put my feet in the stocks, and mark all my paths. You set a mark on the soles of my feet- He feels that God is watching him too closely, carefully noting every misstep in life's path. As discussed above, God saw him as perfect. His failure was to accept the friends' view, that he must in fact be a terrible sinner. Job complains that although he is associated with Cain (as in :24), this is not really fair. The mark on him that was a witness wherever he went echoes that which God put on Cain. God's preservation of Cain from death also finds a parallel in Job's feeling that God is preserving him unnaturally (Job 3:21-23; 10:9-15). See on Job 11:15; 16:17,18; 31:39. The exiles felt as Job- marked, unable to die, miraculously preserved, and yet imprisoned in stocks. The restoration prophets have the message of deliverance from the stocks, and paths directed back to Zion- towards a restoration as Job experienced. But most of them refused this and remained in Babylon, and those who did return precluded the fulfilment of the restoration prophecies.

Job 13:28 though I am decaying like a rotten thing, like a garment that is moth-eaten- This is parallel in reference to Is. 50:9: "Behold, all they shall wax old as a garment, the moth shall eat them up". The "they" are any possible adversaries who might bring charges against us. This had particular relevance to all the adversaries to the rebuilding of Jerusalem. With Yahweh justifying the returned exiles, the court room was effectively empty of adversaries, all charges were to be seen in the perspective of God's ultimate justification of His people (see on Is. 50:8). These words are also found in Job 13:28, where it is God who consumes them, as it were manifesting Himself in a tiny moth. We find the same ideas in Is. 51:6, where the "they" is the 'heavens and earth' of any system, be it Persia / Babylon or an unbelieving Jewish system, which is adversarial to God's people and purpose. The contrast is with how the clothing of Israel in the wilderness did not "wax old" (s.w. Dt. 8:4; 29:5; Neh. 9:21). The exodus and journey to the promised land is repeatedly alluded to in Isaiah as a pattern for the exiles to follow in returning to Judah, and for us in our exodus from this world and journey towards the Kingdom.

JOB CHAPTER 14

Job 14:1 Man, who is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble- Job slips back into the argument that human nature or condition is such that behaviour doesn't matter, as it will all soon be over anyway; and so it is God's problem if He wastes His time so closely concerned with our lives (:3). Job has at times a clearer view of the future, even looking forward to resurrection and judgment. But his faith in that goes up and down, with his depression always clawing him back towards a

Job 14:2 He comes forth like a flower, and is cut down. He also flees like a shadow, and doesn't continue- Is. 37:27 speaks of how the nations around Judah at Hezekiah's time were like this, and were of "small power", s.w. "few" in Job 14:1. Job was reasoning as if he were just any man with human nature. What he says about the brevity and frailty of life is true as far as it stands; but he fails to see that God's way with His chosen give them hope beyond the narrow limits of human nature. Hence the

connection with Hezekiah continues- in his case, the shadow *did* "continue", its fleeing was "brought back" (Is. 38:8). Is. 40:7,8 specifically says that although the flower is cut down, the word of restoration would endure for ever.

Job 14:3 Do You open Your eyes on such a one, and bring me into judgment with You?- I noted on Job 1:6 that the 'Satan' figure refers to both fellow worshippers and also their Angelic representative in the heavenly throne room. The "eyes" of the Lord are His angels, and Job seems to be asking why God is using His Angel-eyes to take such a special interest in him; why God has asked His Angel to "consider My servant Job". When Job asks God to 'look away' from him, or remove His eyes from him (Job 7:8,19 RV and frequently in Job), this would then be understood as a reference to God's Angel-eyes, whom Job perceived as bringing about his problems. The restoration prophecy of Zech. 12:4 turns all this around, saying that Yahweh will "open My eyes upon the house of Judah" to restore them.

Job's argument is that man is so tiny and, according to him, unclean by nature (:4), that it is quite wrong of God to look in detail at puny man ["open Your eyes on such a one"], and to judge him. Man's smallness means, according to Job, that God Almighty is quite wrong to judge man. God's answers will demonstrate that His almightiness means that He does pay attention to every detail in His creation. Human might and height of position means that the powerful, exalted man will not pay attention to the small man. But God's might and height are of a quite different nature and dimension. It is, in fact, the small things that matter so hugely to Him. Thus He condemns Israel for 'murmuring in their tents'; and He repeatedly makes it clear throughout the Biblical record that internal self talk is a huge issue for Him.

Job 14:4 Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one- This is not to say that all born of a woman must be morally unclean; for all we posit about human nature we say about the Lord Jesus, who fully had human nature, and yet was holy and undefiled. The LXX may be better, therefore: "For who shall be pure from uncleanness? not even one". And in any case, Job is wrongly assuming things about the human condition at this point. God doesn't make man a laughing stock or target practice, for example, nor is man without hope of resurrection as Job elsewhere thinks (:10). And there is a way for sinful man to be purged from uncleanness, as the law of Moses taught. It was and is a lame excuse to blame any human sin upon our nature. At best, as discussed on :3, Job is claiming 'defilement by nature', by reason of being human, as a reason why God should not judge man. Likewise, Job speaks of human predestination (:5) as a reason why God should not judge human behaviour (:3). He definitely has it wrong here. If only Job had given up trying to find *why* he was suffering, his mind would not have wandered into these unhelpful speculations and meanderings.

Job 14:5 Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months is with You, and You have appointed his bounds that he can't pass- This may be a reference to the 'wonderful numberer' Angel of Dan. 8:13 who controls the timing of all things. LXX "if even his life should be but one day upon the earth: and his months are numbered by him: thou hast appointed him for a time, and he shall by no means exceed it". The restoration prophets interpret this more positively, in that the appointed time was set to favour Zion (Ps. 102:13)- just as a time was set for the end bounds of Job's sufferings. "Determined" is the word used for the 'determined time' of Judah's judgment and restoration (Is. 10:22,23; 28:22; Dan. 9:27; 11:36). "Bounds" is the

word translated "appoint me a set time" in :13. Job longed for that point to come, in that he assumed that the bound or end of his suffering was in death. When God finally appears, that bound or set time is reached- and by pure grace, Job is restored and not slain in death. And this was what could have happened for the exiles when the appointed 70 year period ended.

Job 14:6 look away from him, that he may rest, until he shall accomplish, as a hireling, his day- Job's faith in resurrection or future restoration comes and goes; in :13 he looks for a future "set time" of change of fortune, but now he just longs for death, counting the days toward it, considering that there is more hope of a tree reviving than of human restoration (:7-10). The way restoration finally comes for Job is therefore proof enough that God doesn't require perfect faith.

Job 14:7 For there is hope for a tree, If it is cut down, that it will sprout again, that the tender branch of it will not cease- Job's idea that a tree will revive because it can sprout again with a "tender branch" is contrasted in his own mind with how he considers he doesn't have such hope (:10). However, these very images are reworked into a positive take by the restoration prophets. The revived Judah were indeed to have a "tender branch", a Messiah figure. Zerubbabel, the 'sprout from Babylon', could have fulfilled the prophecies in the sort term. There was indeed "hope" for the tree of Judah, once cut down by Babylon; just as finally, we are to see that Job also was "cut down" and yet sprouted again at his restoration.

The imagery is taken over in Is. 6:13: "If there is a tenth left in it, that also will in turn be consumed: as a terebinth, and as an oak, whose stump remains when they are felled; so the holy seed is its stump". The idea is of new life being sown from a minority (ten per cent?) as a result of the destruction of the majority. The image is similar to that of the Messianic "Branch" shooting forth from the decaying stump of the house of David. A ten percent minority is also envisaged in Am. 5:3; Am. 6:9,10. The point is that as those trees even when cut down retain the seed in their roots, which will again spring up into a great tree, so out of the judgments to come upon Judah there would arise a remnant who would grow up into the great tree of God's restored Kingdom.

Job 14:8 Though its root grows old in the earth, and its stock dies in the ground- "Earth" is *eretz*, the land (of Israel). If merely "soil" was intended, a different word would have been used. Again, we see the drama of Job has been tweaked, under Divine inspiration, to become the narrative for the exiles. The root had indeed largely died in the land at the time of the Babylonian invasion, but it still had some life and would "bud" again (Job 14:9). Job was the man with great roots who had been cut down but hadn't completely died (Job 8:17); his roots had been dried up (Job 18:16; 29:19). He represented Judah, whose roots were throughout the land as a tree transplanted by God (s.w. Ps. 80:9). Those roots were withered by the invasions (Is. 5:24), but out of those dry roots would grow up a "tender plant / branch" (Is. 11:1,10; 53:2), using the same word for "tender" as in Job 14:7. This Messianic suffering servant was to be based upon Job, and representative of all God's restored people. They were to again spread their roots in the land of promise in a restored Kingdom (Is. 37:31; Jer. 17:8), after the pattern of Job's restoration.

Job 14:9 yet through the scent of water it will bud, and put forth boughs like a plant-

Perhaps God almost playfully responds to this by talking of how oceans of waters are under His control. Clearly Job's restoration was typical of how the restored Israel could "bud" and fill the land with fruit (s.w. Is. 27:6; 35:1,2; 66:14; Hos. 14:5,7).

Job 14:10 But man dies, and is laid low. Yes, man gives up the spirit, and where is he?- I pointed out on :4 that Job's depression leads him to a wrong understanding of the human condition; and here we have another example, in his denial of any hope of resurrection of the body (as in :12); even though by Job 19:25-27 he has come to believe in it, and even by :13 he has returned to some idea of it. Again we see how both Job and the friends have truth on many points, but framed in the wrong context. Death is indeed unconsciousness; but Job is overlooking the resurrection of the body and future restoration, just as the exiles were focused only upon their present realities and not eternal ones.

Job 14:11 As the waters fail from the sea, and the river wastes and dries up- The theme of 'drying up' or 'withering' is significant. Bildad considers Job to have been 'dried up' by God's judgment (Job 8:12), and the word is used of how God withered or dried up Judah at the hands of their invaders (Jer. 12:4; 23:10; Ez. 17:9,10,24; Zech. 11:17; Lam. 4:8; Is. 40:7,8- although the prophetic word of God requiring their restoration would endure, despite their drying up). The dry bones of Judah in captivity were withered or dried up (Ez. 37:11). So Job's 'drying up' was again, a sharing in the representative suffering of God's people. Job's personal response to his 'drying up' was to reflect that God dries up waters and also sends them forth as floods (Job 12:15 s.w.); He can give and He can take, just as Job had initially realized (Job 2:10). Just as He dried up Job / Israel, so He could abundantly send forth waters; just as He did at the Red Sea. Restoration and salvation was just as easy for Him as destruction, to put it another way. The drying up of Job was also understood by him as referring to his death (Job 14:11), but God could raise him from the dead and have a desire to him again (Job 14:15). Eliphaz wrongly argues that the Divine 'drying up' of a person means permanent extinction (Job 15:30), as does Bildad (Job 18:16); but Job always sees the 'drying up' as part of a Divine action which also has a counterpart, the pouring out again of waters, or resurrection of the dried up, withered bones. Likewise Judah in captivity thought that their drying up, their dry bones, were incapable of revival (Ez. 37:11); but the message is that they could indeed be revived, and their drying up was but a presage to their eternal revival.

Job 14:12 so man lies down and doesn't rise. Until the heavens are no more, they shall not awake, nor be roused out of their sleep- Job was wrong to deny so dogmatically the hope of resurrection; see on :10. But he has the closeness of relationship with God to ask that in fact his case there would be a resurrection (:13), and by Job 19:25-27 he is thoroughly convinced there will be. We hereby see his growth in understanding throughout the book.

Job 14:13 Oh that You would hide me in Sheol, that You would keep me secret, until Your wrath is past- The desires of Job were met, at least potentially, in God's willingness to hide the exiles from further personal suffering when Babylon fell, and to preserve them for His restored Kingdom. For these words are surely alluded to in Is. 26:20: "Come, My people, enter into your rooms, and shut your doors behind you. Hide yourself for a little moment, until the indignation is past".

That You would appoint me a set time, and remember me!- As noted on :5, that "set time" corresponds with Job's restoration, just as the exiles were to be restored at the end of 70 years "set time". See on Job 7:1.

Much of what Job says is fantasy, especially about having a day in court with God and proving God wrong. But he also realistically admits that this can never ever happen. I suggest that we have the same here, a realistically admission that [as Job understands it] this life is all we have, and there is no hope of resurrection. But he fantasizes of a time when actually he will live again, and God will be kind to him and stop looking at his sins and trying to hurt him. The wonderful truth is that God did for Job, and will do, exceeding abundantly above all he asked or thought. He was already right with God, and God would resurrect him into His Kingdom and eternal relationship with Him.

Job's fantasy that one day, eternal death would be over and God would again speak with him... is wedged in between statements from Job that clearly state that he doesn't believe in any future hope. He says he will wait until "my release comes. You would call and I would answer you; you would yearn for the work of your hands" (Job 14:13-15). He clearly alludes to Adam being called by God in Eden, but this time, Job will answer God's call with a good conscience. But in :19 he will return to his baseline disbelief in a future hope: "Water wears away stone, and torrents wash away soil. So you destroy a man's hope". So in fantasy, Job dreams of a day when God would be in free, open and loving relationship with him, instead of being [as Job thought] caught up with the issue of human sin, for ever touchy and sensitive about what He thinks we've done wrong, always watching Job's sins, dredging up his past sins, and carefully watching every step he makes and noting the sins involved in it: "But now You number my steps. Don't You watch over my sin?" (:16). And as discussed on :17, he felt God kept a record of all his past sins. He has asked in Job 13:21 "Don't let Your terror make me afraid"; the terror is perhaps "the terror of the Lord", the fear of condemnation at the last day (so Paul uses the phrase, 2 Cor. 5:11). His fantasy is of living without fear of Divine condemnation hanging over him; hence his demand of God to stop hiding His face from him. He wanted to see God's unhidden face. And we have been given exactly this hope and freed from condemnation in the Lord Jesus.

That dream, that fantasy, was in fact real for Job. The prologue describes God's very high view of Job as He observed his path in this life. That high view was in spite of the fact Job had sinned at times in his life and was just a mere human, as Job admits in this chapter. We too can imagine a world where we live without any fear of God for ever touchy about sin. And we live freely with Him. He calls to us, as He called to Adam in the garden, and we freely respond with no fear. That is in fact the life we can have now in the Lord Jesus, and which awaits us eternally.

Job 14:14 If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my warfare would I wait, until my release should come-

Job recognized that there would come a time when "My change come (when) Thou shalt call, and I will answer Thee: (I know) Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands" (Job 14:14,15 AV). It would appear from this that Job feels that there will be a call to resurrection corresponding to God's call of Adam out of hiding, after which he would confess his sins- i.e. at the judgement. God's calling to Job out of the whirlwind and Job's subsequent confession at the end of the book again encourages us to see "the end of the Lord" with Job as pointing forward to our justification at the day

of judgement and the Kingdom, as well as the restoration possible for the exiles. See on Job 14:20.

Even if God slew him, Job would still be patient or wait (Job 13:15), he would 'patiently wait' for his "release" (AV "change") to come at some point after his death (Job 14:14), and waited for light to somehow come out of his current darkness (Job 30:26). This was the legendary "patience of Job" which we are bidden follow (James 5:11). He was impatient, but he was "patient" in the Hebrew sense of enduring in faith; faith that even if things didn't work out at all in this life, even if God was apparently unfair in this life, he would be finally restored at the resurrection. This was his 'endurance', and it is a parade example for all who struggle with the justice of God and the incomprehensible problem of suffering.

Job 14:15 You would call, and I would answer You. You would have a desire to the work of Your hands- This desire to be called by God and to answer repeats Job 13:22 "Then call, and I will answer". He wants to be as Adam in Eden, for Eden to be restored and for him to be called by God as Adam was, and to be able to freely answer with no conscience of sin. Restored relationship with God was what Job wanted. He wanted to have God having a yearning for him, as the work of His hands. The truth is, we know from the prologue that indeed that was always how God viewed Job. The tragedy was that he didn't trust it to be true, and was loaded with false guilt by his friends and his theology to think otherwise. The friends, as discussed on Job 11:16, thought that health and wealth in this life was all God was offering Job if he repented. That wasn't actually what Job wanted; he wanted relationship with God, and feeling God loved him. As we know from the prologue, he actually had all those things- he just couldn't see beyond the steely silence of the skies. Despite all his apparently bitter words against God, Job realizes that finally, "God is love". For he uses a very tender expression for how he believes when God finally calls him to judgment, God will have a "desire" to Job as His very own created handiwork. It was 'just' that God was apparently acting very differently at that time in Job's mortal life. This is one implication of understanding that we are God's created beings, made in His image and likeness, and not mere results of random evolutionary chance. If indeed we are created by Him in His image, then He has a tenderness toward us, ultimately.

Job 14:16 But now You number my steps. Don't You watch over my sin?- This was how Job felt in this life, but he has prefaced this in :15 by saying that he believes that finally God would call him to judgment and show great tenderness to him. That indeed was what happened when God appeared at the end, speaking positively of the Job who had well nigh cursed Him, and restoring him. And the exiles could have experienced the same grace. We note that Job is slowly moving towards the acceptance that he does have "my sin", a realization which will come to full term when God finally appears. Earlier he has spoken as if he has nothing to apologize for before God.

Job 14:17 My disobedience is sealed up in a bag. You fasten up my iniquity-

Job imagines God as having written his sins on a papyrus scroll and sealed it up for ever: or perhaps the allusion is to small egg-shaped memorial stones inscribed with debts and kept in a sealed bag. As discussed on :13, his fantasy was to be able to live freely with God, knowing God in fact didn't remember our past sins and they were dealt with. And that fantasy was in fact true for him [see the Prologue] and could be true for every man, especially in Christ.

LXX "and marked if I have been guilty of any transgression unawares". Like David, Job felt that God took note of sins of ignorance. But although he is now beginning to accept his sinfulness, he is justifying it. He has argued that his human nature is an excuse, and now he deploys the argument that any sin found in him would be a mere sin of ignorance. He has yet to come to the final confession of sin he makes at the end, when he ceases all attempts at self-justification before the marvel of God's justification of him.

Job 14:18 But the mountain falling comes to nothing. The rock is removed out of its place- We note the progression from mountain to rocks to stones to dust (:19). Job saw man's being brought to dust as reflected in the process of erosion which can remove the greatest mountains. Again, Job is saying the truth but within the wrong framework. For although God indeed brings to dust, He revives from the dust and can work any number and nature of new creations. Again, the restoration prophets have a positive take on this; the great mountain which God would surely remove was Babylon, and He would establish the mountain of His restored people and Kingdom in Zion (Zech. 4:7; Dan. 2:45). See on Job 18:4.

Job 14:19 the waters wear away the stones. The torrents of it wash away the dust of the earth. So You destroy the hope of man- Bildad had earlier argued that "the hypocrite's hope shall perish" (Job 8:13). Job seems to now be saying that man generally has no hope at all, and so whether or not an individual is a hypocrite is meaningless. See on :18. Originally, Job believed that his "hope" was predicated upon his upright ways (Job 4:6). But Job through his sufferings comes to feel he now has no "hope" (Job 7:6; 14:19; 17:15; 19:10). The friends suggest that Job had only the "hope" of the hypocrite, and this "hope" would perish (Job 4:6; 8:13; 27:8). Job had integrity, and on that basis he thought he had "hope". He suffered, and he lost that "hope", because he assumed that his sufferings meant that he was not in fact righteous. And yet he often reflects that he is righteous and is suffering unjustly. And so he is led to the realization that the "hope" of the righteous is by God's grace and not because of the "integrity of [Job's] ways". Judah in captivity likewise lost their "hope" (Ez. 19:5; 37:11). But the message of the restoration prophets was that "there is hope in your end" (Jer. 31:17); they were prisoners or exiles in "hope" (Zech. 9:12).

Job 14:20 You forever prevail against him, and he departs. You change his face, and send him away- LXX "thou settest thy face against him, and sendest him away", relevant to the sending away of Judah into captivity with the face of God hidden from them and against them. See on :18. In his humbler moments Job recognized that he was a sinner and deserved Adam's punishment of being sent out of Eden; or also to Cain's countenance falling and then being sent away from God. See on Job 31:33; 9:17; 10:9. But Job makes one very wrong statement here, although 'just' one word: "forever". God does not send away forever. This was the whole message of the restoration prophets.

Job 14:21 His sons come to honour, and he doesn't know it. They are brought low, but he doesn't perceive it about them- This may simply be a reference to the numbness Job still felt about the bringing low of his own sons.

Job 14:22 But his flesh on him has pain, and his soul within him mourns- This clearly refers to Job personally; he saw himself as representative of the whole body of God's

people, or all mankind. The captive exiles likewise 'mourned' (s.w. Ezra 10:6; Neh. 1:4), but were urged not to mourn (Neh. 8:9) because it was God's intention to restore them; after the pattern of Job.

JOB CHAPTER 15

Job 15:1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered- Eliphaz in this speech clearly objects to Job having made any comeback whatsoever on what the friends have so far said. This is so often the case in supposed 'dialogue'; once people are persuaded of their own narrative, they accuse any dissent therefrom to be arrogance. Which is in turn really just their own pride.

Job 15:2 Should a wise man answer with vain knowledge, and fill himself with the east wind?- This is an allusion to inspiration, seeing that "wind" in Hebrew also means 'spirit'. He implies that he and the friends are Divinely inspired, whereas Job is not. Yet the friends state often that they are merely saying what the wise sages thought. But as often happens, by reason of merely repeating their own narrative they become persuaded of its truth and beauty and imply that in fact they are speaking on God's behalf, inspired by Him, and any opposition thereto is therefore uninspired and blasphemous. We note Job never claims to be inspired by God, his speeches are a struggle with God rather than a man claiming Divine inspiration.

Job 15:3 Should he reason with unprofitable talk, or with speeches with which he can do no good?- This reflects a very utilitarian view of grief and language, as if even in grief a man is supposed to say things which "do good", which somehow put things right. The friends change very quickly from their initial silent grief with Job, and become very aggressive. They cannot cope with their narrative being upset, or being rejected. And then all human sympathy for the individual suffering person goes out of the window.

Job 15:4 Yes, you do away with fear, and hinder devotion before God- "You have reduced reverence and maligned meditation before God". We can read "fear" as meaning 'fear of God'. This is saying that if Job is indeed an example [as he claims] of innocence and suffering co-existing at the same time, then the whole religious structure they knew would come crashing down. And indeed it does. And that is one of the purposes of the book of Job. For we know from the epilogue that Eliphaz speaks wrongly about both God and Job. GNB "If you had your way, no one would fear God"; and yet we know from the Prologue that Job indeed feared God like none other.

This would appear to be criticism of Job's confidence that he will finally be accepted by God, even if not in this life. Whatever Job said was found wrong by the friends, and this whole drama is a parade example of how dialogue breaks down to the point that every word said is taken issue with and found wrong; and then it is extrapolated to positions never intended by the speaker. In this case, Job's apparent confidence of final acceptance is extrapolated to mean that he is hindering or 'limiting' the power of prayer ["devotion"] to God.

Job 15:5 For your iniquity teaches your mouth, and you choose the language of the crafty-

This is indeed true, that sin within the heart leads to words; from the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks (Mt. 12:34). The friends actually say more that is technically true than Job does; their theory is wrong regarding sin and suffering, but a lot of their other statements are true. Whereas the majority of what Job says isn't true and is in fact blasphemous. Yet God at the end says that Job said what was right about Him, and the friends didn't. This is such a glaring contradiction that it begs us to examine it- and clearly Yahweh's reference is to Job's final brief words of repentance, which weren't forthcoming from the friends. We are left to reflect that how much we have technically right in our theology isn't so much the issue as whether we have humbly repented.

As noted on :4, the friends were extrapolating from Job's words to positions they imputed to him which were totally untrue. He was hardly "crafty", he blurts out whatever he feels at the moment, oscillating between faith in resurrection and utter denial of it. The whole thing is an object lesson in how not to dialogue.

Job 15:6 Your own mouth condemns you, and not I. Yes, your own lips testify against you- I discussed on Job 4:9 how the words of the friends are not altogether untrue. Although the context of these words is that Eliphaz is twisting Job's words against him (see on :3-5), he states a truth. And this is picked up by the Lord in His words to the one-talent man in the parable: "Out of your own mouth will I judge / condemn you" (Lk. 19:22). The man was condemned for keeping his talent (his spiritual knowledge of the word) to himself rather than sharing it with others. Eliphaz proceeds to make the same rebuke of Job- although he had "heard the secret of God", which may imply the gift of prophesying the word seeing that Job was a prophet, he instead "restrained wisdom unto thyself" (:8 AV). This confirms that the one talent man of the parable is based on Job, thus making him represent the rejected at judgement. No doubt the primary application of the one talent man was to the Jewish believers of Christ's day who did not capitalize on the talent they already had. The taking away of the talent and its being given to others recalls the Kingdom (i.e. the Gospel of the Kingdom) being taken from the Jews and being given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it (cp. trading the talent).

Job 15:7 Are you the first man who was born? Or were you brought forth before the hills?- This is probably quoting a proverb, something like "Yes, yes, he is the first man, no wonder that he is so wise!". The friends ridiculed Job's evident comparison of himself with Adam: "*Are you* (the emphasis is on that phrase) the first man (Adam; 1 Cor. 15:45 alludes here) who was born?". See on Job 31:33; 9:17; 10:9. But the idea is that there was more wisdom the further back you went; the further back in history, and also the longer you had lived, the more likely you were to have wisdom. This is a very weak argument; for Adam messed up, and the wisdom of sages is often at variance with God's wisdom.

Job 15:8 Have you heard the secret counsel of God? Do you limit wisdom to yourself?- "Do you listen in on the Divine council?" may be suggesting that the friends had done, but Job hadn't. This of course returns us to the prologue to the book, where it is the Satan who is in the Divine council. And that Satan figure may, on this basis, refer to the friends who now 'give the game away' by claiming to have listened in on the Divine council. But perhaps they may mean that neither they nor Job have listened in on the Divine council; but we the readers have done, because we have read of it in Job 1 and 2. And we know that they are wrong in what they assume about it.

“Dost thou hearken in the council of God?” (Job 15:8 RVmg.) is the language of the Heavenly throne room- note how this is said in the context of Job, where we have the most classic statement of the operation of the court of heaven in the opening chapters. See on Job 1:6. If indeed the friends were the "sons of God" of the prologue, the fellow worshippers who were influenced by the discussion between God and the 'Satan' figure (who was also a human worshipper, it seems, although with Angelic representation in the court of heaven). If indeed all this is in view, the argument would be that Job was wrong to be out of step with the argument of the Satan. Eliphaz's argument would then be that indeed he was only faithful to God because God had blessed him, and Job was then wrong to deny it.

Or the idea may be that Job was not the *only* one who had heard God's counsel (:9); they had also heard it. And yet they did not accurately speak forth what they had heard, or were even inspired with, as Job did (Job 42:7).

Job 15:9 What do you know, that we don't know? What do you understand, which is not in us?- These are the words Job says to them. They are all in fact on the same square regarding the relationship between sin and suffering. But any issues outside that square make them bitter enemies; just as we see in so many church disputes today. This is all a parade example of how dialogue and inter-personal discussion goes so wrong. The friends were persuaded that their narrative was right, and Job couldn't teach them anything. Any new perspective he might offer was therefore treated as an example of his pride and assuming knowledge. But all this arose from their idea that 'truth' was a closed circle of ideas which they possessed and anything outside of it was just presumed knowledge. And human nature hasn't changed to this day, especially with those who consider that they hold absolute truth.

Job 15:10 With us are both the gray-headed and the very aged men, much elder than your father- This implies Job's father was still alive. Again, the source of truth is seen as predicated upon how long a person has lived. Human experience and developed philosophy was seen as the authority, rather than Divine revelation. And this is why their arguments are reduced to nothing by the final appearance of God speaking His own words.

Job 15:11 Are the consolations of God too small for you, even the word that is gentle toward you?- LXX "Thou hast been scourged for but few of thy sins: thou hast spoken haughtily and extravagantly", just as Ezra says that Judah had suffered less than their sins deserved (Ezra 9:13). Again, although what Eliphaz says is true so far as it goes, he is totally wrong because he fails to perceive that the grace of being punished less than sin deserves is but a prelude to glorious restoration.

Job 15:12 Why does your heart carry you away? Why do your eyes flash- Job was indeed angry, with flashing eyes. But the expression of emotion is misinterpreted as being angry with God (:13). God's special creation, Leviathan, also had flashing eyes (Job 41:18,19). Perhaps this is God's way of saying that eyes flashing with anger is not necessarily sinful of itself, and is all part of the natural created order, and is not worthy of rebuke in itself. This is said against the backdrop of a Bedouin culture where expressions of emotion were only to be made in appropriate ways. Possibly Eliphaz is accusing Job of having the 'evil eye' which was so commonly believed in. Job will reply in Job 16:9 that in fact, it is the other way around.

Job 15:13 that you turn your spirit against God, and let such words go out of your mouth?- As the speeches of the friends continue, they engage less and less with Job's actual words. They argue against their perceptions of his position and deal in vague generalities. This again is typical of the breakdown in meaningful dialogue which we see all around us, whereby the participants become confirmed in their positions and build up an image of their opponent in their mind which gets progressively awful and also the more confirmed as true in their view.

Job 15:14 What is man, that he should be clean? What is he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?- Here and in :15, Eliphaz is just repeating what he has said in Job 4:17-19. I noted there the problems with his ideas, and how questionable it was that he really had the vision he claimed, and in any case, the contents of it contradict Bible teaching elsewhere so it was not of God. And again, this is how human relationships break down, as discussed on :13. The participants revert to their old arguments and refuse to engage with what is being said by their opponent, whom they progressively demonize. Eliphaz's argument that man is inevitably sinful is used to desperately disprove Job's perceived claim of being sinless. But the argument also convicts Eliphaz of sin, as he too was human.

Job 15:15 Behold, He puts no trust in His holy ones. Yes, the heavens are not clean in His sight-

Eliphaz has a very negative view of God, assuming He is hard to please, despises men, Angels and His own "heavens", and is so negative about His servants. He is wrong on both counts. Eliphaz was clearly wrong to claim God thinks the heavens are unclean. We think of Ex. 24:10, "And they saw the God of Israel, and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the very heaven in its clearness". Angels don't sin, and God had a very high view of Job, although he was a man, as we know from the prologue. But Job basically accepts Eliphaz's wrong view of God, developing it to the point that Job accuses God of being a sadistic monster. Eliphaz is just repeating what he has said in Job 4:17-19. I noted there the problems with his ideas, and how questionable it was that he really had the vision he claimed, and in any case, the contents of it contradict Bible teaching elsewhere so it was not of God.

It can be argued that the book of Job is a dialogue concerning evil and suffering, with three popular views being represented by the three friends. These views are examined and corrected by the personal history of Job, as well as by the epilogue and prologue to the book. Eliphaz seems to be representative of the idea that Job is being hit by supernaturally controlled evil- Eliphaz speaks of a force of darkness (Job 22:10,11) and sinful or faulty Angels living in an unclean Heaven (Job 4:18; 15:15). Yet the *answer* to all this is that the Satan figure is under God's control, all Job's misfortunes come from *God* and His Angels- one of whom may have been called 'the adversary' ('Satan')- are in fact perfectly obedient to Him and not disobedient. And finally, Eliphaz and the friends are rebuked for their various wrong understandings, with God declaring Himself supreme and ultimate sovereign. Likewise Bildad's view of Angels in Job 25:5 "The stars are not pure in God's eyes" is corrected by God in Job 38:7, when He says that "the morning stars sang together and all the Sons of God shouted for joy".

The question "How can a man be just with God?" is the same question as 'How can a man ever be clean before a perfect God?', and is repeated in this form in Job

9:30; 15:15; 25:5; here, we have the claim that even heaven is unclean before God. The exiles had considered themselves cleansed whiter than snow because of their obedience to some parts of the Mosaic law (Lam. 4:7), but failed to accept that such cleansing to be whiter than snow is only possible by doing what David did, and casting ourselves upon God's grace outside of justification by works (Ps. 51:7). Job was to learn this lesson at the end. It was this offer which was made to Job just as it was to Judah under judgment (Is. 1:18).

Job 15:16 how much less one who is abominable and corrupt, a man who drinks iniquity like water!- Eliphaz seems to be claiming this about all humanity, in order to desperately prove Job wrong in claiming to be sinless (as Eliphaz liked to perceive Job's words). There is error all around here. For Job was not claiming to be sinless, and Eliphaz was himself human, so his argument that we are all inevitable sinners would apply to himself. But self-awareness and humility aren't present in him; he is driven to prove Job wrong, and he will use any argument to do so. The simple truth is as Job put it- God has a tender desire to man, the work of His hands (Job 14:15). And whatever we posit about human nature, we say about the Lord Jesus. He fully shared that nature and yet was holy, harmless and undefiled (Heb. 7:26). Man by nature, just standing there as flesh and blood before God, is not "abominable" to Him of himself. It is sin which is the problem; and sin is not inevitable. We must bear full responsibility for our sins and cannot just pass them off as an inevitable function of our humanity. The wrong view of human nature held by the friends affected their view of Job and people in practice. They claim man is "abominable" to God, and therefore the same word is used of how they abhorred Job, treating him as "abominable" (Job 19:19; 30:10). The lower our view of human nature, the more likely we are to despise human beings rather than value them and speak well of them because they are made in the image of God (James 3:9).

Job 15:17 I will show you, listen to me; that which I have seen I will declare- Eliphaz again is appealing to his supposed vision which he "saw", first referenced by him in Job 4:17-19. I noted there the problems with his ideas, and how questionable it was that he really had the vision he claimed, and in any case, the contents of it contradict Bible teaching elsewhere so it was not of God. Eliphaz says that his position is what he has "seen"; but then :18 he says that it coincides with traditional wisdom. A rather fortunate coincidence! It's a classic case of confirmation bias. We say we are 'open minded', but we filter all our 'discoveries' to confirm what we already subconsciously decided to believe. "Confirmation bias is the unintentional psychological tendency to search for, interpret, favour, and recall information in a way that confirms your pre-existing beliefs. It acts as a mental shortcut, causing the brain to prioritize evidence that supports current opinions while conveniently ignoring or discrediting contradictory fact". And in the online world, it seems confirmation bias is an increasing problem, because algorithms on social media and search engines often learn what you like and feed you more of the same content, unintentionally amplifying your existing views.

Job 15:18 which wise men have told by their fathers, and have not hidden it- Eliphaz is careful to emphasize that what he 'has seen' in his vision is perfectly in line with the wisdom of the sages of old. This is so important in legalistic societies- to always speak in line with accepted, historical wisdom. There is no humility in this, no openness to truth or to the possibility that Divine revelation may in fact contradict all

we once held as 'truth'. This is the power of God's final appearance and words at the end of the book.

Job 15:19 to whom alone the land was given, and no stranger passed among them- Eliphaz claims that his "fathers" were given the *eretz* alone and no other ethnic group. This could sound like an early form of the land dispute amongst the children of Abraham which we see to this day. We marvel at the relevance of this ancient book. Adding this point was irrelevant as to whether Eliphaz is speaking rightly about God, but for him it was obviously significant. GNB "Their land was free from foreigners" suggests Job's land had been taken over by foreigners; and so again we see the connection between Job and the exiles, whose land was taken over by the Babylonians.

Job 15:20 the wicked man writhes in pain all his days, even the number of years that are laid up for the oppressor- This was his response to Job's statement in Job 12:6, that the tents of robbers were in peace. Clearly he has Job in view, who was oppressed by raiders, and was apparently writhing in pain constantly. Eliphaz suggests that Job must suffer this for a Divinely decreed "number of years". This is the phrase used of the number of years Judah and Israel were to suffer for their sins in exile at the hands of their oppressors (Ez. 4:5; Dan. 9:2). "Laid up" is AV "hidden". Perhaps Elihu alludes to this when he uses the same phrase to say that "the number of years" cannot be "searched out" because God is great (Job 36:26). This may refer to how Daniel tried to search out the number of years Judah ought to be in captivity, and had to conclude that the 70 years time period was flexible, depending upon Judah's repentance and other preconditions. We note Ez. 4:5 gives a different period.

Job 15:21 A sound of terrors is in his ears. In prosperity the destroyer shall come on him- In God's final revelation to the friends and Job, they all heard the terrifying sound of the approaching theophany in the thunderstorm. They were thereby convicted of Divine judgment, expressed in their own terms.

Eliphaz says that Job's sudden problems amid his prosperity were what would happen to all the wicked. This seems to be alluded to in 1 Thess. 5:3 concerning the sudden destruction of rich, spiritually self confident believers- but at the Lord's coming, not in this life. Again we see the friends stating things which are true as far as they go, but framing them in a context which makes them untrue; and this can happen today.

The friends insist that "the destroyer" [by which they surely meant an early equivalent to 'the devil' of popular belief today] had touched Job- whereas Job insists that it is *God* who had destroyed him (Job 15:21 cp. 19:10; 13:21), perhaps through the Divine Angel known as "the destroyer" (1 Cor. 10:10). I suggested on Job 1:6 that the 'Satan' may have reference to an obedient Divine Angel. In some ways the book of Job is a deconstruction of the popular Persian and Canaanite myths about a 'satan' figure. Job, both in the story of his sufferings and his specific words, seeks to demonstrate that the essential issues in life is being "just with God", and not whether or not we are touched by the hand of an evil being; for the hand of God which touched Job (Job 19:21) is the hand of 'satan' into whom God delivered Job temporarily (Job 1:12). Job says that the attitude of the friends is wrong- they should be looking into themselves, rather than fantasizing about the action of some unseen evil being they imagined: "Ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in *me*?... know that there is a [personal] judgment" (Job 19:28,29).

Job 15:22 He doesn't believe that he shall return out of darkness. He is waited for by the sword- The oblique references to Job continue. He has oscillated between faith in a return from the darkness of death, and yet disbelief in this. Uncharitably, Eliphaz focuses upon the low points of his statements. This too can be how we handle interaction with others- seizing upon their lowest points. Job was constantly writhing in pain (:20), so to focus upon his words at his lowest points shows a willful desire to judge and not save him. We need to learn from this not to mentally record every word spoken in a dialogue- if we are truly seeking to help and restore, rather than judge. Eliphaz was sure that it was only a matter of time before the sword of Divine judgment fell upon Job; hence God's appearance and justification of Job was so fatal for Eliphaz.

Job 15:23 He wanders abroad for bread, saying, 'Where is it?'. He knows that the day of darkness is ready at his hand- LXX "and a dark day shall carry him away as with a whirlwind"; the language of Judah's destruction, and also alluding to Job's sons being slain by a whirlwind. Eliphaz implies that that is coming for Job too. It could seem from what Eliphaz says that Job was even driven to begging for bread by this point.

Job 15:24 They prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle- Eliphaz claims that God is preparing to judge Job like a king ready to ride into the battle. But God's later revelation includes Him demonstrating that man cannot participate successfully in any battle with what God has willed (Job 41:8), and the horse runs foolishly into battle with no regard for consequence (Job 39:25). The connection with the words of Eliphaz may be in that it was effectively Eliphaz who was rushing into battle to do judgment against Job; and he was acting like the foolish horse, forgetting that God alone will fight in the battle, and win (Job 38:23).

Job 15:25 Because he has stretched out his hand against God, and behaves himself proudly against the Almighty- As noted above, Eliphaz is imputing positions to Job, extrapolating from Eliphaz's general impression of Job's positions and turning them into something far removed from reality- in this case, accusing Job of actively stretching out his hand against God. To stretch out the arm is an idiom for judging (Jer. 6:12 and often). The idea is that Job has judged God. Hence the first half of the verse reflects the second half- he has behaved proudly against God.

Job 15:26 he runs at Him with a stiff neck, with the thick shields of his bucklers- As noted on :25, this again is a grotesque extrapolation from Job's positions, claiming that he is proactively against God, charging at Him as a fully armed soldier charges at an enemy.

Job 15:27 because he has covered his face with his fatness, and gathered fat on his thighs- Eliphaz refers to how Job was once full fleshed because of the good life he enjoyed, whereas now he was emaciated and begging for bread (:23). GNB renders :26,27 "They are proud and rebellious; they stubbornly hold up their shields and rush to fight against God". The allusion would be to Job's reckless bravado in going out to fight against God by demanding He come to court with Job, and be defeated by Job in court.

Job 15:28 He has lived in desolate cities, in houses which no one inhabited, which

were ready to become heaps- LXX "and what they have prepared, others shall carry away"- the language of the Babylonian captivity and the curses for disobedience to the covenant. Job had not broken the covenant, but is suffering as if he had, as the representative suffering servant. It could be implied that Job was now living in deserted homes in deserted settlements, as well as begging for bread (:23). This would all imply a period of time during which the historical Job suffered.

Job 15:29 He shall not be rich, neither shall his substance continue, neither shall their possessions be extended on the earth- The "substance" of Israel would continue blessed if they continued obedient (Dt. 33:11 s.w.) and be removed if they were not (s.w. Is. 10:14; Jer. 15:13). Again we see Job suffering as the representative of sinful Israel whilst himself innocent, all looking forward to the nature of the Lord's work for us as the ultimate suffering servant.

Job 15:30 He shall not depart out of darkness- Job had perceived that God would and could bring light out of darkness (Job 12:22). To predict that the darkness was endless is presented here as a major sin and mistaken position. And so it was for those who thought the darkness of exile in Babylon could never end.

The flame shall dry up his branches. By the breath of God's mouth shall he go away- The theme of 'drying up' or 'withering' is significant. Bildad considers Job to have been 'dried up' by God's judgment (Job 8:12), and the word is used of how God withered or dried up Judah at the hands of their invaders (Jer. 12:4; 23:10; Ez. 17:9,10,24; Zech. 11:17; Lam. 4:8; Is. 40:7,8- although the prophetic word of God requiring their restoration would endure, despite their drying up). The dry bones of Judah in captivity were withered or dried up (Ez. 37:11). So Job's 'drying up' was again, a sharing in the representative suffering of God's people. Job's personal response to his 'drying up' was to reflect that God dries up waters and also sends them forth as floods (Job 12:15 s.w.); He can give and He can take, just as Job had initially realized (Job 2:10). Just as He dried up Job / Israel, so He could abundantly send forth waters; just as He did at the Red Sea. Restoration and salvation was just as easy for Him as destruction, to put it another way. The drying up of Job was also understood by him as referring to his death (Job 14:11), but God could raise him from the dead and have a desire to him again (Job 14:15). Eliphaz wrongly argues that the Divine 'drying up' of a person means permanent extinction (Job 15:30), as does Bildad (Job 18:16); but Job always sees the 'drying up' as part of a Divine action which also has a counterpart, the pouring out again of waters, or resurrection of the dried up, withered bones. Likewise Judah in captivity thought that their drying up, their dry bones, were incapable of revival (Ez. 37:11); but the message is that they could indeed be revived, and their drying up was but a presage to their eternal revival.

Job 15:31 Let him not trust in emptiness, deceiving himself; for emptiness shall be his reward- This idea that we become like that which we trust or worship is again true, so far as it goes. "Trust" is the usual word for "belief"; and "emptiness" is s.w. "vanities", a term often used about idols. There is here the definite suggestion Job was an idol worshipper. This was untrue. Now Eliphaz has been driven to absolutely wrong conclusions about Job, because he is so convinced that suffering means major sin has been committed. We see a progressive imputation of sin to Job by the friends, all dramatically reversed when God appears and imputes righteousness to Job.

Job 15:32 It shall be accomplished before his time. His branch shall not be green- To

die before man's time, to die young, was seen as a sign of Divine judgment. The death of the Lord Jesus at 33 reveals what a misunderstanding this was.

Job 15:33 He shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine, and shall cast off his flower as the olive tree- The idea is that he would begin having fruit, but it would be shaken off before it came to maturity. The reference would be to the way Job had had children, but they had been slain in relative youth. The friends are later accused of 'wronging' Job by wicked "devices" (Job 21:27). 'Wronging' is the same word as "shake off" in Job 15:33. Eliphaz was so convinced that God would do Job 'wrong' that he developed to the point of actually devising to do wrong to Job, thus confirming the sense that the friends became the 'Satan' figure and actually did the evil to Job which he initially wanted done.

Job 15:34 For the company of the Godless shall be barren, and fire shall consume the tents of bribery- It was Job's tents that had been consumed, and so clearly Eliphaz implies Job's children had practiced bribery. Perhaps they had- for they were indeed destroyed by "the fire of God". But he is wrong to imply some kind of guilt by association whereby Job had done the same and was about to be judged for it.

Job 15:35 They conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. Their heart prepares deceit- Eliphaz thought there were only a few very sinful people in the world, of whom Job was one; but his words are quoted by the Spirit in Is. 59:4 concerning the whole nation of Israel; and this in turn is quoted in Rom. 3:15-17 concerning the whole human race. This same path of progressive realization of our sinfulness must be trodden by each faithful individual, as well as on a communal level. The association between Job's supposed sins and those of Israel again confirms the idea that Job is the prototype suffering servant of Is. 53, carrying Israel's sins and the judgments for them, whilst personally innocent.

JOB CHAPTER 16

Job 16:1 Then Job answered- Job only gives the first six verses to responding to Eliphaz and then addresses himself to God. Job here despairs at how Eliphaz has merely repeated his earlier speech; and his disillusion with the friends leads him in this speech to therefore turn to God more strongly and directly. And this is where disillusion with fellow believers and religious structures will lead the truly spiritual person- to the God whom we know has the answers to our unaddressed issues and questions, even if for now He is not revealing them.

Job 16:2 I have heard many such things. You are all miserable comforters!- The friends admit they are only saying what was generally accepted wisdom at the time. Job had heard this many times over. But it gave him no comfort. This leads him to seek "comfort" from God; and the restoration prophets promise such "comfort" direct from God to the exiles who had not found it in traditional answers (Is. 40:1; 66:13).

Job 16:3 Shall vain words have an end? Or what provokes you that you answer?- Job is led by the annoying, empty answers of the friends to long for "an end". And that is what he is given when Elihu and then God appear at the end. His enquiry as to what

was motivating them can be read as genuine pity for them, and a desire to help them forward spiritually- even from his own desperate position. This basic desire was rewarded at the end, when he is asked to pray for the friends and thereby save them from their own stupidity.

Job 16:4 I also could speak as you do. If your soul were in my soul's place, I could join words together against you, and shake my head at you- It was against the Lord Jesus that the Jews shook their head, as He died the death of the suffering servant (Ps. 22:7). Despite his own awful situation, with all the self-centeredness which is elicited by extreme physical pain and suffering, Job thinks himself into their very soul, imagining how he would react in their situation. This basic concern for them was turned into reality when God makes Job their saviour in the end.

Job 16:5 but I would strengthen you with my mouth. The solace of my lips would relieve you- We can't be brethren in Christ who have no effect on the rest of the body. We all have an influence on others. Words of our brethren really can strengthen and relieve. Our behaviour, however passive, has a powerful effect on our brethren. We are all members of one body. See on :6. On the contrary, a whole community can be cursed for the sake of one man's sin, even if he later repents (2 Kings 24:3,4). The fact we can be guilty of causing others to stumble means that we can limit God's gracious plan for them. "Strengthen" is exactly what God wanted to do for the exiles in their suffering (s.w. Is. 35:3; 41:10).

Job 16:6 Though I speak, my grief is not subsided. Though I forbear, what am I eased?- "Relieve" in :5 is the same word translated "subside" in :6. Job is therefore pointing out that the words of another can relieve grief in a way that ones' own self-talk simply cannot (Job 16:5,6).

Job 16:7 But now, God, you have surely worn me out- Or, "wearied", the same word used of the weariness of sinful Judah (Jer. 9:5; 12:5; Ez. 24:12). Job was to be read as their representative, although not personally sinful.

You have made desolate all my company- Job had sought comfort from the friends, his "company", but he feels that the lack of comfort from them is also somehow God's testing of him. Those who despair at the lack of comfort from their fellow believers would do well to adopt this perspective; that this too is from God, and as in Job's case in this speech, it is designed to drive us the closer to Him personally.

Job 16:8 You have shrivelled me up. This is a witness against me. My leanness rises up against me. It testifies to my face- Job looked at his body, as the Lord looked upon His own body from His elevated position on the cross (Ps. 22:17). The once fat and full fleshed Job (see on Job 15:27) was now thin and emaciated. Job has absorbed the theology of the friends, to the point he believes that judgment for sin is revealed in a person's body, particularly in the state of their skin / flesh. He considers that his emaciated skin and body is a witness to the fact God considers he has sinned, and has punished him for it. This sets the scene for his desire in Job 19:25-27 for a new body, a body restored.

Job 16:9 He has torn me in His wrath, and persecuted me. He has gnashed on me with His teeth- Job 41:14 speaks of how terrible are the teeth of the creature God has made; but He alone can open the mouth of it and is fearless before its' teeth. The idea

of the connection back to Job 16:9 is that God knows all about teeth. He has designed them, and even if Job thinks God is gnashing at Him like a beast, he must accept that God creates the beast and its teeth.

My adversary sharpens His eyes on me- Job sees God as his adversary / enemy; he understood God to be the Satan. God's eyes often refer to the Angels. For the connection between the Satan and an Angel, see on Job 1:6. Quite possibly Job considers that he is suffering because of the 'evil eye' of the friends; again, they are the Satan. But he fails to consider that God could easily overcome that. In fact it is God's Angel eye that is upon Him. He is responding to Eliphaz's claim that Job has the evil eye (Job 15:12).

Job 16:10 They have gaped on me with their mouth. They have struck me on the cheek reproachfully- The implication could be that the friends not only gaped at him and gathered themselves to him, but also literally struck him on the cheek in rebuke of his words. The exact language of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, the ultimate "suffering servant" (Ps. 22:13; Mic. 5:1). I have earlier suggested that the "friends" morph with the Satan figure, adopting his mentality, and proceed to actually bring some of the sufferings upon Job. Their aggression was to the point of pulling faces and hitting him. Yet they originally came to see him to comfort him, apparently sincerely. This is how far and how quickly a false theological understanding can transform human relationships for the worse. They also spat in his face (see on Job 17:6).

They gather themselves together against me- A reference to the friends gathering themselves together to supposedly comfort Job.

Job 16:11 God delivers me to the ungodly, and casts me into the hands of the wicked- There is reason to think that Eliphaz, the leader of the friends, may have been the specific individual referred to as 'Satan' in the prologue. God singles him out for especial condemnation at the end (Job 42:7). After one of Eliphaz's speeches, Job responds with what appears to be a comment upon him, rather than God, here in :9-11. Eliphaz was a Temanite, from where Job's afflictors came. See on Job 1:6. But Job perceives that God is working through the friends; and his thoughts about them in :9,10 now therefore merge into his thoughts about God, so clearly did He see God working through them. This is a sure example as to how we can see the difficult people in our lives- as used by God. This removes some amount of personal anger with them, even though God is not forcing them to behave as they do, and they will be ultimately accountable for it as the friends were.

Job 16:12 I was at ease, and He broke me apart- The language here is pretty much blasphemous: "I was at ease, and he broke me in two; he seized me by the neck and dashed me to pieces". Job accuses God of random violence, and serious abuse of power. If only he knew the high opinion God had of him, as revealed in the prologue!

There are some very evident ways in which Job spiritually grew. In Job 3:26 he originally says that his life previous to his afflictions had not been a life of ease; but as a result of his suffering, he realized that actually it had been "at ease".

Yes, He has taken me by the neck, and dashed me to pieces- Job perceives God as a lion or beast of prey, taking him off to His lair by the neck and now ripping him apart.

He has also set me up for His target- Like the friends, Job is starting to repeat himself; for he has said this in Job 6:4; 7:20. Eliphaz blames Job's troubles upon the "sons of Resheph" (Job 5:7); but Job's response is that the source of the evil in his life

is ultimately from *God* and not any such being. Eliphaz there speaks of how man's trouble comes "as the sons of Resheph fly upwards". Resheph was known as "the lord of the arrow" and the Ugaritic tablets associate him with archery (William J. Fulco, *The Canaanite God Resep* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1976)). We would therefore be justified in reading in an ellipsis here: man's trouble comes "as the [arrows of] the sons of Resheph fly upwards". Job's response is that "The arrows of *the Almighty* are in me" (Job 6:4), and he laments that God is an archer using him as his target for practice (Job 7:20; 16:12,13). Job refuses to accept Eliphaz's explanation that Job is a victim of Resheph's arrows. For Job, if God is "the Almighty" then there is no space left for Resheph. Each blow he received, each arrow strike, was from God and not Resheph.

Job 16:13 His archers surround me. He splits my kidneys apart, and does not spare. He pours out my gall on the ground- The prophets speak of archers surrounding Zion, and the language of gall and kidneys spilled on the ground is that of Jeremiah in Lamentations reflecting on the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians. God was to threaten His sinful people that He would "not spare" (Jer. 13:14; Lam. 2:2). He finally did, in His grace. Job has earlier hinted that God would have a tender desire to the work of his hands at the end (Job 14:15), but in his weakness he has for now lost that perspective. And yet at this very nadir of faith and understanding, he becomes the representative of God's people who felt He had not spared them.

"And does not spare" is literally "without pity". Surely this is alluded to in James 5:11. In Job we see that in "the end of the Lord", He is in fact "very pitiful and of tender mercy". Again we have Job wrong. And this is yet another outburst he later has to repent of. Just as Joseph appeared hard to his brothers whilst having a heart that broke and wept for them, so is God with man.

Job 16:14 He breaks me with blow after blow. He runs on me like a giant- LXX "They...", as if Job saw God manifest in the abusers. This was the situation in the Babylonian overthrow of Judah. Just as Eliphaz had exaggerated Job's position to the point of accusing him of running upon God as a charging soldier (Job 15:26), so Job now makes the same mistake and does the same, exaggerating positions and extrapolating to make God like a giant charging at him. This was not at all the case. But once one party in a dialogue starts distorting things grossly, the partner in the dialogue tends to do the same in other contexts. And this is a lesson for us today.

It was so hard for Job to accept that God and not any orthodox 'Satan' figure was his adversary. It's one thing to deduce from the Bible that both good and disaster comes from the Lord, as per Is. 45:5–7. It's of course quite another to accept it in real life, and Job is an inspiring example. Job 16:9–14 is so powerful – the poetry speaks of Job's awesome and even angry realization that *God* is in fact [in a sense] his enemy / adversary. "Here Job... identifies God as his enemy rather than his advocate. From his perspective he is led to wonder if the God in whom he trusted is not in reality his Satan" (J.E. Hartley, *The Book of Job* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) p. 30). See on Job 19:26.

Job 16:15 I have sewed sackcloth on my skin- The language of the Messianic Ps. 69:11 about the suffering of the Lord Jesus. Sinful Israel were called to do this in repentance (Jer. 6:26); they refused to do so, and so they were covered with sackcloth at the time of their judgment (Lam. 2:10). Job was sorry for himself, and didn't use

sackcloth as a sign of repentance but of self pity. This was to be transformed at the end when he really repents unconditionally.

And have thrust my horn in the dust- His horn may refer to his reproductive organ, so desperate was he to express his grief.

Job 16:16 My face is red with weeping. Deep darkness is on my eyelids- "On my eyelids is the shadow of death" (Job 16:16 AV). Job felt he was facing death right before his eyes, and the shadow of that death was cast over his eyes. But God disagrees, challenging Job that he has not in fact seen "the doors of the shadow of death" (Job 38:17 s.w.). Job had only seen death from a personal, human perspective. God sees death for what it really is, and it is far more terrible than man perceives. For from God's perspective it carries with it the tragedy of the eternity which a man has missed, if he has rejected God. And God is saying that Job hasn't see death from that perspective.

Job 16:17 Although there is no violence in my hands, and my prayer is pure- Job oscillates between accepting he has sinned, and protesting his innocence. The final appearance of God leads him to the unqualified conclusion that he is indeed a sinner, and this was God's intended outcome for the exiles in captivity. Job's oscillation however is understandable once we perceive that he is being set up as representative of God's sinful people, represented by the friends. He is suffering the judgment for sins when he himself is innocent, pointing forward to the Lord's representative sacrifice.

The Hebrew phrase translated "not for any violence" occurs only once elsewhere- in the prophecy of the suffering servant who "had done no violence" (Is. 53:9). The suffering servant of later Isaiah is without doubt based upon Job, who was repeatedly called "My servant" and highly praised by God (Job 1:8; 2:3; 7:2), just as God praised "My servant" in Is. 42:1-4. Both Job and the suffering servant are declared "righteous" by God (Is. 42:6).

Isaiah's servant figure represented both Israel, and the Lord Jesus, who was their representative. That servant figure is presented as weak and fallible, blind and deaf, as Israel were; but the servant is also the Lord Jesus, who was perfect but also totally representative of weak Israel. He thus became the way to their salvation. Job was counted perfect to start with, but throughout the dialogues he blasphemes and says many wrong things; but at the end he repents, and his prayer results in the salvation of the friends. He shared their wrong views and attitudes, but was seen as perfect; he was their representative. The Lord Jesus didn't sin, unlike Job. But He likewise identifies with us so that we may identify with Him, in baptism and in a life lived in Him. And so the blaspheming, cursing Job is at the very same time the representative of the Lord Jesus, the suffering servant; and through his sufferings, his people [= the friends] are saved. This is all God's intricate and amazingly achieved work. The connections between Job and Isaiah's suffering servant are worth listing:

- "Surely the justice due to me is with Yahweh, and my reward with my God" (Is. 49:4,5) is so often the language and argument of Job

- The servant was considered "stricken" of God ["yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted", Is. 53:4; "stricken for the disobedience of My people", Is. 53:8], just as Job was (Job 19:21)

Job was considered to have been chastised by God (Job 5:17); the same word used of the servant's "chastisement" ("the chastisement of our peace was upon him", Is. 53:5).

- Job was “despised” by his people (Job 19:18) was the Lord (Is. 53:3) by brethren. They “forgot” him and 'stayed away' from him (Job 19:13,14); as God's people “hid their faces” from the servant (Is. 53:3).
- The buffeting / smiting of Job upon the cheek implied by Job 16:10 is what they did to the suffering servant, who was also smitten on the cheek (Is. 50:6; 53:4).
- They spat in the face of the servant (Is. 50:6); the Hebrew word is used only of Job and the suffering servant: "They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face” (Job 30:10; 17:6, RSV).
- Job suffered “not for any violence” in his hands (Job 16:17); and the phrase is only used elsewhere of the suffering servant suffering not for any violence: “because he had done no violence” (Is. 53:9).
- Job's prayer was pure (Job 16:17); just as there was no guile found in the mouth of the servant (Is. 53:9).
- Men were astonished / appalled at Job's sufferings (Job 17:8); as they were at those of the servant (Is. 52:14 s.w.)
- Job's "Who will contend with me?" (Job 13:19) is the very same question posed by the suffering servant (Is. 50:8)
- The "travail" of the soul of the suffering servant (Is. 53:11) is the word used for Job's toil / travail (Job 7:3).

We naturally enquire why the blaspheming Job during the time of his sufferings should be made such a detailed type of the sinless Lord Jesus. But more correctly, Isaiah's suffering servant is being constructed upon the image and language of the suffering, sinful Job. The servant in Isaiah is indeed the Lord Jesus; but the same servant is frequently criticized as sinful, blind, deaf, dumb- a useless messenger who doesn't do what his master asks. The servant is sinful Israel. But the servant is also the Lord Jesus; in that in His death, He totally represented and identified with sinful Israel, supremely in His death on the cross. And there, He was identified with Job *during Job's time of suffering*. Which was when the otherwise righteous Job was at his lowest point spiritually, blaspheming God, falsely accusing God... And this is the wonderful thing about the Lord's death. There He identified not simply with "us" and the people of God generally, but specifically with us *at our very lowest points, in the depth of our sins, at the nadir of our spirituality*. We find all this hard to grasp, because we naturally move away from obnoxious people, those who speak or act badly toward us. And we might possibly resume the relationship when they treat us better. God's movement is quite the other way- toward us, to save us. Just as a parent walking with a child will show the child far more attention when they stumble and fall, than when they are walking calmly and sensibly. It's the Footprints in the Sand poem...

Job 16:18 Earth, don't cover my blood- The crying out of blood means he is apparently appealing to God for justice and the revenge of his wrongly shed blood (as in Dt. 21:1-9), in that he thinks he is about to die and his death will be unjust and a case of murder. But he considers God to be a murderous monster, who is slaying him. His appeal is therefore to someone other than God, to investigate his death and take vengeance on God. And the wrongful shedding of blood had to be punished by death- he wanted God punished with death. How blasphemous is that... That being he appeals to is the "witness" he fantasizes about in :19; the one he fantasized about in Job 9:32,33, who was higher than both God and himself, who could place his hand upon both God and man, acting as an "umpire" between God and man (Job 9:33). The

language of "umpire" suggests Job considered God was not playing by the rules and was unfairly winning against him...

Here he seems to associate himself with unfairly persecuted Abel, whose blood cried out for justice (Gen. 4:10). And yet he earlier compares his seeking of death and not finding it, as a marked man, with the judgment of Cain. He feels he is being treated as Cain when he is in fact as Abel. This is exactly what happened to the Lord in hearing our sins. See on Job 11:15.

Let my cry have no place to rest- Job makes the amazing comment: "Although He slays me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15). The language of 'slaying' takes us back to the Mosaic commands about how a 'slayer' of a man might be killed by the 'avenger of blood'. Job saw God as slaying him; yet he also sees God as the 'witness' in the case (Job 16:19), and the avenger of Job's blood (Job 19:25). Job even asks God to not let the earth cover his blood, so that God as the avenger of Job's blood may avenge Job's death, continuing the allusions to the avenger of blood scenario. Job feels he is innocent blood. Job does *not* see 'Satan' as his slayer, and God as the avenger of his blood. Instead Job – in a quite breathtaking set of associations – sees God in all these things: the slayer, the legal witness to the slayer, the avenger of blood, and the One who will enforce the doing of justice in this case, the One who will not let the earth cover Job's blood. If Job really believed in a superhuman Satan, in Satan as the bad guy and God as the avenger of the injustice, he surely would've expressed himself differently. As Job imagines God as it were taking vengeance on Himself, so he came to portray for all time the way that evil and good are indeed both ultimately from God.

Job 16:19 Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven. He who vouches for me is on high- See on :18. Job in his depths came to know God as his "witness in heaven"; in his former life, "when the eye saw me, it gave witness [s.w.] to me" (Job 29:11). But Job was brought to learn that the only ultimate witness in life is God, and it is His testimony and not man's which is meaningful.

However, the witness in Heaven who is on Job's side in Job 16:10 could be another reference to the redeemer / advocate or negotiator that Job had dreamt of having in Job 9 and who he more strongly believes in by the time of Job 19. "He who vouches for me" is rendered "advocate" (NASB), "he who testifies for me" (ESV). He speaks of this person in Job 16:21: "that he [the witness in heaven] would maintain the right of a man with God, of a son of man with his neighbour!". We could translate Job 16:20 as referring to this mediator: "my eyes pour out tears to God; on behalf of a man he pleads with God as one pleads for a friend"; NIV "My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend". Such an entity is clearly not God Himself, because Job imagines this person maintaining Job's "right" with God. He views God very negatively, so the witness in Heaven "who vouches for me on high" is not God, but this imagined, hoped for person. Job fantasized about such a person "like me" in Job 9:32-35: "For there is not a person like me to whom I could answer: "let us come together in judgment." Would that there were an umpire between us who would lay his hand on the two of us, taking from upon me His [God's] rod and not allowing His dread to terrify me. I would speak and not be afraid of him [the imagined umpire]". But in Job 16, Job seems more positive about the existence of this being. And Job appears to have the same person in view in Job 19:25: "I know that my redeemer lives: and finally he will stand upon the earth...". Job is very negative about God, but very positive about this personal "redeemer", who is "my" personal redeemer. The

redeemer is not God, but this imagined "umpire", thanks to whom Job believes that he will somehow see God's face despite being "in the flesh". GNB of Job 19:25-27 makes this clearer: "I know there is someone in heaven who will come at last to my defense [a legal term; he has in view the court of Heaven]. [And therefore, because of this "someone"] even after my skin is eaten by disease, while still in this body I will see God. I will see him with my own eyes, and he will not be a stranger". Job's image of this being develops; from an "umpire" in Job 9:33, to a passionate mediator / interceder (Job 16:18-21), to a redeemer and saviour in Job 19:25-27. Yet Job's belief in this imaginary interceder for him before a monster of a God seems to have receded again by Job 31:35, when Job again laments: "Oh that I had one to hear me!".

Elihu appears to say that such an intermediary is indeed the way to rightness with God: "If God has by Him an ambassador, a mediator, one of the thousand, to declare to man what is right for him, and [then] He [God] is merciful to him [man], and says, 'Deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom' (Job 33:23,24). The Hebrew is difficult, but the idea seems to be that Elihu suggests that indeed there may be such a mediator "by" God, at His right hand in Heaven, who could save Job- with the possible implication that it is him. We are intentionally left wondering about Elihu. God makes no use of him in reconciling Job to Himself. Job wanted a witness and advocate in the court of heaven, to try to get God back on Job's side. But we know from the prologue what went on in the court of heaven- God was totally "for" Job anyway. Job didn't have the Lord Jesus in view, and God engaged with Job directly, without mediation. But the fantasies of Job about such a person, and Elihu's confirmation of the details, all lead us naturally to think of the Lord Jesus. What Job so desperately wanted, even though he himself didn't actually need this person- we have, in the Lord Jesus. The advocate for Job in the heavenly court was in fact none other than God Himself, as we readers know from the prologue. God was not in fact angry with Job and in need of an advocate to somehow placate Him and make Him see sense. But all the same, despite in a sense not 'needing' such an advocate- it is what we want. Before the work of the Lord Jesus, God still saved men like Job even though there was no advocate like the Lord Jesus. But what we see from Job is the human desire for such an intercessor. And so even that has been provided in the Lord Jesus, who ticks all the boxes of Job's desires and wish list for a qualified mediator. He is the "faithful witness" in Heaven whom Job dreamed of (Rev. 1:5; 3:14).

Job again dreams of this figure in Job 23:7: "There the righteous one might reason with Him, so I should be delivered forever from my judge [i.e. God]". "The upright / righteous one" is the imaginary advocate Job fantasized of having. "There the upright *might* reason" suggests now Job again recognizes that in fact this figure doesn't exist. Likewise in Job 17:3 he feels he has absolutely nobody to take his side before God: "I am being honest, God. Accept my word. There is no one else to support what I say" (GNB). He dreams that this person might be able to eternally save him from his judge, i.e. God. He entertains the old popular [but wrong] idea of an angry God who is placated by an advocate. And then accepts he is fantasizing. Such fantasy is quite psychologically credible for someone enduring extreme suffering as Job was.

Job 16:20 My friends scoff at me. My eyes pour out tears to God- The emphasis is upon "God"; he had poured out his tears to the friends and they had scoffed at him. So his experience of disillusion with his brethren didn't turn him away from God, as so often happens; instead it drove him to throw himself more intimately upon his God.

Job 16:21 that He would maintain the right of a man with God, of a son of man with his neighbour!- Job sees his enemy as his "neighbour", surely referring to the friends. Again we have the hint that they had effectively morphed into the satan figure bringing some of the actual distresses upon him. Job felt like having a court case with them before God. But God's final appearance is to hold a court case against them all, Job included. Clearly the lesson is that instead of judging our brother and wanting justice established with him, we should concern ourselves with God's judgment of us, and our injustice before Him.

Maintaining the right is legal language. Job appeals for 'witnesses' (Job 9:33–35; 16:18–22; 19:20–27), an advocate in Heaven (Job 9:33), denies his guilt and demands a legal list of his sins (Job 13:19), he wishes for God to come to trial (Job 9:3), and thus Job is described as a man who has taken out a 'case' with God (Job 23:4; 40:2). Job 29–31 is effectively Job's declaration of legal innocence and an appeal to God to hear his case more sympathetically (Job 31:35). And of course God pronounces a final legal verdict at the very end (Job 42:7), in response to Job's earlier plea: "Sleeplessly I wait for His reply" (Job 16:22). It's as if the whole experience of Job was [at least partly] in order to test out the Canaanite theories of 'Satan', suffering and evil in the court of Heaven; and also the various theories which arose to explain Judah's captivity in Babylon. The friends represent the traditional views of evil, and often make reference to the myths of their day about 'Satan' figures. They speak as if *they* are the final court – Eliphaz speaks of how the judges and elders of their day, the "holy ones", had concluded Job was guilty, and that they, the friends, were right: "To which of the holy ones will you appeal [legal language]?... we have [legally] examined this, and it [Job's guilt] is true" (Job 5:1,27). This is of great comfort to those who feel misjudged by man – above them in Heaven the ultimate Heavenly court is considering our case, and that is all that matters.

AV "Oh that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbour!". "Plead" is the same word translated "umpire" in Job 9:33. The word suggests 'one who is right', a reasoner, an advocate, one who pleads, a reprover (Job 40:2 s.w.). Job's request is not simply for a mediator; he would have used a different word if so. He seems to want to put God in the dock, but knows this is not appropriate; he wants someone else to do this who can legitimately do it. And he is rebuked for this in Job 40:2: "He that reproves / pleads with God, let him answer it!". And Job could not answer; indeed, "let him answer it!" could be a legal summons to Job to answer before the court of heaven. "Oh that one might plead..." (AV) is perhaps Job returning to his recognition that his desire for this 'pleader', this "umpire", is just fantasy. He actually didn't have such a person in Heaven. But we do... in the Lord Jesus. Job dreamed of an advocate who could plead with God for him, as a man pleads for his neighbour / friend. And indeed, what a friend we have in Jesus... He pleads for us because we are His friends. "I say to you my friends... You are my friends... No longer do I call you servants... but I have called you friends" (Lk. 12:4; Jn. 15:14,15).

Job 16:22 For when a few years have come, I shall go the way of no return- This may be a purposeful challenge to the statements of Eliphaz in the previous chapter, that Job is about to be smitten with death at any moment. Job instead gives himself a few years. We note that Job directly engages with the words of the friends, whereas they attack him in terms of vague generalities

JOB CHAPTER 17

Job 17:1 My spirit is consumed. My days are extinct, and the grave is ready for me- LXX "I seek for burial, and obtain it not". To have no burial and to have their corpse thrown on the open field was the very punishment several times threatened to Judah's leadership. Again Job oscillates; in Job 16:22 he has just given himself a few years, but now within the same speech he considers himself already as without spirit and at death's door. This is typical of a depressed sufferer, and confirms that there was a historical Job who suffered these things.

Job 17:2 Surely there are mockers with me. My eye dwells on their provocation- Even in deep illness, a man can still dwell on the unkind words of others. This is one lesson of Job- the power of words. LXX "strangers have stolen my goods", also relevant to the captivity at the hands of Babylon. This further confirms the idea that the satan figure of the prologue has morphed into the friends, and it was they personally who brought some of the sufferings upon him.

Job 17:3 Now give a pledge, be collateral for me with Yourself. Who is there who will strike hands with me?- The person in view is clearly God, as :4 continues to address Him. To strike hands is parallel with giving a pledge as in Prov. 6:1. Job is here inviting God to enter court with him, and to pay a pledge, a kind of caution money required before the court sits, in case He is indeed found guilty. And that bond money is to be God Himself. This is indeed arrogant of Job. He is asking God to stake His very own Divine self, all He stands for, and risk losing it if Job is right. When God finally appears in judgment, Job is quite rightly humbled. But for all this arrogance of a moment, it is the friends whom God condemns and justifies Job. We cannot justify arrogance or sins of depression or hot blood, they remain as sins. But we notice, we are forced to notice, that God passes over them in Job's case and sees the man's core devotion to Him. It is the arrogance and lies of the friends, their hatred of their brother, which is to Him so hard to forgive unless, as it were, He has the 'help' of Job in forgiving them himself and praying to Him for their restoration. We learn so very much from all this.

GNB: "I am being honest, God. Accept my word. There is no one else to support what I say". He feels, as his baseline position, that he has no advocate in Heaven. He dreamed and fantasized of one, but such a person wasn't there. See on Job 16:9.

Job 17:4 For You have hidden their heart from understanding, therefore You shall not exalt them- Job considers the friends have been stopped from understanding the real facts and truths about Job's case, because God doesn't want to exalt them. God can indeed close eyes of understanding, but He does so in response to the attitudes of the people concerned; just as He hardened Pharaoh's already hardened heart. We see that God is capable of working directly upon the mind of man, to give or take understanding.

In Job's first four replies to the friends, he at times addresses God directly. Here in Job 17:4 we have the last example of this; in his next four replies, he never addresses God directly. Perhaps we see him slipping away from his personal relationship with God, going down the rabbit holes of overthinking and endless introspection without looking up to God. All that is ended when God speaks to Job directly, and refuses to let him refuse to answer Him. And this is the pattern of us all in various periods and moments of our life with God.

Job 17:5 He who denounces his friends for a prey, even the eyes of his children shall fail- Perhaps the idea is that in the envisioned court case of :3, Job is not going to denounce the friends before God. Job may here be quoting a proverb known at the time. Job is angry with the friends in his speeches, but has a basic desire to save them and not to see them dragged by him into court for condemnation. This basic desire to save people needs to be in us too, and if it is, as with Job at the end (Job 42:7,8), then God will use us to save people. This is what is so essential in all evangelism; technique and evangelism materials may be as perfect as man can make them, but without this basic desire to save others, it is all useless.

GNB "In the old proverb someone betrays his friends for money, and his children suffer for it. And now people use this proverb against me; they come and spit in my face".

Job 17:6 But He has made me a byword of the people. They spit in my face- The friends have earlier been accused of striking Job (see on Job 16:10), and the "they" here refers likewise to the friends (:5). They were so furious with him that they spat in his face, thereby again connecting him with the future sufferings of the Lord Jesus, the suffering servant after the pattern of Job. Their aggression was to the point of spitting at and hitting him. Yet they originally came to see him to comfort him, apparently sincerely. This is how far and how quickly a false theological understanding can transform human relationships for the worse. LXX brings out the application to the exiles, using the very phrase often used of Judah in exile: "You made me a byword among the nations".

Job 17:7 My eye also is dim by reason of sorrow. All my members are as a shadow- Failing eyesight appears to also have been experienced by the Lord on the cross. "Shadow" is literally a shade, and is very often used in the sense of giving shade and comfort to others. Through his sufferings, Job was to become a shade for salvation to the friends who were abusing him, just as the Lord achieved for His enemies through His crucifixion.

Job 17:8 Upright men shall be astonished at this. The innocent shall stir up himself against the godless- This matches the astonishment of the Jews at the ghastly physical appearance of Christ on the cross (Is. 52:14). Job begins to have the sense that his sufferings are somehow for the sake of others; and this is revealed as the key to his suffering, as an innocent man suffering as if he has committed sins he hasn't, so that he might thereby become a representative saviour. Just as the Lord Jesus did, to a far greater extent. So now he muses that his sufferings will stir up other innocent people to action. He is starting to come towards the climax of the book, when he is asked to pray for and intercede to save the friends (Job 42:7,8).

Job 17:9 Yet shall the righteous hold on to his way. He who has clean hands shall grow stronger and stronger- Job has been lamenting the decline of his physical health, to the point he feels he is now facing death (:11). But he has held on to his way spiritually and insists he has clean hands. So he knows that at some future point, he must "grow stronger and stronger". This implies a resurrection. See on :17.

Job 17:10 But as for you all, come on now again; I shall not find a wise man among you- Paul alludes to these words in lamenting that there was not found a wise man

amongst the church at Corinth, who could correctly judge his brother (1 Cor. 6:5). This is an identical context- the friends couldn't judge their brother Job rightly because they were themselves morally compromised and lacked wisdom. We can infer that Paul understood Job to mean that there was not a wise man amongst the friends *to judge him rightly*. For that is how Paul uses this quotation.

Job 17:11 My days are past, my plans are broken off, as are the thoughts of my heart- The word for "plans" is not the Hebrew word which would be used if "plans" were simply meant. In nearly all of the other 28 occurrences of the word in the Old Testament, the word means "wickedness" or "lewdness". Job again moves closer towards the final confession of sin he will make, and away from his earlier self righteousness. He seems to be saying that death will finally end his sin, because his sin is parallel with his thoughts, and they will perish at death. Or it could be that he was so carrying the guilt of others, as their sin bearer, that he feels a wicked sinner when in fact he wasn't; just as the Lord was to carry the sin of His people in Himself on the cross. The difference of course was that although Job is presented as "perfect" before God in Job 1:1, he was not Jesus, and he had sinned, and he minimized that sin- until the final appearance of God elicits this realization from him.

Job 17:12 They change the night into day, saying 'The light is near' in the presence of darkness- The argument was that because Job was in darkness, then light had to come soon; whereas Job felt he was about to die, before the dawn broke (:11,13). The friends never deploy this argument; Job is transferring his own thoughts onto the friends, and then knocking down the argument. And they then do just the same to him (see on Job 18:3). This again is an example to us of what happens when dialogue goes wrong. The whole dialogues are a masterful example to us in this respect. The restoration prophets again seize upon Job's words here and reframe them; the darkness of the exile was indeed to soon end in the day of Zion's glad morning of restoration. And so it happened with Job.

Job 17:13 If I look for Sheol as my house, if I have spread my couch in the darkness- Job was lying on a couch (Job 7:13), and felt that he was already lying in the darkness of the grave. The deserted house he was lying in (see on Job 15:28) was effectively *sheol*, the grave, for him.

Job 17:14 if I have said to corruption, 'You are my father'; to the worm, 'My mother', and 'my sister' - Job felt he was in a living death and therefore the idea that hope was just around the corner (12,15) was meaningless, because death had already come effectively, and he felt as if already in *sheol*.

Job 17:15 where then is my hope? As for my hope, who shall see it?-

This firm rejection of any future hope is Job's baseline position. His expressions of future hope elsewhere are his fantasies. The wonderful thing is that his fantasies about a future hope, justice, reconciliation with God etc. were all wonderfully true. God will do for this man exceeding abundantly above all he thought or dreamed of.

Job believed as a baseline position that all man has is this life; he therefore considered that he had lost all hope of ever having his blessings returned, and therefore his life was over. Originally, Job believed that his "hope" was predicated upon his upright ways (Job 4:6). But Job through his sufferings comes to feel he now has no "hope" (Job 7:6; 14:19; 17:15; 19:10). The friends suggest that Job had only

the "hope" of the hypocrite, and this "hope" would perish (Job 4:6; 8:13; 27:8). Job had integrity, and on that basis he thought he had "hope". He suffered, and he lost that "hope", because he assumed that his sufferings meant that he was not in fact righteous. And yet he often reflects that he is righteous and is suffering unjustly. And so he is led to the realization that the "hope" of the righteous is by God's grace and not because of the "integrity of [Job's] ways". Judah in captivity likewise lost their "hope" (Ez. 19:5; 37:11). But the message of the restoration prophets was that "there *is* hope in your end" (Jer. 31:17); they were prisoners or exiles in "hope" (Zech. 9:12).

Job 17:16 Shall it go down with me to the gates of Sheol, or descend together into the dust?- Job saw *sheol* as death, the grave, the time of turning back to dust. And he felt he could take no hope with him there. Here again we have Job at the low point of his oscillation between believing in a resurrection, as he does in :9 and often, and yet denying it. Or at best, placing it under serious question. But for all his fluctuating faith and spirituality, he is the one justified in the end; and the self confident friends are condemned. We learn at least that perfectly consistent maintenance of faith and hope is not necessary for God to impute righteousness and save us by grace. Job is rightly condemned at the end and does repent, but the up points of his faith cycle are noted by God.

JOB CHAPTER 18

Job 18:1 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered- Bildad doesn't even engage with Job's words after briefly doing so in :4, but rather just vents his anger in this speech, threatening Job with all manner of condemnation; and the longer he rants on, the more convinced he becomes that Job is "wicked" and doesn't know God (:5,21). This is the problem when we don't engage with the words and arguments of another, or pay mere lip service to doing so; we can fall headlong into a feeding frenzy of angry accusation, resulting in doing what God condemns- condemning our brother, imputing sin rather than righteousness to a person we have created in our own minds, who merely bears the name of the one who began merely with a theological difference with us.

Job 18:2 How long will you hunt for words? Consider, and afterwards we will speak- This again is imputing to Job an image which the friends like to assume he has, rather than engaging with what he has actually said. Job appears to be blurting out his feelings, not hunting for words to say.

Job 18:3 Why are we counted as animals, which have become unclean in your sight?- Again as noted on :2, this is a case of attacking a straw man image of an opponent. For Job has not treated them as animals. They have themselves proclaimed all men as "unclean" by birth (Job 15:14), and yet they decide Job has called them unclean, and they object to it. But as Job transfers his feelings back onto the friends in Job 17:12, so they are doing the same to him. They may posit that all men are unclean, including themselves; but if Job is even supposed to have said this, then he is to be condemned. This again is an example to us of what happens when dialogue goes wrong. The dialogues begin and end with Job and the friends in silence. The implication is that all that was said had been not said. The silence at the start and the end would have been more noticeable if indeed "Job" was initially a drama, a play for voices.

Job 18:4 You who tear yourself in your anger, shall the earth be forsaken for you? Or shall the rock be removed out of its place?- This is the only point in this speech where Bildad makes any attempt to engage with the actual words of Job; see on :1. And he quickly moves on to generalize about Job as a wicked person for the rest of his speech. In any case, he is only superficially engaging with Job's words. Job has said that he felt as if God were tearing him apart like a wild beast (Job 16:9); but Bildad twists this, or simply misremembers it, to Job saying that he was tearing himself apart. Job has argued that the process of erosion wears down the greatest mountains and removes them (Job 14:18,19), and so likewise the strongest man is eventually worn down to dust. But Bildad denies this; perhaps he was ignorant of the process of erosion, and considered it bunk science. For him, present realities are all that count. Mountains aren't removed, in his experience. And yet they are, by faith (Mt. 17:20); and the great mountain which God would surely remove was Babylon, and He would establish the mountain of His restored people and Kingdom in Zion (Zech. 4:7; Dan. 2:45). The exiles disbelieved this, and thus were like Bildad, seeing only what was immediately before their own eyes. Bildad considered that the *eretz* ("land") could never be "forsaken"; but that is just what happened. The very phrase is used of the land being forsaken, because God's people had forsaken Him (Lev. 26:43). The hope of the restoration prophets was that the land would no longer be forsaken (Is. 62:4). But just as Bildad considered such a thing impossible, so God's people had done. Again, Job is presented as the righteous remnant amongst the exiles, and the friends as the generally unbelieving exiles who were finally intended to be saved by the prayers of the remnant.

Job 18:5 Yes, the light of the wicked shall be put out, the spark of his fire shall not shine- Much of Bildad's condemnation of Job in :5-21 appears to be taken from the "wisdom of the Beni Kedem", the children of the east (1 Kings 4:30). Bildad has decided Job is sinful and very wicked, because of the extent of his sufferings. And he brings in now descriptions of the wicked man taken from other sources. Through these allusions and quotations, he is lead to yet further condemn and slander Job.

Job will later respond that his experience is otherwise: "How seldom does the lamp of the wicked fail, nor does the calamity they deserve befall them" (Job 21:17). Both Bildad and Job are appealing to human experience. And that yields no answer to the question of Job's suffering.

Job 18:6 The light shall be dark in his tent. His lamp above him shall be put out- Light becoming dark is exactly the phrase used about the judgment coming upon Judah (Is. 5:10; 13:10; Jer. 13:16). Indeed this had happened to Job, but insofar as he was representing God's people who were to suffer this.

Job 18:7 The steps of his strength shall be shortened. His own counsel shall cast him down- An oblique reference to the way Job was apparently dying before his time, with a shortened life. Here we have another connection between Job and Hezekiah, who had the same experience, but like Job was restored out of it. Yet Hezekiah didn't make use of that restoration, just as the exiles didn't.

Job 18:8 For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he wanders into its mesh- I noted on :5 that Bildad has concluded that Job is wicked because of the extent of his sufferings; and he begins quoting or alluding to standard condemnations of the wicked

from the wisdom of the east. And this leads him to ever more falsely accuse Job. For it was simply not so that Job was falling into his own trap. For he had lived justly and uprightly before his trials (Job 1:1). If only Bildad knew the prologue! God insisted that Job suffered "without cause". One reason why we are not to judge is that we really cannot judge. Situations may appear one way, when from Heaven God sees them quite differently, and indeed, the opposite.

Job 18:9 A snare will take him by the heel. A trap will catch him- I noted on :8 that this idea that Job had fallen into his own snare was totally untrue. But it was how he was judged and considered by men. In this respect, he was completely identified with the sins of Israel, who indeed fell into their own snare (Is. 8:14; 24:17,18; Hos. 5:1). He was a representative figure.

Job 18:10 A noose is hidden for him in the ground, a trap for him in the way- Jeremiah alludes to this in complaining that the Jews had hid snares for him (Jer. 18:22). He often alludes to Job and saw himself as Job- persecuted by his own people, whom he vainly tried to reform.

Job 18:11 Terrors shall make him afraid on every side, and shall chase him at his heels- This looks ahead to Jerusalem, represented by Job, surrounded on every side by her enemies. The "terrors" are imagined to be demon-like figures under the control of "the king of terrors" (s.w., :14). As noted on :14, this wrong idea is being deconstructed.

Job 18:12 His strength shall be famished. Calamity shall be ready at his side- The destruction of Jerusalem by famine may be in view, prefigured by Job being so hungry that he had to beg for bread (see on Job 15:23).

Job 18:13 The members of his body shall be devoured. The firstborn of death shall devour his members- The phrase recalls the destroying Angel who destroyed the Egyptians and would have also destroyed the Israelite firstborn were it not for the blood of the Passover lamb. The Satan figure was associated with an obedient Divine angel who brought the trials upon Job (see on Job 1:6). "Devour" is the same Hebrew word used of how Job's wealth was "consumed" by Divine fire (Job 1:16). Again, Job is representative of an apostate Israel who likewise had their members (s.w. "branches") devoured by the fire of Divine judgment (s.w. Ez. 19:14; Hos. 11:6).

Job 18:14 He shall be rooted out of his tent where he trusts. He shall be brought to the king of terrors- Rashi "He shall be torn away from his wife, she will cause him to walk and will send him away (from her) to the grave, to the king of the demons". The next verse, "There shall dwell in his tent that which is none of his", would then mean that his wife would remarry, and the new husband would live in Job's tent. We can suppose that this was not an unrealistic prediction of how things were with her...

Significantly, it is the friends who make allusion to the 'Satan' figures and gods as if they are real, whereas Job in his responses always denies their reality and sees God as the direct source of His sufferings. Bildad speaks of how Job's troubles are to be associated with "the king of terrors"; Eliphaz blames them upon the "sons of Resheph" (Job 5:7); but Job's response is that the source of the evil in his life is ultimately from *God* and not any such being. See on Job 5:7. The Bible personifies

death as a person; that is the king of terrors (Ps. 49:14; Is. 28:15), rather than the superhuman being of the friends' imagination.

Job 18:15 There shall dwell in his tent that which is none of his. Sulphur shall be scattered on his habitation- Living in early times, the friends were likely aware of the fate of Sodom. Job's children and wealth had been destroyed by Divine fire, just as Sodom was, and perhaps sulphur was also used. God's sinful people are likewise identified with Sodom (Is. 1:10; Ez. 16:46; Am. 4:11), the destruction of Jerusalem was seen as that of Sodom (Lam. 4:6), just as the friends here identify Job with Sodom.

Job 18:16 His roots shall be dried up beneath. Above shall his branch be cut off-

The context is the claim that the wicked are left with no family and no descendants. This leads Job to dream of having a kinsman redeemer in Job 19, someone who would continue his name. The theme of 'drying up' or 'withering' is significant. Bildad considers Job to have been 'dried up' by God's judgment (Job 8:12), and the word is used of how God withered or dried up Judah at the hands of their invaders (Jer. 12:4; 23:10; Ez. 17:9,10,24; Zech. 11:17; Lam. 4:8; Is. 40:7,8- although the prophetic word of God requiring their restoration would endure, despite their drying up). The dry bones of Judah in captivity were withered or dried up (Ez. 37:11). So Job's 'drying up' was again, a sharing in the representative suffering of God's people. Job's personal response to his 'drying up' was to reflect that God dries up waters and also sends them forth as floods (Job 12:15 s.w.); He can give and He can take, just as Job had initially realized (Job 2:10). Just as He dried up Job / Israel, so He could abundantly send forth waters; just as He did at the Red Sea. Restoration and salvation was just as easy for Him as destruction, to put it another way. The drying up of Job was also understood by him as referring to his death (Job 14:11), but God could raise him from the dead and have a desire to him again (Job 14:15). Eliphaz wrongly argues that the Divine 'drying up' of a person means permanent extinction (Job 15:30), as does Bildad (Job 18:16); but Job always sees the 'drying up' as part of a Divine action which also has a counterpart, the pouring out again of waters, or resurrection of the dried up, withered bones. Likewise Judah in captivity thought that their drying up, their dry bones, were incapable of revival (Ez. 37:11); but the message is that they could indeed be revived, and their drying up was but a presage to their eternal revival.

This connects with the thought of Job's words in Job 14:8: "Though its root grows old in the earth, and its stock dies in the ground". "Earth" is *eretz*, the land (of Israel). If merely "soil" was intended, a different word would have been used. Again, we see the drama of Job has been tweaked, under Divine inspiration, to become the narrative for the exiles. The root had indeed largely died in the land at the time of the Babylonian invasion, but it still had some life and would "bud" again (Job 14:9). Job was the man with great roots who had been cut down but hadn't completely died (Job 8:17); his roots had been dried up (Job 18:16; 29:19). He represented Judah, whose roots were throughout the land as a tree transplanted by God (s.w. Ps. 80:9). Those roots were withered by the invasions (Is. 5:24), but out of those dry roots would grow up a "tender plant / branch" (Is. 11:1,10; 53:2), using the same word for "tender" as in Job 14:7. This Messianic suffering servant was to be based upon Job, and representative of all God's restored people. They were to again spread their roots in the land of promise in a restored Kingdom (Is. 37:31; Jer. 17:8), after the pattern of Job's restoration.

Job 18:17 His memory shall perish from the earth. He shall have no name in the street- This was the most awful fate for an oriental sheikh or leader. Is. 26:14 uses this language about Babylon, who initially refused to let the Jews return. Bildad's idea was that Job would have a shameful death, his name forgotten and his body just cast out with no decent burial. He was lying on the ash heap outside the city where the garbage was burnt, and he would die there and his body likewise be burnt. All this is picked up by Job in his fantasy that although this would be the case, he might have a kinsman redeemer in Heaven who would somehow reverse that shame by getting his body resurrected in glory; see on Job 19:24.

Job 18:18 He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world- The idea of being driven away into darkness is that of condemnation, as is used of the driving of God's condemned people into exile (Is. 8:22; Jer. 23:12). Again, Job suffered the condemnation of the wicked without being wicked as charged. And just as the Lord's death made Him be perceived as an accursed criminal, although He was innocent, so the friends' judgments of Job made him appear "wicked" when he wasn't.

Job 18:19 He shall have neither son nor grandson among his people, nor any remaining where he lived- Clearly an oblique reference to the fate of Job's children. Perhaps the desolation and emptying of homes and areas in Israel and Judah is in view, after the people were carried into exile.

Job 18:20 Those who come after shall be astonished at his day, as those who went before were frightened- "Astonished" is s.w. "desolation" in the descriptions of the fate of the land when its people would go into exile (Lev. 26:34,35; Lam. 1:4). The promise of restoration was that the new covenant would change this and restore the desolate (Jer. 33:10). Bildad failed to see this, assuming that all judgment was to be eternal. The idea of ultimate restoration was out of his mind, as it was with the faithless exiles.

Job 18:21 Surely such are the dwellings of the unrighteous. This is the place of him who doesn't know God- "The dwellings" would refer to the family / house. These continued claims that Job would die without family are behind his fantasy in Job 19:24 for a kinsman on his side, a relative, who would also be his redeemer. Clearly Job did "know God". We see here for all time the danger of dashing headlong along a path of reasoning about a person which leads us to a totally wrong and slanderous position about them. Job 36:26 uses the same phrase in what appears to be Elihu's take on this- which is that in fact God is too great to be known by any man. His final appearance makes it clear that to know God is to repent and accept His grace.

JOB CHAPTER 19

Job 19:1 Then Job answered- This speech sees Job bitterly lament his treatment by God and the friends. Indeed everything was so unfair. But out of all this deep self pity, he comes to the classic expression of his faith in resurrection and judgment in :25-27. Taking any of his statements alone would lead to the impression that he was almost narcissistic in his self-pity, but it is out of this down cycle that is born the expression of faith and yet deeper understanding of :25-27. Even though it was

expressed at this point as a fantasy.

Job 19:2 How long will you torment me, and crush me with words?- If nothing else we see here the power of words. The friends had come to comfort, but ended up crushing him. Eliphaz had earlier concluded that Job was "crushed" (s.w.) because of his sins (Job 5:4) and so he thought he could crush Job with words as well. Even if Job had indeed been condemned, his friends ought still to have sought to save him. Through this experience he came to bear the "torment" which the exiles would during the Babylonian invasion and captivity (s.w. Is. 51:23; Lam. 1:4).

Job 19:3 You have reproached me ten times. You aren't ashamed that you attack me- The Hebrew for "reproached" carries the idea of shame; it is elsewhere translated to make to blush / put to shame. Job on one hand is rightly resisting false shame and false guilt. And yet he has just admitted that they have crushed him, or he has allowed them to crush him, with their words (:2). On one hand we may reject false guilt, or say that we do- when all the same, we take it. This is just so true to human psychological experience. David seems to have realized this, and so he actually prays for God's help so that people don't take false guilt: "Don't let the oppressed be put to shame; let those poor and needy people praise you" (Ps. 74:21 GNB). The implication is that false guilt impedes our praise of God; for we feel too unworthy to even praise Him.

There have not yet been ten speeches by the friends. So "ten times" is being used to mean 'totally' or 'many times', as in Gen. 31:41; Num. 14:22; Neh. 4:12; Dan. 1:20. We must understand that Semitic languages don't use numbers always in the strictly literal sense which European languages tend to. The friends were so sure that Job was condemned that they lost all sense of shame and personal guilt in how they treated him.

Job 19:4 If it is true that I have erred, my error remains with myself- Perhaps he means 'You have no evidence I have erred, apart from the fact I am suffering'. Earlier, Job recognizes his sins, and speaks of the sins of his youth. Now he puts that under question, and will conclude his speeches with a very long clearing himself of any possible sin and protesting his righteousness. This is what happens under false accusation- we come to deny any sinfulness and become self righteous. It's all so psychologically credible.

The aggression of the friends was because they thought they had the right to join in the apparent Divine condemnation of him; rather than leaving the matter between God and Job. This mentality is seen all around us today. We note however that Job is still qualifying his sinfulness ["if it is true..."]; and his final repentance reflects a total shedding of this kind of careful self qualification.

Job 19:5 If indeed you will magnify yourselves against me- The Messianic Psalms record David and the Lord Jesus feeling that their enemies had magnified themselves against them (Ps. 35:26; 38:16; 41:9; 55:12). Ps. 41:9 applies the term to Judas, who was typified by the friends as the Lord Jesus was by Job.

And plead against me my reproach- Pleading is legal language. Job had done nothing wrong to the friends, but he feels they had come into court to quote his "reproach" as evidence he had sinned, and therefore were demanding his judgment. When they should have left any possible sin as a matter between Job and God (:4).

"Reproach" is "shame". Job on one hand insists he has nothing to be ashamed of, whereas the friends say he is shamed in the eyes of men because he was very sinful.

The way Job now talks of "my" shame shows that he has in fact picked up and absorbed the false guilt put upon him by the friends. Our freedom from shame through the Lord's work on the cross is so very powerful. It should free us from all false guilt.

Job 19:6 know now that God has subverted me, and has surrounded me with His net- This is Job's response to Bildad's earlier claim that Job's own feet had led him into a net or snare (Job 18:8). Job here blasphemously accuses God of having abused him, throwing around His superior power. If only Job knew the prologue... he would have known how far wrong he was. God loved him and had a hugely high opinion of him. "Subverted" translates a Hebrew word which clearly means to be perverse or wicked with another person. Elihu sternly rebukes Job for this statement, saying that God will *not* "pervert judgment" (Job 34:12). Again we marvel at the grace of how God later says that Job has spoken what was right about Him (Job 42:7). Whilst that statement may refer simply to Job's expression of total repentance, we would still expect it to be qualified by some clause to the effect that "although earlier Job accused me of many awful things". There is no such clause in Job 42:7. The absence of it, bearing in mind Job's wrong statements about God which Elihu has reminded us of, is surely noticeable and intended to be noticed. We are left marvelling at the extent of grace and imputed righteousness, through faith by grace. And how God was so thrilled with Job's few words of repentance, uttered from the heart. This is in the end what God looks for. That is to speak right about God, even if we have spoken wrongly about him for chapter after chapter of our lives as Job did.

Job 19:7 Behold, I cry out because of injustice, but I am not heard. I cry for help, but there is no justice- Job now turns to lament how he feels God has treated him, having complained of how the friends have unjustly treated him. Job feels he has 'cried out' to God for justice and not been heard (Job 19:7; 30:20); and that there is nothing wrong with crying out to God in distress, it is a perfectly natural reaction (Job 24:12). One comment upon this is that the young ravens cry out to God for food and yet are not always heard (Job 38:41 s.w.). But God in the wider picture sustains all of creation by grace. Job did well to cry out to God even if there was no answer, because the hypocrites do not 'cry out' to God when they are facing judgment (Job 36:13 s.w.). Job feels hurt that God has not responded to his 'crying out' because he says that when the needy cried out to him, he had heard (Job 29:12 s.w.). But here we see his works based approach; he thought that his response to those who cried out to him meant that therefore God must respond to *his* crying out. And God is not so primitive. His apparent silence is because His response is not predicated upon human works and charity. It is by grace alone, as is taught in His final appearance to Job. The exiles likewise were to finally see the response to their crying out to God in the restoration (Is. 58:9), just as their representative Jonah cried out to God from the belly of *sheol* amidst the sea of nations, and was heard (s.w. Jonah 2:2).

Job 19:8 He has walled up my way so that I can't pass, and has set darkness in my paths- Job is feeling confined, imprisoned, blocked in. But this was what happened to Judah in their judgment (Hos. 2:6); Job although righteous was the representative of Judah. See on Job 10:11,12.

Num. 22:22 describes how an Angel of God stood in a narrow, walled path before Balaam, so that his donkey fell down beneath him. That Angel is described as a

"satan", an adversary, to Balaam. Job comments how the sufferings which the 'Satan' brought upon him were God 'walling up my way that I cannot pass' (Job 19:8). The connection is clear- and surely indicates that Job's satan was a satan-Angel, acting as an adversary to Job just as such an Angel did to Balaam. See on Job 1:6. Job and Balaam have certain similarities- both were prophets (in Job's case see Job 4:4; 23:12; 29:4 cp. 15:8; Amos 3:7; James 5:10,11); both had genuine difficulty in understanding God's ways, but they to varying degrees consciously rebelled against what they did understand; both thus became angry with God (in the Angel), and were reproved by God through being brought to consider the Angel-controlled natural creation.

Job 19:9 He has stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head- "Stripped me" is s.w. "fell upon" in describing how the troops of Job's enemies fell upon his children and wealth (Job 1:17). It was God who did this, Job perceives; they were "His troops" (:12). The same word is used of the stripping of God's people of their glory (Ez. 16:39; 23:26; Mic. 3:3), which only happened because they themselves did not strip themselves of their clothing in repentance (s.w. Is. 32:11; Ez. 26:16). The stripping of Job, which also recalls the stripping of the priest Aaron of his clothes and "crown" [mitre] when his priesthood ended (Num. 20:26,28), was therefore to elicit repentance in him. And this is what was finally achieved at the end of the book. See on Job 40:10.

Job 19:10 He has broken me down on every side, and I am gone. My hope He has plucked up like a tree- Originally, Job believed that his "hope" was predicated upon his upright ways (Job 4:6). But Job through his sufferings comes to feel he now has no "hope" (Job 7:6; 14:19; 17:15; 19:10). The friends suggest that Job had only the "hope" of the hypocrite, and this "hope" would perish (Job 4:6; 8:13; 27:8). Job had integrity, and on that basis he thought he had "hope". He suffered, and he lost that "hope", because he assumed that his sufferings meant that he was not in fact righteous. And yet he often reflects that he is righteous and is suffering unjustly. And so he is led to the realization that the "hope" of the righteous is by God's grace and not because of the "integrity of [Job's] ways". Judah in captivity likewise lost their "hope" (Ez. 19:5; 37:11). But the message of the restoration prophets was that "there is hope in your end" (Jer. 31:17); they were prisoners or exiles in "hope" (Zech. 9:12). And we may get the possible whiff of restoration of hope in Job; for now he compares himself to a tree plucked up, whereas in Job 14:7-10 he has said that a tree has hope of sprouting again, but he has no hope at all. Now, he at least sees himself as the tree. These were baby steps towards faith in restoration. Or we could conclude that having no hope was Job's baseline position. He repeatedly says that he will never get out of the grave. He has no hope. His following words about having a redeemer are therefore his fantasy.

Job 19:11 He has also kindled His wrath against me. He counts me among His adversaries- Job feels God's wrath kindled against him (Job 19:11). The innocent Job experienced the judgments of God's people, against whom God's wrath was kindled (Dt. 11:17; 2 Kings 23:26). Significantly, we find Elihu's wrath kindled against both Job and the friends (Job 32:2,3), but the wrath of God was kindled only against the friends (Job 42:7). Elihu is therefore not fully reflecting God's position about Job. I have repeatedly demonstrated that the innocent Job was suffering the judgment for the sins of God's people. In the end, this came to full term in the

salvation of the friends on account of Job's intercession. God's wrath was not personally against Job, it was against the friends. But Job suffered God's wrath against him, because he was to be the saviour of the friends by offering sacrifice for them and praying for them. This looks forward to the work of the Lord Jesus, the suffering servant based upon Job; experiencing the judgment for our sins, and through the representative nature of His sacrifice, being able to save us.

Job 19:12 His troops come on together, build a siege ramp against me, and encamp around my tent- See on :9. Job represents both the Lord Jesus Christ and Israel. He was representative of both. This is nicely shown by how the language of 19:12-14 is reminiscent of the descriptions of the Roman armies (Christ's armies- Mt. 22:7) surrounding Jerusalem in AD70. There then follows a description of Job's sufferings which has clear links with that of Christ's crucifixion in Ps. 69. "He hath put my brethren far from me (cp. Ps. 69:8), and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me". Note how the last phrase links with Christ's description of Judas as "my own familiar friend", implying there may be a connection between the one-time friends of Job, and Judas. Both epitomized the Jewish system, and both were at one stage trusted by Job/Jesus. Other descriptions of Job's sufferings in the language of Ps. 69 include Job 30:9 "Now am I their song, yea, I am their byword" (cp. Ps. 69:12); Job 22:11 "abundance of waters cover thee" (cp. Ps. 69:1,2); Job 2:11 the friends came "to mourn with him and to comfort him", although Job said he turned to them for comfort in vain (16:2). The Hebrew in Job 2:11 is identical to that in Ps. 69:20, describing Christ looking in vain for comforters.

Job 19:13 He has put my brothers far from me. My acquaintances are wholly estranged from me- The brothers of Job turned against him (:17) because they all considered him "smitten of God" just as the suffering servant was considered (Is. 53:4); the Lord Jesus likewise had this experience, being initially rejected by his brothers (Jn. 7:5). Yet it was this total loss of human relationships that led Job to fantasize about a *go'el*, a relative, a kinsman redeemer, in :25-27. Between :13-20 we will read how having lost all his children, absolutely everyone in his social and family circle had turned against him. He speaks of his "close ones", his wife, his servants, his siblings, his friends, the kids in the village... "All members of my circle abhor me" (:19). And so often it is the breakdown of human relationships, the experience of 'divorce' with those once close to us... which leads us, desperately, to the Lord Jesus. So often it is bereavement, breakdown of relationship with children or marriage breakdown... which leads men to Christ.

Job 19:14 My relatives have gone away. My familiar friends have forgotten me- This total rejection by everyone was indeed lamentable, but it led to Job turning the more intensely toward God, despite the apparent distance of God from him. And this apparently hopeless situation of being rejected by all his family in Job 19:13-16 was reversed at the end when all his relatives again came to him (Job 42:11). The way they give him a piece of money and an earring appears to be some kind of gratitude for his salvation of them. They thus recognized their guilt and expressed deep gratitude that although they had rejected him, his sufferings and their rejection of him had led to their salvation. For we can deduce from the gift of a piece of money that they feel they have sinned, and he has saved them. So again, his restoration was the restoration

of others, the friends and his family who had rejected him. He had borne the sufferings for their sins, and thus becomes a type of the Lord Jesus, who suffered the judgments for sin in order to save those who had rejected and abused him.

Job 19:15 Those who dwell in my house, and my maids, count me for a stranger. I am an alien in their sight- His family considered him a stranger and alien, not a relative any more. Hence his fantasy about finding a relative, a kinsman redeemer. This is quoted in the Messianic Ps. 69:18 concerning the Lord's sufferings on the cross.

Job 19:16 I call to my servant, and he gives me no answer. I beg him with my mouth- The begging was for bread; see on Job 15:23. This is how desperately low Job became. "Beg" is the word for 'grace'; see on :21. He had cried out to God for justice and had no answer (:7); and even his former servant wouldn't answer him. This lack of answer leads him to fantasize about a responsive "redeemer" who will respond to him (:25-27).

Job 19:17 My breath is offensive to my wife. I am loathsome to the children of my own mother- "Loathsome" is not the best translation, the Hebrew word is usually translated to be gracious to. Perhaps the idea is that he asked his brothers for grace, but wasn't afforded it. The usage of the word suggests Job for the first time is thinking about grace, undeserved favour; and this is what he is led to realize at the end when God appears. But this was one of the baby steps towards that. See on :21.

LXX "And I besought my wife, and earnestly intreated the sons of my concubines. But they rejected me for ever; whenever I rise up, they speak against me" (:17,18). This nuances his earlier claim to have no eyes for any woman apart from his wife.

Job 19:18 Even young children despise me. If I arise, they speak against me- Job was finally to be the saving hero of his society. Likewise the exiles who had been despised were to be praised by all in the restored Kingdom (Is. 41:9 s.w.). All because Job was the suffering servant, despised and rejected of all and yet finally saviour of those who despised him, just as the Lord Jesus to a far greater extent (Is. 53:3). See on Job 16:17 for more connections with the suffering servant.

Job 19:19 All my familiar friends abhor me. They whom I loved have turned against me- This abhorrence of Job by the friends is related to the way they considered mankind to be "abominable and corrupt" (Job 15:16). "Abhor" is the same word as "abominable". The simple truth is as Job put it- God has a tender desire to man, the work of His hands (Job 14:15). And whatever we posit about human nature, we say about the Lord Jesus. He fully shared that nature and yet was holy, harmless and undefiled (Heb. 7:26). Man by nature, just standing there as flesh and blood before God, is not "abominable" to Him of himself. It is sin which is the problem; and sin is not inevitable. We must bear full responsibility for our sins and cannot just pass them off as an inevitable function of our humanity. The wrong view of human nature held by the friends affected their view of Job and people in practice. The lower our view of human nature, the more likely we are to despise human beings rather than value them and speak well of them because they are made in the image of God (James 3:9).

It must be noted that the Satan never occurs again, under that name. The real adversary of Job was his "friends"; and in God's final judgment, it is they who are condemned, not 'Satan'. It is therefore reasonable to see a connection between the

satan and the 'friends' of Job; they too walked to and fro in the earth in order to come to him, as it seems satan did at the beginning. And we pause here for another lesson. The great satan / adversary of Job turned out to be those he thought were his friends in the ecclesia. And so it has been, time and again, in our experience: our sorest trials often come from the words of our brethren. Without underestimating the physical affliction of Job, his real adversary was his brethren. Rather than bemoaning his physical affliction, he commented how his friends had become his satans (Job 19:19) And so with the Lord Jesus, whom Job so accurately typified. Again, without minimizing the material agony of His flesh, the essential piercing was from His rejection at the hands of those He died for. For other reasons to connect the satan with the friends, see on Job 1:6.

Job 19:20 My bones stick to my skin and to my flesh. I have escaped by the skin of my teeth- Job was just about hanging on to life, and so he had the hope of restoration. This was the position of the exiles. From their living death they would be given new skin and flesh in revival (Ez. 37:6,8) after the pattern of Job- if they wished to follow his example of repentance. But probably we are better to translate "with the skin of my teeth", as if all he has in his mouth is his gum skin- all his teeth having fallen out.

*Job 19:21 Have pity on me, have pity on me, you my friends-*The crying out for pity / grace went unheard- hence his fantasy about a kinsman redeemer. The word for "grace" is used four times in quick succession (:16,17 and twice in :21). Job is now appealing for grace, even if he is deemed guilty. Job for the first time is thinking about grace, undeserved favour; and this is what he is led to realize at the end when God appears.

For the hand of God has touched me- "Touch" is the word used by the satan in Job 1:11, showing again that the hand of the Satan was the hand of God, and Job understood this. The friends insist that "the destroyer" [by which they surely meant an early equivalent to 'the devil' of popular belief today] had touched Job- whereas Job insists that it is *God* who had destroyed him (Job 15:21 cp. 19:10; 13:21). In some ways the book of Job is a deconstruction of the popular Persian and Canaanite myths about a 'satan' figure. Job, both in the story of his sufferings and his specific words, seeks to demonstrate that the essential issues in life is being "just with God", and not whether or not we are touched by the hand of an evil being; for the hand of God which touched Job (Job 19:21) is the hand of 'satan' into whom God delivered Job temporarily (Job 1:12). Job says that the attitude of the friends is wrong- they should be looking into themselves, rather than fantasizing about the action of some unseen evil being they imagined: "Ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in *me*?... know that there is a [personal] judgment"(Job 19:28,29).

Job understood God to be in control in Heaven; he rejects the idea of a cosmic conflict going on 'up there' which the friends seem to allude to. More specifically, Job speaks of how God's hand forms and can pierce the "crooked serpent" and smite any monster (Job 26:11–14). It's as if Job is mocking the idea that God has let him go into the hands of the cosmic monsters which the friends believed in. For Job so often stresses that it is the "hand of God" which has brought His affliction (Job 19:21; 23:2). That Divine hand was far greater than any mythical 'Satan' figure. The theme of his speech in Job 28 is that Yahweh alone is to be feared throughout the entire cosmos. Nobody else – such as the 'Satan' figures alluded to by the friends – needed to be feared.

Job 19:22 Why do you persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh?- The friends ended up playing God. They presumed to judge Job according to their own limited and inaccurate theology, by assuming that he must have sinned in order to receive such terrible trials from God. Zophar claims to have revealed Job's guilt, and then says that "the heavens"- an ellipsis for "God"- have revealed Job's guilt (Job 20:27). Job figured out what was happening when he complained to them: "Why do you hound me as though you were divine?" (Job 19:22 NAB). But something good came out of all this for Job. The way the friends played God set up a kind of dialectic, from which Job came to perceive more powerfully who God really was- and, moreover, how in fact this God would ultimately save him rather than destroy and condemn him, as the friends falsely thought. By 'dialectic' I mean that the way the friends presented a false picture and manifestation of God's judgment led Job to react against it, and thereby come to a true understanding of God's judgment. Having stated his perception that the friends are indeed playing God (Job 19:22), Job goes straight on to make a solemn and important statement. The solemnity of it is witnessed by his request, albeit as a fantasy, that what he was now going to say would be inscribed in rock with the point of a diamond as a permanent record (Job 19:24). And that solemn statement was that he knew that God would be his vindicator at the last day, that he would "see God", that he would have a bodily resurrection, and that at that time it would be the friends who would be condemned (Job 19:25-29). This supreme statement of faith, hope and understanding, albeit as a fantasy, was elicited from Job because of the rejection he suffered from his friends, and the way they so inaccurately and wrongly played God in wrongly condemning him on God's behalf. Job thus came to long for the judgment seat. There are few believers who have reached that level of intimacy with God- but Job did, thanks to the way his friends so cruelly turned against him. And this is a major lesson we can take from being the victim of slander, misunderstanding and misjudgment by our own brethren.

Job 19:23 Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book!- The reference is not to a book as we think of a book, but to a permanent writing, i.e. his epitaph on his tombstone. Although it is tempting to think that the existence of the book of Job is proof enough that his wish was granted. His request, however, shows baby steps towards realizing that his sufferings can be used for a greater and wider purpose. He was not just suffering for himself. And finally his salvation of his friends and family [possibly leading to the resurrection of his slain children] was realized by him to be the outcome of this sufferings. He, the innocent, had born their sins in his own body, just as the Lord did. Earlier he had offered sacrifice for his children, but this was not enough; a representative sufferer was needed. For now, he is only just beginning to move towards this realization.

Job 19:24 That with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever!- An "iron pen" is only found again in Jer. 17:1, where Judah's sin is written with an iron pen. The desire for suffering to be remembered was strong amongst the exiles as it was with Job. Perhaps Job is wishing that he would have a gravestone where his words were engraved as an inscription; an iron stylus and lead were exactly what was used on such inscriptions. "My words" (:23) would then refer not to all his words, but to the words about Job, the epitaph on the gravestone. Instead, as the friends have implied, he as a hated, miserable sinner would have no decent burial and not be buried in a family tomb; and burial was so significant to those of Job's time. Bildad and

others had implied this by speaking of how the name of the wicked would be destroyed at their death, and their bodies cast out with no mourners for them (Job 18:15-19). Job was living on the ash heap outside town, and when he died, his body would be burnt and left where he died. His wife had turned against him, and he now had no children to make a memorial for him. The connection with the exiles is in the promise to the childless eunuchs that they would be given by God "a monument and a name better than [that given by] sons and daughters [on a memorial stone]" (Is. 56:5). And so he fantasizes that he does in fact have a *go'el* a redeemer, a kinsman, a relative, somewhere, who somehow would get him something far better than a decent burial- this relative, this kinsman, would redeem his body from death and give him a resurrection of his battered body. And thus this *go'el* would do what a *go'el* was supposed to do- preserve Job's name eternally, just as Boaz did to Mahlon in the book of Ruth. And so Bildad's aspersion that Job's name would be no longer remembered would be proven wrong. Although he accepts dying with no memorial in this life, he goes on to talk of the redeemer / witness he imagines he has in Heaven, who would somehow bring him to a bodily resurrection. And an eternal relationship with God so wonderful that it eclipses all sadness at dying with no burial and his body despoised. Job frequently broods upon his upcoming death; he ends all his speeches by speaking about it, and how permanent it would be (Job 7:21; 10:21,22; 14:20-23; 17:11-16; 19:23-27). His baseline position was that he would soon die and there would be no resurrection. But people in extreme trauma often entertain fantasies, and here we have his fantasy about a resurrection thanks to a distant relative, who must be in Heaven seeing he is not on earth. And Job's fantasy is in fact going to be reality for him, for God will do exceeding abundantly above all that man asked or thought.

Job 19:25 But as for me- Given the context, the idea may be that whether or not his suffering achieves anything for others, he is confident of his own salvation at the end.

The witness in Heaven who is on Job's side in Job 16:10 could be another reference to the redeemer / advocate or negotiator that Job had dreamt of having in Job 9 and who he more strongly believes in by the time of Job 19. He speaks of this person in Job 16:21: "that he [the witness in heaven] would maintain the right of a man with God, of a son of man with his neighbour!". We could translate Job 16:20 as referring to this mediator: "my eyes pour out tears to God; on behalf of a man he pleads with God as one pleads for a friend". Such an entity is clearly not God Himself, because Job imagines this person maintaining Job's "right" with God. He views God very negatively, so the witness in Heaven "who vouches for me on high" is not God, but this imagined, hoped for person. Job fantasized about such a person "like me" in Job 9:32-35: "For there is not a person like me to whom I could answer: "let us come together in judgment." Would that there were an umpire between us who would lay his hand on the two of us, taking from upon me His [God's] rod and not allowing His dread to terrify me. I would speak and not be afraid of him [the imagined umpire]". But in Job 16, Job seems more positive about the existence of this being. And Job appears to have the same person in view in Job 19:25: "I know that my redeemer lives: and finally he will stand upon the earth...". Job is very negative about God, but very positive about this personal "redeemer", who is "my" personal redeemer. The redeemer is not God, but this imagined "umpire", thanks to whom Job believes that he will somehow see God's face despite being "in the flesh". GNB of Job 19:25-27 makes this clearer: "I know there is someone in heaven who will come at last to my defense [a legal term; he has in view the court of Heaven]. [And therefore, because of this "someone"] even after my skin is eaten by disease, while still in this

body I will see God. I will see him with my own eyes, and he will not be a stranger". Job's belief in the imaginary interceder for him before a monster of a God seems to have receded again by Job 31:35, when Job again laments: "oh that I had one to hear me!".

The *go'el* was the powerful relative whom Job fantasized about after realizing everyone in his life was against him. The *go'el* was able to save him from slavery, restore lost property, raise up his name if he died childless [as Job assumed he now would, having lost his children], and get vengeance upon his murderer. And Job often calls God his murderer. His fantasy about a redeemer involved his idea that God should be tried, found guilty and killed in vengeance for having murdered Job. Whatever "faith" we want to see in Job at this point [and I see it as fantasy rather than faith], he was in the grip of a blasphemous bitterness with God. But Job saw this witness / redeemer as "in heaven" (Job 16:19), in the Divine Council. We know from the prologue that no such advocate figure was needed there because God was 100% on Job's side. God needs no mediator, including the Lord Jesus, in order to save man. He saved men in the time before Christ. The Lord Jesus and His death was to commend God's love to man and thereby save the more. It wasn't that pre-Christ, man was saved by God imagining that red blood of His future son and therefore turning away from wrath.

Elihu appears to say that such an intermediary is indeed the way to rightness with God: "If God has by Him an ambassador, a mediator, one of the thousand, to declare to man what is right for him, and [then] He [God] is merciful to him [man], and says, 'Deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom' (Job 33:23,24). The Hebrew is difficult, but the idea seems to be that Elihu suggests that indeed there may be such a mediator "by" God, at His right hand in Heaven, who could save Job- with the possible implication that it is him. We are intentionally left wondering about Elihu. God makes no use of him in reconciling Job to Himself. Job wanted a witness and advocate in the court of heaven, to try to get God back on Job's side. But we know from the prologue what went on in the court of heaven- God was totally "for" Job anyway. Job didn't have the Lord Jesus in view, and God engaged with Job directly, without mediation. But the fantasies of Job about such a person, and Elihu's confirmation of the details, all lead us naturally to think of the Lord Jesus. What Job so desperately wanted, even though he himself didn't actually need this person- we have, in the Lord Jesus. The advocate for Job in the heavenly court was in fact none other than God Himself, as we readers know from the prologue. God was not in fact angry with Job and in need of an advocate to somehow placate Him and make Him see sense. But all the same, despite in a sense not 'needing' such an advocate- it is what we want. Before the work of the Lord Jesus, God still saved men like Job even though there was no advocate like the Lord Jesus. But what we see from Job is the human desire for such an intercessor. And so even that has been provided in the Lord Jesus, who ticks all the boxes of Job's desires and wish list for a qualified mediator. He is the "faithful witness" in Heaven whom Job dreamed of (Rev. 1:5; 3:14).

Job again dreams of this figure in Job 23:7: "There the righteous one might reason with Him, so I should be delivered forever from my judge [i.e. God]". "The upright / righteous one" is the imaginary advocate Job fantasized of having. "There the upright might reason" suggests now Job again recognizes that in fact this figure doesn't exist. He dreams that this person might be able to eternally save him from his judge, i.e. God. He entertains the old popular [but wrong] idea of an angry God who is placated by an advocate.

I know that my Redeemer lives-

"I know" can be understood as 'I discern / perceive / conclude that...'. In this case it is not so much an expression of concrete faith, as the expression of a hunch Job has come to. He hasn't sinned, yet God is made with him- as he imagines. And so there must be someone, somewhere, surely... to reason with God and resolve the situation.

God was the redeemer of His people from slavery and captivity (Ex. 6:6; 15:13). Job felt his sufferings had placed him in some kind of slavery or captivity, from which he needed redemption or 'buying out'. And he believed that God was that redeemer. In these feelings, he becomes the exact representative of the suffering exiles in slavery and captivity. A redeemer from slavery was typically a close relative (Lev. 25:48; s.w. "kinsman" in Ruth 4:8), and this is how Job came to perceive the God whom he felt was so apparently silent and distant. He is a parade example of not being ultimately fazed by the apparent silence of God. The exiles were intended to rejoice that they had a redeemer, again, after the pattern of Job (Is. 41:14; 43:1,14; 44:6,22,23 etc.); and their redemption from Babylon was ultimately to be from death itself (Hos. 13:14).

In the end- AV "latter day" is wrong. There is no Hebrew equivalent here for the idea of a "day". The idea is simply, in the future.

He will stand upon the earth- We could understand the 'standing' in the context of the long running legal allusions throughout Job's speeches. Job's fantasy was of his redeemer 'standing' before God in Job's defence. "Earth" here is the word for dust, it is the word used when Job says he repents in "dust" and ashes (Job 42:6). And again by Abraham: "I who am but dust and ashes" (Gen. 18:27). He desperately wants a powerful mediator who is all the same of dust, like him. His idealized fantasy actually comes to reality in the nature and person of the Lord Jesus. If the land or physical planet earth was in view, then *eret* would probably have been used as it is elsewhere in Job. "Stand" doesn't have to imply resurrection; the idea is of being 'raised up', as the Messiah was to be raised up from amongst His brothers (Dt. 18:15; Jer. 23:5). Putting the ideas of the verse together, Job looked for a Messiah-Saviour figure similar to himself to be raised up in the future, who would be the living God manifested in human dust and ashes like Job's (Job 7:21; 17:16). The Lord Jesus was not God Himself nor did He personally pre-exist, but Job's idea is that this person was to be his representative, of his own dust, but raised up by the living God. His sufferings led him to long for someone exactly like the Lord Jesus- and that longing ultimately came true.

Job 19:26 After my skin is destroyed-

We could translate this as "Even after my skin is flayed from my flesh I shall behold God". In the spirit of "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him". He sees God as being terribly brutal to him. But believes he will somehow at some point "see God".

In Job 2:4-6 we have the 'Satan' commenting that Job's flesh and skin need to be harmed; but in Job 19:6,26 we have Job stating his faith that even though *God* destroys his flesh and skin, yet God shall ultimately save him. See on Job 16:14.

Then in my flesh shall I see God- Job understood God to be a personal being, and that in a bodily form he would 'see' Him. Seeing his body was to be destroyed in death, this can only mean he was fantasizing about a resurrection of the body. And yet he was to be brought to realize the 'now but not yet' nature of the Kingdom experience; for he came to realize that man can even now "see God" through

repentance and acceptance of His great salvation: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee" (Job 42:5 AV). See on Job 42:5. And yet throughout Job's speeches, he fantasizes about having his day in court with God, but complains that this is impossible as God is God and avoids such a meeting. The desire to "see God" doesn't just refer to physically seeing God; it is rather a fantasy that his friendly "redeemer" can force God to meet Job, and Job will see God in court, face to face with his [false] accuser, as Job sees it. In Job 23:3-7 he laments that he cannot "find" where God is, so that he can bring the legal case against Him. All this fantasy was of course quite unnecessary if he had known or believed the prologue- that God loved him, and was totally on his side in the court of heaven. So much of our headspace is taken up with fantasies about things and situations which we need not ever think about, if we are more deeply and simply convinced of God's love for me. And that through the Lord Jesus, we stand justified in His sight right now. May we know it to be true, far deeper than we do.

The desire for a cleansed flesh / skin and a new body is emphasized. "Flesh" and "skin" each appear three times in this unit (:20,22,26). This emphasis by Job is to be understood in the context of passages like Job 16:8: "You have shrivelled me up. This is a witness against me. My leanness rises up against me. It testifies to my face". Job has absorbed the theology of the friends, to the point he believes that judgment for sin is revealed in a person's body, particularly in the state of their skin / flesh. We recall that his entire flesh was covered with boils (Job 2:7) and had a black appearance (Job 30:30). He considers that his emaciated skin and body is a witness to the fact God considers he has sinned, and has punished him for it. This is why he says that his skin will indeed be destroyed, and yet in a bodily form he will "see God"- he dreamed of a time when the consequences of sin would no longer be experienced in his body. This fantasy is in fact the good news of the Gospel- eternity in a bodily form, but not a body as we currently have, which reflects judgment for sin.

Job 19:27 whom I, even I, shall see for myself. My eyes shall see it, and not a stranger's. My heart is consumed within me-

Job labours his passionate desire to personally meet and see God: "I shall see for myself", "my eyes shall behold", "I and not another". He says the same thing three times, so deeply does he want personal relationship with God. We note all the personal pronouns; this is the essence of personal relationship. David shows the same wonder, with a double emphasis upon "I": "I, even I shall behold Your face in righteousness" (Ps. 17:15). To see God's face is the hope held out to us at the end of the book of Revelation. Ps. 11:7 likewise: "The upright will behold His face". Whatever value Job's sufferings may have had for others, Job was rejoicing in the intensely personal nature of salvation. He whose eyes and body were fading into death would in a corporeal form see God for himself. "And not a stranger's" connects with what we noted on :23; Job had begun to realize that his sufferings were for others' benefit, even though he didn't know who, they were still strangers to him. His point is that notwithstanding that, he was now beginning to grasp the utter wonder of his personal salvation.

As Job's emphasis on the coming of Messiah and judgment increased, so his concentration on his present sufferings decreased. His heart was consumed within him with desire for that day. 2 Tim. 4 can be regarded as Paul's most mature spiritual statement, written as it was just prior to his death. In 2 Tim. 4:1,8, Paul's mind was clearly on the second coming and the certainty of judgment. He realized, in that time of undoubted maturity, that the common characteristic of all the faithful would be that

they all *loved* the appearing of Christ. But do we *love* the appearing of Christ as Job did? Is it *really* all we have in life? Is our conscience, our faith in the grace of God, our real belief in the blood of the cross, so deep that we *love* the idea of the coming of judgment, that we would fain *hasten* the day of His coming? Job's *love* of the Lord's coming grew very rapidly. Before, he was too caught up with bitterness about his unspiritual fellow 'believers', effectively justifying himself in the eyes of his ecclesia and his world, full of passive complaints about his own sufferings... and so he didn't *love* that day as he later came to. You and I personally will be in God's Kingdom, with our arms around each other in the rubble of Jerusalem. We will personally be there. We will see Abraham there (Lk. 13:28); as Job says, with our own eyes we will behold our Lord, and not through anyone else's eyes (Job 19:27). Our eyes shall behold the King in the beauty which we personally perceive in Him (Is. 33:17).

The desire to 'see God' must be seen in the context of Job's earlier demands to have God appear in person in court. Job has complained that God is refusing to attend, and not letting Job 'see' Him in court. Job asks God to provide him with a legal case, with a list of his sins (Job 13:23), and then goes on to complain "Why do You hide Your face?" (Job 13:24). He wants to see God- in court. God's answer is going to be that by nature, He is inscrutable. He cannot be questioned. His grace must simply be accepted.

Continuing down that path of interpretation, it has been proposed that this passage is simply Job again desiring for immediate vindication, assuming that even if he has a redeemer who one day comes to earth, it will be too late for him:

"I know that my vindicator lives and will at last arise upon the earth. But (that will be) after my flesh has been stripped away (like) this. But I would see God while still in my flesh. I want to see Him for myself; and my eyes behold (Him) and no other. Oh! My desire is overwhelming!".

"My heart is consumed within me" could mean that he faints at the thought of meeting God. 'To faint' is what the phrase means in Ps. 73:26; 84:2; 119:81,123.

Job 19:28 If you say, 'How we will persecute him!'; because the root of the matter is found in me-

GNB offers: "My courage failed because you said, "How can we torment him?" You looked for some excuse to attack me". If this is referring to the friends, we again see them presented as the satan. Or we can read :27,28 as his heart groaning until the friends say "Why do we persecute him, seeing no evidence has been found [against Job]?". He so wants to be right with men legally, to be seen as right by them. If he had known the prologue, he would have known that God saw him as right with Him. And that is absolutely all that matters.

Having begun by complaining about the friends and then moved to rejoicing in God's future salvation of him, Job now returns to address the friends. Here and in :29 he appeals for them not to judge him but to repent and prepare for judgment day. This is not at all out of context with the passionate rejoicing in personal salvation he has just expressed in :25-27. The connection is in that he desperately wanted the friends to be there too, to share his wonderful hope. But whilst they continued condemning him, they would unlikely be there; for God has always operated the principle that those who judge / condemn will themselves be condemned (Mt. 7:1), and that is just what they were doing. And Job wants them to stop that and be saved. The situation arose because they considered that Job was totally at fault, and they were intended to persecute him on God's behalf. If they had realized that we are not to judge in the

sense of condemning, and left the possible sins between God and Job (see on :4), then they would not have worked themselves into the situation they were now in- thinking it was their duty to persecute Job. This is one of several passages where Job speaks as if the friends were responsible for his physical persecution (cp.:22); as if they had brought the calamity which the opening chapters make satan responsible for. See on Job 1:6, and note how the satan figure morphs into the friends as the book continues.

Job 19:29 be afraid of the sword, for wrath brings the punishments of the sword, that you may know there is a judgment- With his mind on some future day of meeting with God and being vindicated (:25-27), Job warns the friends in the next verses that in such a case, they will be condemned. I suggest that this expresses a deep concern in Job for the final salvation of the friends; see on :28. He urges them to be aware that the wrath they have could lead to their own punishment by the Divine sword of judgment. And he wants them to realize "there is a judgment". His basic desire to save them is rewarded. God does appear in judgment and condemn the friends, and asks Job to save them by his prayers and sacrifices for them.

JOB CHAPTER 20

Job 20:1 Then Zophar the Naamathite answered- Job has just uttered a wonderful statement of ecstatic joy at the prospect, albeit as a fantasy, of his personal, future salvation, and then has gone on to appeal for the friends to repent and stop judging him, so that they might share it (Job 19:25-29). Zophar is so proud and angry that all he can do is lash out at Job, totally ignoring Job's faith, hope and appeal. This is characteristic of how the friends generally refuse to engage with Job's actual words and arguments, because they are so obsessed with their own narrative they have spun about Job. And this refusal leads Zophar to crudeness (:7,15) and basically predicting the violent destruction of Job, with heaven and earth united in witness against his evil (:24-28).

Job 20:2 Therefore do my thoughts make me answer, even by reason of my haste that is in me- Elihu opens his response with something similar, leading us to see Elihu as summarizing the arguments of the friends and Job.

Job 20:3 I have heard the reproof which seeks to shame me. The spirit of my understanding makes me answer- The "reproof" was Job's genuine appeal to the friends to stop condemning him because they might thereby miss out on the wonderful personal salvation which Job rejoiced in (Job 19:25-29). To be told 'You are too judgmental' made Zophar even more judgmental and angry. And again we see how theological disagreement leads the friends to feel "shame". Destroying the opponent becomes necessary in order to avoid shame.

Job 20:4 Don't you know this from old time, since man was placed on earth- We the audience become almost bored by the way the friends keep on claiming that ancient sage wisdom is the source of truth, and any new revelation must be wrong just because it is new. But this sense of weariness at their repetition is intentional. We are led to realize that indeed, dialogue cannot progress if the participants simply return to the same old arguments all the time and refuse to engage with the responses.

Literally, since Adam was placed on the earth; there are further allusions to Adam in :6,18. "Though his excellency mount up to the heavens", alluding to Adam's initial status (:6); and there is likewise an allusion to the curse upon Adam in :18: "To labour shall he return, but he shall not eat... earth his recompense: yes, nothing shall he taste". Zophar argues that sin always merits immediate retribution, and that that principle started with Adam. He fails to understand Paul's inspired observation that in Adam, all have sinned. We all sin in essence as did Adam, and that includes Zophar. The friends make the classic mistake of considering their sins to be mere surface level sins, compared to the apparently major sins of Job. This belief means that we never come to personal repentance nor meeting with God. It is especially hard for religious types who consider their own sins as mere slight infringements. It's what makes churches and churchgoers such hypocrites and goody two shoes people who are in fact the biggest disadvertisement for the true church.

Job's response is to point out that the wicked often prosper. And that travellers from all over the earth have shared such stories. Travel was seen as a source of wisdom in those days, as was old age and lines of tradition. But again Job's counterargument isn't that strong. Because the very wicked do not generally have great lives over the long term. Both sides are generalizing rather than accepting that all men are sinners. They say it is an old given truth that sin brings suffering. Job replies that human observation shows the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. Both the friends and Job are appealing to human experience. And that yields no answer to the question of Job's suffering.

Job 20:5 that the triumphing of the wicked is short, the joy of the godless but for a moment?- Job's relatively brief period of prosperity is interpreted as meaning that Job was "wicked... Godless". Again we see how the wrong theology (in this case, that suffering implied personal sin) led to a headlong dive into ever more false assumptions, and condemning an upright man.

Job 20:6 Though his height mount up to the heavens, and his head reach to the clouds- This was of special relevance to the captives in Babylon. These words are used of Babylon's king who was to fall (Dan. 4:22), an event the restoration prophets associate with Israel's restoration. Again, the friends state certain truths which are even quoted in later scripture, but they hold those truths within the wrong frames of reference when it comes to Job. And this is the problem with 'truth' about a matter being held isolated from a wider framework, and without connection to the things of the spirit. For God seeks worshippers in "*spirit and truth*". See on :9.

GNB "They may grow great, towering to the sky, so great that their heads reach the clouds". This is one of several allusions in Job to the tower of Babel. Likewise there are allusions to the destruction of Sodom. The argument that "Sin always brings retribution in this life, and righteousness brings blessing in this life" was not altogether wrong, especially in the context of the time when Job and his friends were living. The fact was that this was not a consistent principle in God's dealings with man; and God doesn't deal consistently as man understands it. He operates on a higher level of morality and ethics, and we see only parts of His ways. This is why life has so many loose ends, twists and turns that appear to have no reason; to humble us and make us trust. See on Job 21:30.

Job 20:7 yet he shall perish forever like his own dung. Those who have seen him shall

say, 'Where is he?' - Bildad's anger is such that he becomes crude in his vicious desire to curse Job. We recall that just shortly before, he had been sitting in silence with Job seeking to comfort him as a friend and fellow worshipper. This is how quickly relationships can go wrong, and false suppositions and lack of engagement with a person as an individual can lead to them going down a totally different track.

Job 20:8 He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found. Yes, he shall be chased away like a vision of the night- This is perhaps in response to Job's fantasy about a future resurrection at the end of Job 19. Bildad is dogmatic that after Job's death, there can be no restoration, and he bitterly stresses this in the following verses. Later events were to show him how wrong he was. And he then is thereby presented as a warning to the exiles who tended to believe that restoration to the land of promise was impossible for them.

Job 20:9 The eye which saw him shall see him no more, neither shall his place any more see him- Again, this is a true enough picture of death, and shows the error of all primitive fears of ghosts of the dead haunting their previous living places, reincarnation etc. But that truth is misused by Bildad and is seen without the wider context of God's power to restore and resurrect. See on :6.

Job 20:10 His children shall seek the favour of the poor. His hands shall give back his wealth- Job's wealth had been taken from him by Temanite invaders, from the same area as Eliphaz the Temanite. His hands didn't give it back. This is another hint that the Satan figure morphs with the friends, and they were actually the ones behind the stealing of Job's wealth, on the basis that they believed that as a sinner, it ought to be taken from him. See on :15.

Job 20:11 His bones are full of his youth, but youth shall lie down with him in the dust- AV "full of the sins of his youth". Job has earlier admitted the possibility that he had sinned in youth, so perhaps he had indeed sinned as a young man. Seeing they could see nothing apparently sinful in Job at that time, they concluded he must have sinned earlier, or was sinning in a way hidden from them. They were desperate to impute sin, finding possible fault in everything; whereas the way of love and of the spirit is to seek to impute righteousness as God does to us, and as He does to Job at the end. This of itself was a huge rebuke to how the friends had done just the opposite.

Job 20:12 Though wickedness is sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue- As noted on :11, the implication is that although they had to admit there was no sin in Job's current lifestyle, they concluded that his sufferings meant he had either sinned in youth, or was hiding his current sins from them.

Job 20:13 though he spare it, and will not let it go, but keep it still within his mouth- The idea is that Job has sinned secretly and will not let that sin go but savours it. He is accused of keeping something sweet in his mouth as long as he can (:12), just to enjoy the pleasure of something sweet.

Job 20:14 yet his food in his bowels is churned. It is cobra venom within him- As noted on :6, there is truth in these statements, in this case, that sin becomes its own punishment; the sin secretly kept in the mouth and enjoyed as a tasty morsel, turns

into the venom of judgment when swallowed. But it is truth without context, just as a Bible text without context is a pretext... for various wrong thinking and behaviour.

Job 20:15 He has swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again. God will cast them out of his belly- It was in fact Israel who had taken riches but not by right, and would vomit them up again (Jer. 17:11). Job had not done this, but was treated and judged as if he had. Again we see how he was suffering as an innocent representative of his peoples' sins. If indeed it was the friends who had seized Job's wealth wrongfully (see on :10), then Job becomes so powerfully their saviour at the end. He suffered the judgments for what they had done, although he had not done those things; and so he bore their sins. Through his prayer and offering for them at the end, he thereby saved them. He was suffering for the salvation of his friends, although at the time it seems he didn't realize it. The Lord Jesus did the same to a far greater extent, but He learned the lesson of Job and was aware that His sufferings were for our salvation. See on :16,18; Job 42:7.

Job 20:16 He shall suck cobra venom. The viper's tongue shall kill him- We sense the intense hatred Zophar feels for his one time friend and brother; earlier he speaks of Job dying and decaying like his own dung. This is what happens when people get obsessed with a theological position, in this case that suffering means sin, and then persecute anyone who disagrees, be they their own friend and brother. As noted on :15, this was the judgment of Israel in their apostasy (Dt. 32:32,33; Is. 59:16; Jer. 8:14; 9:15; 23:15; Lam. 3:5). Like the Lord Jesus, who also drunk gall on the cross (s.w. "venom"; Ps. 69:21), Job was suffering the judgment for others' sins, so that he might finally save them.

Job 20:17 He shall not look at the rivers, the flowing streams of honey and butter- Honey and butter were the blessings for obedience to the covenant; Job was suffering as if he had been disobedient to the covenant, just as the Lord did.

Job 20:18 That for which he laboured he shall restore, and shall not swallow it down. According to the substance that he has gotten, he shall not rejoice- Bildad was clearly jealous of Job's wealth, adopting the thinking of the Satan who suggested these things originally. But he justifies this by saying that Job has taken his wealth from others, and the Bedouin bands who had stolen it were in fact just taking back what Job had taken wrongfully from them. If indeed it was the friends who had seized Job's wealth wrongfully (see on :10), then all Bildad is saying becomes true for him. And he is therefore only to be saved by Job, the innocent, bearing the judgments for his sins.

Job 20:19 For he has oppressed and forsaken the poor. He has violently taken away a house, and he shall not build it up- Bildad assumes Job must have done something like this, to deserve his sufferings. Job engages with what Bildad says and denies it (Job 29:12; 31:17). Again we note that Job engages with the actual words of the friends, whereas they tend to attack him in terms of the straw man image of him they had built up in their minds, ignoring him as a person and the actual words he says. This is typical of how dialogue goes wrong.

Job 20:20 Because he knew no quietness within him, he shall not save anything of that in which he delights- AV "quietness in his belly". Bildad is back to his crude comparison of Job's sin and wealth with tasty things he had secretly eaten (:15) which

now swallowed, were working within his stomach to produce death by his bowels excreting them all.

The Hebrew *shalev*, "quietness", is very similar to *selav*, the word for the quail given in the wilderness. The following verses appear to allude to the incident of Num. 11:31-35, when the murmurers were showered with quail which they then couldn't eat and which became their judgment. Compare :21-23 with Num. 11:33: "And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague"; Ps. 78:26-30: "He rained flesh upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea: so they did eat and were filled- but, while the meat was in their mouth, the wrath of God came upon them". I suggest that Job lived before this time, but the poet has worked in this allusion.

Job 20:21 There was nothing left that he didn't devour, therefore his prosperity shall not endure- The satan had begun by saying that God had given Job wealth, but if that wealth was taken away, he would curse God. The satan then morphs into the friends, the "sons of God" present in the prologue, and they continue the role of the satan as the story progresses. But Zophar has now moved beyond the original suspicion. He now paints Job as a man who had not so much been given wealth by God, but had greedily devoured the wealth of others and was now paying the price, and justice was making him relinquish all his ill gotten wealth. Again we see a parade example of how dialogue breaks down. An initial suspicion (however legitimate the suspicion) becomes exaggerated into a totally different accusation, which has no basis in reality and is outright slander, however confidently presented.

Job 20:22 In the fullness of his sufficiency, distress shall overtake him. The hand of each one who is in misery shall come on him- Zophar is reasoning that those who had been reduced to misery by Job could now legitimately put their hand upon him. In the prologue, Job is placed in the hand of the satan, with the reminder that this hand is ultimately God's hand. Zophar now defines that "hand" as the hand of those whom Job has supposedly grabbed wealth from and reduced to misery. Again we have the suspicion that some of the trials were brought upon Job by the friends, who reasoned themselves into the assumption that they were the ones from whom Job had taken wealth. This is the classical outworking of envy and jealousy; 'you are wealthy... you have more than me... I am poorer than you... because... *you took my wealth from me and added it to your own!*'.

Job 20:23 When he is about to fill his belly, God will cast the fierceness of His wrath upon him. It will rain on him while he is eating- A clear reference to how "the fire of God" had consumed Job's wealth and children, at the very apex of his prosperity. God casting wrath through His Divinely controlled "angels of evil" is the very phrase used of His judgment of His sinful people (Ps. 78:49; Ez. 7:3). We noted the connection between the Satan and such "angels of evil" on Job 1:6. Again, Job is presented as experiencing the judgments of God' sinful people, whilst personally innocent.

Job 20:24 He shall flee from the iron weapon. The bronze arrow shall strike him through- Zophar claims that Job was going to flee from the arrow of Divine judgment, but would all the same be struck through by it (Job 20:24,25). God's response was that His creatures didn't flee from His arrows (s.w. Job 41:28). Neither did Job flee from God; he uses the same term to describe how the wicked vainly tried to flee from God

(Job 27:22). He was in harmony with the natural creation. Zophar was wrong. Job didn't flee from God but quite the opposite- he keeps begging God to reveal Himself, and He does so at the end of the book.

Job 20:25 He draws it forth, and it comes out of his body. Yes, the glittering point comes out of his liver- The assumption is that Job is about to die because of his sins. If only they knew the prologue, where God had declared Job perfect and decreed that his life would not be taken from him... This is the trouble with judgmental attitudes to others- they progress in their severity, and can end up totally out of step with God's judgments and position in Heaven.

Zophar is gloating in the judgment that he was sure would come upon Job. We marvel at how quickly he has transformed his position from the man who came and sat down with Job seven days in silence, perhaps sincerely seeking to comfort Job in his affliction. But now by this point, the friends have reasoned themselves into a position where they not only think Job's sufferings are legitimate and deserved, but gloat at the prospect of his further and final sufferings, with his liver pierced by God's arrows, and the arrow coming out of the other side of his body. This is how far the relationship broke down, all because of a refusal to understand Job as a person and engage with what he was actually saying and who he really was.

Terrors are upon him- "Terrors" are again the judgment of God upon an apostate Israel, whom Job was suffering for whilst innocent, after the pattern of the later Lord Jesus (Dt. 32:25 s.w.). Those "terrors" were likely understood by the friends as some kind of demonic beings. God deconstructs this by explaining that the great beasts He has created likewise were 'terrible' (s.w. "terrors"). But the simple point was that He had created them and was totally in control (s.w. Job 39:20; 41:14).

Job 20:26 All darkness is laid up for his treasures. An unfanned fire shall devour him. It shall consume that which is left in his tent- This implies Job still had some wealth concealed in his tent. But that seems unlikely, seeing he was literally begging for bread (see on Job 15:23) and squatting in deserted houses (see on Job 15:28). Again the friends are dogmatically asserting what they had previously begun by surmising. This again is how relationships go wrong when there is no actual engagement with what the person really is saying and their actual location in reality.

Job 20:27 The heavens shall reveal his iniquity. The earth shall rise up against him- The friends became assured that God, "the heavens", knew Job was a sinner, and "earth" would rise up against Job in harmony with "heaven". Again, the dialogue broke down because of their assumptions, which they came to assume were supported by God, and therefore their reasoning went full circle- they, as the "earth", were rising up against Job in harmony with "heaven". They are unaware of the prologue, where the council of Heaven had declared Job innocent of iniquity.

Job 20:28 The increase of his house shall depart. They shall rush away in the day of His wrath- Rashi "shall go into exile", again making Job a symbol of the exiles. Zophar assumed the day of God's wrath was upon Job, whereas in fact His wrath was kindled against Zophar and the friends ("My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends", Job 42:7; as Elihu's wrath was likewise, Job 32:2).

Zophar is alluding to the destruction of Job's house / family. The friends have moved on from the original concern of the satan, who morphs into them. The initial question was whether Job only believed in God because God had materially blessed

him. And so God gave all Job had into the hand of the 'satan'. The removal of Job's wealth was never intended to be an outcome of God's wrath. Rather was it part of an experiment, if you like, to teach the satan and the friends something. But they had moved far further from that position, and were talking in terms of Divine wrath and judgment against Job. This moving on from original questions and concerns about an individual is exactly what we see in relationship breakdown today. The original issues are unrecognizable compared to the accusations which the original issues morph into.

Job 20:29 This is the portion of a wicked man from God, the heritage appointed to him by God- As explained on :28, the removal of Job's wealth was in order to test Job and reveal him to God and man. It was not a judgment of a wicked man; the prologue is at pains to point out that Job was "perfect" (Job 1:1) and not a "wicked man".

JOB CHAPTER 21

Job 21:1 Then Job answered- I have consistently noted how Job actually engages with the words of the friends, whereas they pay little attention to his words and attack him in terms of the straw man they have created. See on :2.

Job 21:2 Listen diligently to my speech. Let this be your consolation- As noted on :1, Job engages with what the friends have said, whereas they attack him in terms of vague generalities without such specific engagement with his words. In this chapter he specifically answers what Zophar has said in Job 20. He argues that (contrary to what Zophar has just claimed in the previous speech) in fact the wicked are rarely cut down in this life, instead they prosper (:17,18). And their children often don't suffer for the sins of the parents but instead profit from them (:19-21).

Job 21:3 Allow me, and I also will speak; after I have spoken, mock on- This may be an invitation to them to hear what he has actually said and only then "mock on", rather than continually attacking the straw man image of him they had created in their minds (see on :1,2). "Mock" is the word for "scorn" used of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, the suffering servant based upon Job (Ps. 22:7). The application to Hezekiah's time is that the people of Judah were likewise scorned by their enemies (Is. 37:22); and to the exiles in that they too were mocked by the opponents to the rebuilding by men who came from the same ethnic background as the three friends (s.w. Neh. 2:19; 4:1).

Job 21:4 As for me, is my complaint to man? Why shouldn't I be impatient?- He may mean that he was not so much complaining about the friends, as complaining about God. Job fell into the trap of thinking that his terrible situation somehow allowed him to speak whatever words came into his head. Job felt he hadn't been 'fed' and so he was entitled to "bray" and "low" over his misfortune (Job 6:5). Because of the weight of his sufferings, he thereby justified the fact that "Therefore have my words been rash (Job 6:3). Likewise "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit" (Job 7:11). "I will give free course to my complaint. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 10:1 RV). Zophar criticizes Job being "full of talk" and speaking "the multitude of words", "for thou sayest, my doctrine is pure" (Job 11:1-4)- as if Job felt that because he held true doctrine he was justified in pouring out words as he did. "Why should I not be impatient?" (Job 21:4 RV). "Today is my complaint bitter. My stroke is heavier than my groaning" (Job 23:2)- i.e. his

complaining was due to his sufferings. "If I hold my peace, I shall give up the spirit" (Job 13:19 RVmg.). Job felt that the situation he was in *forced* him to use the words he did, and certainly justified it [we may well have used this reasoning ourselves when justifying the use of bad language]. But in the end, Elihu on God's behalf rebuked him for his wrong words. And Job himself recognized: "I am vile. I will lay mine hand upon my mouth" in regret of his words (Job 40:4). "Wherefore I loathe my words and repent" (Job 42:6 RVmg.). He realized his mistake: he had thought that the situation justified his words. Now he hung his head and admitted that there was no justification for speaking in the way he had. Especially in the matter of the tongue, we can so easily justify ourselves; 'I only said / did it [or didn't do it] because...'. And it is all so child-like. Once we leave off *all* attempts at self-justification, we will face up to our sins. No trial is so great that we cannot bear it; a way of escape will be made lest we are overpowered (1 Cor. 10:16). "For the sceptre of wickedness won't remain over the allotment of the righteous; so that the righteous won't put forth their hands to do evil" (Ps. 125:3). Every sin is avoidable and culpable. We of course consider our point of endurance to be far lower than God does.

There is surely an intended contrast between Job's self admitted impatience, and the comment of James about Job's patience / endurance. Just as there is an intended contrast between God saying that Job had spoken what was right about Him- when chapter after chapter, Job has been cursing God. On one hand we could argue that God counted Job righteous, all through his months of cursing Him (Job 7:3 "months of vanity"). Or we can conclude that Job's patience / endurance was in finally repenting. In the longer run of human life, he picked up again and kept running with the Lord.

Job 21:5 Look at me, and be astonished. Lay your hand on your mouth- Here we have another connection with the suffering servant of Isaiah, upon whom men would look and be astonished. See on Job 16:17. When Job finally lays his hand upon his own mouth (Job 40:4), he is only doing what he had earlier told the friends to do in recognition of their folly (Job 13:5; 21:5). Through the pain and irritation of their speeches, Job came to value and appreciate the need for silence before God. But it was only when personally confronted by God at the end that he realizes that he too had spoken too much and he repents of that in silence.

Job 21:6 When I remember, I am troubled. Horror takes hold of my flesh- This horror was at the thought that although the wicked were not judged in this life, they would face a terrible future condemnation, and despite his own desperate illness and situation, he looked out of himself as did the Lord on the way to the cross, to deeply mourn the future judgment of the wicked at the last day. Here we have a wonderful window onto Job's basic loving, saving concern for others. No wonder he was the one chosen to be their representative saviour, suffering the judgment of their sins, and then invited to pray and sacrifice to bring about the salvation of the friends and his own family who had rejected him. If we too have a heart that bleeds for the condemnation of others, we will be used to save them. This is the prime qualification for all evangelism. It is this which God will use, rather than having apparently persuasive technique and evangelism materials.

Or he could mean that he remembers the glory of his former life, and compares it with his sitting on the ash heap with nothing and awaiting death. The depth of his fall is terrifying to him.

Job 21:7 Why do the wicked live, become old, yes, and grow mighty in power?- The answer to this question is what had made Job shudder in :6. The answer is that they will come to their judgment at the last day, as they clearly don't face it in this life. In Job 21:7-9 he feels that the wicked are blessed; in Job 27:13-17 he is sure that the wicked must some day be punished. But it was out of this dialectic that he came to truth. Likewise on one hand he fantasizes about a resurrection from the dead, but at other times he reveals his baseline position- that he has no hope for any life after death.

Job 21:8 Their child is established with them in their sight, their offspring before their eyes- It was and is a great blessing to see your children grow up and become established with their own families (as ultimately in 2 Sam. 7:12-16). In contrast to Job's children who were dead. The point is that Job is answering Zophar's claims that the wicked are punished through the suffering of their children, but Job is saying that this simply doesn't correspond to observable reality. Note that he engages with the words of the friends, whereas they largely ignore his words. See on See on :1,2,17.

Job 21:9 Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them- Their houses compare with Job's, which fell down as a result of the Angel-satan whirlwind. Earlier in Job 9:34 Job pleaded: "Let Him take His rod away from me, and let not His fear terrify me". He felt he was suffering the punishment of the wicked in this life, and therefore he was drawn towards the conclusion that he would not therefore suffer it at the last day- but rather then be saved.

Job 21:10 Their bulls breed without fail. Their cows calve, and don't miscarry- Miscarriage was understood as a Divine curse (s.w. Gen. 31:38; Jer. 15:7; Hos. 9:14; Mal. 3:11). It had come upon Job, but apparently not upon "the wicked". But the references just quoted in the prophets show that it was to come upon the apostate people of God. And this is Job's point. Judgment doesn't immediately come, but it will. And he was suffering those judgments because he was representative of sinners whilst himself innocent, in the spirit of the future Lord Jesus.

Job 21:11 They send forth their little ones like a flock. Their children dance- Again Job is answering Zophar's claim that the children of the wicked are punished, just as Job's children had been. But as noted on :1,2,8,17, Job is saying that this is just not true according to observed reality. There is a longer term Divine game plan here and Job is ever more clearly seeing it.

Job 21:12 They sing to the tambourine and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the pipe- This is the language of partying. Job's children had partied regularly like this, and the fire of God had consumed them in judgment. This could be a tacit recognition from Job that his children had indeed sinned, his sin offerings for them had not of themselves been efficacious, his children had been slain "in an instant" (:13); but there still remained the mystery, that the same sin leads to immediate judgment for some, but not for others. He could even be implying that because his children had suffered it in this life, there would be future hope for their salvation. And this connects with the possibility that his slain children were resurrected, thanks to his being their sin bearer in his own body, when all things in his life are restored at the end. See on Job 42:13.

Job 21:13 They spend their days in prosperity. In an instant they go down to Sheol- The idea is that they die an easy, quick and painless death. Job was dying a hard and slow death, inching ever closer to *sheol* rather than going there "in an instant".

Job 21:14 They tell God, 'Depart from us, for we don't want to know about Your ways- Again as noted on :12, Job may be admitting that his children had indeed cursed God in their hearts, renouncing Him (Job 1:5). For he seems to be saying that his children had been judged in this life for their sins, but those who did the same as they had but who avoided such judgment would be judged and condemned at the last day. There may be in 1 Tim. 5:24 the idea that if we are judged for our sins in this life, we shall not be in the last day; and the reverse is true. This again could support the possibility discussed on Job 42:3 that Job's slain children were resurrected when he was restored. See on :23. His sin offerings for them couldn't achieve this of themselves; but his representative suffering for them could. And this of course looks ahead to the work of the Lord Jesus, saving those whom Mosaic sacrifices of themselves couldn't save.

Job 21:15 What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? What profit should we have, if we pray to Him?' - Note the parallel between praying to God and serving Him. Those who feel incapacitated to physically serve God can take comfort from the fact that the Bible presents prayer as serving God. Again as noted on :14, Job may be admitting that his children had indeed cursed God in their hearts, renouncing Him (Job 1:5). These words are misquoted by Elihu in Job 35:3 as if Job has said this about himself and about there being no profit in serving or praying to God. Yet Elihu claims to speak on God's behalf. We can however understand Elihu as merely reiterating the position of the friends, as a kind of summary at the end of their dialogues; and at the same time giving a foretaste of the speeches of God which are to come. He therefore serves as a literary device in the story, particularly required for an illiterate audience hearing or viewing the drama presented, and having inevitably forgotten the details of all the positions previously presented.

The idols and the Gentile nations amongst whom the exiles lived would not "profit" them (Is. 30:5,6; 44:9,10); but as the book of Esther makes clear, they were profiting well, apparently, from remaining amongst them. But the only real "profit" would be if they quit all that and returned to Zion (Is. 48:17 s.w.). But they saw no "profit" in being forgiven and restored as God's people (s.w. Job 35:3). Rather they considered the temporal "profit" of life in Babylon as far greater profit.

Job 21:16 Behold, their prosperity is not in their hand. The counsel of the wicked is far from me- The idea may be as GNB "They claim they succeed by their own strength, but their way of thinking I can't accept". Job is saying that citing the various calamities of the wicked, as Zophar has just done, is not relevant to him personally as he doesn't act and think as the wicked to.

Job 21:17 How often is it that the lamp of the wicked is put out, that their calamity comes on them, that God distributes sorrows to them in His anger?' - The answer of course is intended to be 'Not often!'. He argues (contrary to what Zophar has just claimed in the previous speech) that in fact the wicked are rarely cut down in this life, instead they prosper (:17,18). And their children often don't suffer for the sins of the parents but instead profit from them (:19-21). We again must note how Job actually

engages with the words of the friends, whereas they increasingly ignore his words and attack the image of "Job" which they have falsely created in their own minds. See on :1,2,8.

This is Job's answer to Bildad's claim that he has observed that "the light of the wicked shall be put out, the spark of his fire shall not shine" (Job 18:5). Both Bildad and Job are appealing to human experience. And that yields no answer to the question of Job's suffering.

Job 21:18 How often is it that they are as stubble before the wind, as chaff that the storm carries away?- This is the language of the latter day destruction of the wicked at judgment day (Is. 17:13; Dan. 2:35). Job is saying that they do not have their judgment in this life, unlike his sinful children who did have it in this life; but they will be judged at the last day. He is driven towards his understanding of the last day by his own experience of injustice and the very differing judgment which sinners experience. All our struggles with the injustice of life today are designed to bring us to a similar focus- upon the return of the Lord Jesus as the just judge, and the establishment of eternal justice.

Job 21:19 You say, 'God lays up his iniquity for his children'. Let him recompense it to himself, that he may know it- GNB "You claim God punishes a child for the sins of his father. No! Let God punish the sinners themselves; let him show that he does it because of their sins". This was particularly relevant to the exiles, who considered they were unjustly suffering for their fathers' sins, and whose arguments are likewise challenged in Ez. 18. And in Job's immediate context, he is tacitly admitting that his children had indeed sinned and been punished- but not for his sins, but for their own sins, which he clearly was not involved in. But he wanted God to show this was the case, he wanted God to explain *why* his children had been killed. This is all so psychologically credible; to want to know *why* God took the lives of your ten kids... And there is no answer to these "why?" questions in God's response.

Job 21:20 Let his own eyes see his destruction. Let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty- GNB "Let sinners bear their own punishment; let them feel the wrath of Almighty God". See on :19.

Job 21:21 For what does he care for his house after him, when the number of his months is cut off?- The idea is that in fact the wickedness of the sinner is often not visited upon their children. Job argues (contrary to what Zophar has just claimed in the previous speech) that in fact the wicked are rarely cut down in this life, instead they prosper (:17,18). And their children often don't suffer for the sins of the parents but instead profit from them (:19-21). We again must note how Job actually engages with the words of the friends, whereas they increasingly ignore his words and attack the image of "Job" which they have falsely created in their own minds. See on :1,2.

Job 21:22 Shall any teach God knowledge, since He judges those who are high?- "Even those in high places" (GNB). The three friends have similarities with the Jewish system. When Job speaks of "the wicked" he is digging at the friends, as they do at him when they speak of the wicked. Thus he implies here that they were trying to "teach God knowledge" - alluded to in Rom. 11:34 and 1 Cor. 2:16, where the Jews are mocked for thinking they can instruct God and be "His counsellor", thus linking

the friends with the Jews. As Job suffered the judgments for their sins and finally redeemed them, so the Lord Jesus did for Israel.

Job 21:23 One dies in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet- The idea is that "one sinner" has an easy death, whereas others have Divine judgment in this life (:25). Job has earlier accused the friends of those being "at ease" (s.w. Job 12:5). He sees them as therefore being liable to future judgment, seeing they were not receiving judgment in this life. Job had earlier lived a "quiet" life (s.w. Job 16:12). But now that had been interrupted; he was experiencing judgment now, so that he would not face it in the last day. And earlier in this chapter it seems that he considered that this is what his sinful children had experienced when God slew them, paving the way for the idea that in fact they were resurrected thanks to his restoration- see on Job 42:3.

Job 21:24 His pails are full of milk. The marrow of his bones is moistened- Perhaps, "his buckets / pails". Job's bones are often mentioned as suffering; he was receiving judgment in this life so he didn't have to face it at the last day (as in 1 Tim. 5:24). The satan had been given specific authority to see Job's bones suffer (Job 2:5). His suffering of the condemnation of the wicked, whose bones were to suffer, was allowed on the specific understanding that God considered him righteous and not a sinner. This had been completely and willfully forgotten by the friends, who were the "sons of God" party to those initial discussions with God in the prologue.

Job 21:25 Another dies in bitterness of soul, and never tastes of good- "Bitterness of soul" is the very phrase Job uses about himself (Job 3:20; 7:11; 10:1). He clearly has himself in view. His idea is that some get their judgment in this life, as he was; and he contrasts himself with those like the friends who don't have their judgment now, but shall have it in the last day.

Job 21:26 They lie down alike in the dust. The worm covers them- The implication of Job's argument, as noted on :6, is that indeed all experience death, but the difference will be at the future judgment. Job's belief in the mortality of man and death as an unconscious state is hereby revealed, and it likely stood in contrast to the majority views of the time. As discussed on Job 9:22 ["he destroys the blameless and the wicked"], he was in fact led to this by his experiences. Their theology was that obedience to God brings blessing, and disobedience results in curse. But that theology had failed. Job is driven to the understanding that there must surely be a future day of judgment, which meant resurrection, which meant God somehow revealed on earth at some latter day, when justice would finally be done. Likewise, he is increasingly driven to the reflection that life for all men, the good and the bad, is very brief- and for good and bad alike, ends in death: "together in the dust [all men] lie, and the worm will cover them" (Job 21:26). This clearly alludes to the curse upon man in Eden. All have sinned, and whether some sin more than others they all alike come to dust. Job suffered "without cause" and I don't discern any spiritual growth in him within the dialogues; but it would be true to say that his theology developed. And we are possibly intended to discern that.

Job 21:27 Behold, I know your thoughts, the devices with which you would wrong me- The friends are accused of 'wronging' Job by wicked "devices"; of actually planning wrong against him. 'Wronging' is the same word as "shake off" in Job 15:33. Eliphaz was so convinced that God would do Job 'wrong' that he developed to the point of

actually devising to do wrong to Job, thus confirming the sense that the friends became the 'Satan' figure and actually did the evil to Job which he initially wanted done.

Job 21:28 For you say, 'Where is the house of the prince? Where is the tent in which the wicked lived?' - "The [wicked] prince" clearly refers to Job. The friends have not exactly said these words, but Job as it were places the implication of their positions in inverted commas, as if they had really said this in so many words- when actually they had only implied it. So again we see how dialogue goes so wrong, when parties become sure that the implication of others' positions is what they have actually said- when they haven't. The friends do the same to Job, but we can say that Job does so more accurately and fairly than they do to him.

Job 21:29 Haven't you asked wayfaring men? Don't you know their evidences- Those who had travelled far were seen as wise men because of having encountered more experiences than most people, who never travelled far. The friends constantly appeal to the wisdom of the sages and of previous generations. Job now appeals to the general knowledge and observations of the ordinary people, the "wayfaring men". He is saying that observed reality simply differs to what the sages are saying.

Job 21:30 that the evil man is reserved to the day of calamity, that they are led forth to the day of wrath?- Job is arguing that the way the wicked prosper means that they must face a future "day of wrath", and that this has been figured out by ordinary "wayfaring" people (:29) because it is so obvious. God confirms this view, by saying that He has "reserved" final judgment, although He has created the things He will use in that judgment and "reserved" them until then (Job 38:23 s.w.).

Or we can go with GNB "On the day God is angry and punishes, it is the wicked who are always spared". When judgment days come, God spares the wicked, according to Job: "the wicked is spared in the day of destruction". In passing, we note that one difficulty in studying Job is the bias of translators who are set on trying to present Job as "patient" and Godly. GNB is good at not doing this. As discussed on :31, this would then be yet another of Job's blasphemous accusations that God is unjust and actually favours the wicked. As discussed on Job 20:6, the argument that "Sin always brings retribution in this life, and righteousness brings blessing in this life" was not altogether wrong, especially in the context of the time when Job and his friends were living. The fact was that this was not a consistent principle in God's dealings with man. And reflection upon this led Job to fantasize that there will be a future day of judgment and eternal justice. Indeed he was not wrong. Although God's response majestically doesn't make that point at all, as we would expect. He is not always consistent, as man judges consistency and integrity. Even though that point is developed in the Psalms, where psalmists struggle with the same issues and take comfort in future judgment. God's repeated point is that we are to accept Him and accept our inability to reason with Him.

Job 21:31 Who shall declare his way to his face? Who shall repay him what he has done?- GNB "There is no one to accuse the wicked or pay them back for all they have done". The answer of course is that there is no such ultimate judgment or moral ombudsman in this life. Yet justice and judgment must be done- and there must therefore be a future day of judgment when God shall do this. Job is driven relentlessly towards a focus upon the last day, just as we are by our experiences of

injustice. And the appearance of God in judgment at the end is a vindication of Job's desire.

Job 21:32 Yet he will be carried to the grave. Men shall keep watch over the tomb- The wicked are carried to peaceful graves without having faced judgment (:31). But therefore, the very peacefulness of their graves is a strong argument for belief in a future day of judgment, and their resurrection to face it. Job at this point doesn't see that; he argues that death is all the same permanent for both good and bad, and therefore God is unjust. And he will die without a tomb nor memorial.

Job 21:33 The clods of the valley shall be sweet to him. All men shall draw after him, as there were innumerable before him- As noted on :32, the apparent sweetness of the death and burial of the wicked, going on generation after generation, is a powerful argument that in fact there must be a day of resurrection to judgment yet to come. Or we can read with GNB "Thousands join the funeral procession, and even the earth lies gently on their bodies".

Job's position is that the wicked often prosper and the righteous suffer. Yet they all die the same death. He has no real conception of a future judgment nor afterlife. And so he concludes that God is unjust.

Job 21:34 So how can you comfort me with nonsense, because in your answers there remains only falsehood?- LXX "I have no rest from your molestation". If this reading is correct, we have more evidence that the friends were in fact the Satan, bringing the judgments upon Job. The friends initially came to "comfort" Job. But their refusal to engage with him as a person and his actual situation and words (see on :1,2) leads them to do the very opposite. And so we see how initially well meaning dialogue turns to be destructive and the reverse of "comfort". The restoration prophets announced "Comfort" to God's people who were feeling and suffering as Job (Is. 40:1; 66:13); Job's lack of comforters thereby makes him representative of the exiles.

JOB CHAPTER 22

Job 22:1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered- Much of this speech is utterly irrelevant to what Job has just said. Eliphaz assumes Job is protesting his righteousness, as noted on Job 21:1,2, the friends attack a straw man image they have built up of Job rather than engaging with that he has actually said. And they repeatedly forget the context of Job as explained by God in the prologue- that Job is a righteous man, and his sufferings are not judgment for sin, but rather to persuade the satan of his doubts. And the satan morphs into the friends after the end of Job 2. Eliphaz here does later mention some of Job's words (:15-20), but he misrepresents them to fit his own agenda. This again is a parade example of how dialogue breaks down and becomes more than unhelpful.

Job 22:2 Can a man be profitable to God? Surely he who is wise is profitable to himself- These words are applied by Elihu to Job in Job 35:3. It seems an obvious and unkindly willful misquotation- until we accept the viewpoint that Elihu is not so much speaking for himself, as summarizing for the audience the arguments presented so far, with Elihu playing the role of the friends in summarizing the argument so far. See on :21. Or we can read :2,3 as Eliphaz summarizing the implications of Job's statements

in Job 21 that good and bad people have the same end, in the grave, and therefore God isn't bothered about human behaviour. Job, says Eliphaz, is arguing that human action cannot impact God's feelings nor give Him pleasure (:3). Like the Greek gods, He was thought to have no emotion, made of concrete. Job has said the same in Job 7:20: "If I sin, what do I do to You, You watcher of men?". And indeed, that is a fair summary of what Job has been arguing. We know from the prologue how wrong this is- for God was thrilled with Job's righteousness. Yet this is a common human failing- to fail to perceive how sensitive God is with our behaviour.

Job 22:3 Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that you are righteous? Or does it benefit Him, that you make your ways perfect?- Eliphaz is now propelled by his obsession against Job to say things about God which are wildly untrue, and is specifically rebuked above the other friends for doing this at the end (Job 42:7). I would surmise that his words of Job 22:3 are specifically in view. For this is a complete denial of all that God reveals Himself to be. Job rightly understood that God as human creator has a tender desire to the work of His hands (see on Job 14:15). But Eliphaz speaks as if God has no interest nor feeling towards those who are righteous, so far above caring is He. And this could not be a more serious misrepresentation of the God who is thrilled by every move a man makes towards Him. See on :12.

But consider that :2,3 are Eliphaz summarizing what Job has said. The words translated "righteous... perfect... pious" in :2,3 are all found in God's assessment of Job in Job 1:8; 2:3 as perfect, upright and God fearing. It was a pleasure to God that Job was like this. Job was tragically unaware of this. For Job, God as so distant and supremely "other" that He is unmoved by human spirituality and heart for Him. The connection with the prologue shows how wrong Job was to think this. The 'satan', who may well be a figure for Eliphaz and his friends, argued that Job's material blessings came from God because Job was "righteous... perfect... pious". And yet Job, according to how Eliphaz is summarizing him, says that God is personally disinterested in mere man being "righteous... perfect... pious". So he considers that material blessing comes as it were on autopilot from an unfeeling God, as if by some law of nature. And so Job has absorbed the theology of the friends and the satan [at this point they are likely the same entity].

Job 22:4 Is it for your piety that He reproves you?- This is sarcasm. And this is the point where we know that dialogue is now no longer dialogue. Eliphaz reached this low point because he is simply ignoring all Job has said in the previous speech, and has developed his own idea that Job's sufferings are Divine reproof- when the prologue makes clear that they were for the benefit of the satan and the "sons of God", the friends party to the original discussion about Job.

That He enters with you into judgment?- The prologue has made it clear to us the readers that Job was seen by God as a righteous man. His sufferings were not Divine judgment, but a means through which to teach the friends. But Eliphaz wrongly assumes that all disaster is a reproof from God, and is a sign of His judgment / condemnation. He won't see that evil comes for various reasons. Indeed we could understand :5 as sarcastically meaning 'Do you really think that because you are so righteous, God so reproves you?'. The truth is that the only truly righteous man, the Lord Jesus, suffered more than any man.

Job's sufferings were not a rebuke nor an opening of a legal case against him from God. But God and Elihu will indeed go on to rebuke and enter into judgment

with Job- not for any sins prior to his trials, but basically because he believed the friends.

Job 22:5 Isn't your wickedness great? Neither is there any end to your iniquities- This is in total defiance of the opening explanation in the prologue that Job was not seen as wicked before God. But just as people today lose their basis in Biblical principle and statement and run headlong into assumptions which lead to breakdown of interpersonal relationships, so Eliphaz has become convinced that Job is a sinner because he is suffering. The greatness of his sufferings was in order to persuade the friends / satan about Job's righteousness; but instead they are so fixated on the idea that sin and judgment are proportional that they assume that the great sufferings imply great wickedness. Initially, Eliphaz accepted Job was righteous: "Isn't your piety your confidence? Isn't the integrity of your ways your hope?" (Job 4:6). But he has reasoned himself to a point where he considers Job was in fact extremely wicked. He cannot accept that the righteous suffer, and so, sufferers must be wicked. Just as people come to hate and demonize a person they once loved... solely because of their internal paths of reasoning. When, in Job's case, he did nothing but sit in front of Eliphaz scraping his skin with broken pottery.

Job 22:6 For you have taken pledges from your brother for nothing, and stripped the naked of their clothing- Eliphaz is so convinced that Job is suffering because he sinned that he now dogmatically states Job's sins in detail. What began as internal speculation within him, he now comes out with as fact. And we see this happening all the time in broken relationships. He assumes that the stripping of Job of his clothing in Job 19:9 must have been because Job had stripped others of their clothing. The same word is used of the stripping of God's people of their glory (Ez. 16:39; 23:26; Mic. 3:3), which only happened because they themselves did not strip themselves of their clothing in repentance (s.w. Is. 32:11; Ez. 26:16). The stripping of Job, which also recalls the stripping of the priest Aaron of his clothes and "crown" [mitre] when his priesthood ended (Num. 20:26,28), was therefore to elicit repentance in him. And this is what was finally achieved at the end of the book.

Job 22:7 You haven't given water to the weary to drink, and you have withheld bread from the hungry- See on :6. The focus of the Lord Jesus upon the positive is shown by the way the Lord quotes Job 22:7 in the parable of the sheep and goats. These words are part of Eliphaz's erroneous allegations against Job- for Job was a perfect man, and not guilty on these counts. Yet the Lord extracts elements of truth from those wrong words, rather than just contemptuously ignoring them. Likewise Job 22:25 speaks of God being our "treasure... our precious silver" (RV). Surely the Lord had this in mind when saying that our treasure must be laid up "in heaven", i.e. with God (for He often uses 'Heaven' for 'God'). And James follows suite by approvingly quoting Job 22:29 about the lifting up of the humble (James 4:6).

Job 22:8 But as for the mighty man, he had the earth from you. The honourable man, he lived in it- The accusation is that Job had given land to the mighty and famous in return for favours from them, whereas he had despised the poor (:7,9). We must recall that Job was "perfect" before God and was being tested for the sake of the education of the friends. But now Eliphaz is so persuaded of his pet theory that Job's sufferings are for his sins, that he feels he can speculate about what those things were. And that

allowance of himself to speculate now leads him to dogmatically make false accusation; dialogue is now no longer dialogue but a feeding frenzy of hatred and self-justification. We too can so easily descend this path.

Job 22:9 You have sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless you have broken- As explained on :8, Eliphaz began by nursing a pet theory: Job was suffering because he had sinned, and God's word of explanation about why Job was now to suffer was ignored. This led to internal speculation about Job's possible sins; and now to utterly dogmatic assertion of that which was untrue. The path to every slander is similar.

Job 22:10 Therefore snares are around you. Sudden fear troubles you- Now Eliphaz quotes some of Job's words describing his lamentable state. But still, as noted on :1, Eliphaz isn't engaging with Job's words and arguments. He is merely quoting Job's laments and descriptions of his illness, and gloating that "therefore", because of Job's sins, these things have happened. This is not engagement with the words and arguments of another.

Job 22:11 or darkness, so that you can not see, and floods of waters cover you- This may refer to fits of blindness which Job complains of, and a sensation of drowning. Or the darkness can refer to the cosmic 'power of darkness' many then believed in. It can be argued that the book of Job is a dialogue concerning evil and suffering, with three popular views being represented by the three friends. These views are examined and corrected by the personal history of Job, as well as by the epilogue and prologue to the book. Eliphaz seems to be representative of the idea that Job is being hit by supernaturally controlled evil- Eliphaz speaks of a force of darkness (Job 22:10,11) and sinful or faulty Angels living in an unclean Heaven (Job 4:18; 15:15). Yet the *answer* to all this is that the Satan figure is under God's control, all Job's misfortunes come from *God* and His Angels- one of whom may have been called 'the adversary' ('Satan')- are in fact perfectly obedient to Him and not disobedient. And finally, Eliphaz and the friends are rebuked for their various wrong understandings, with God declaring Himself supreme and ultimate sovereign. Likewise Bildad's view of Angels in Job 25:5 "The stars are not pure in God's eyes" is corrected by God in Job 38:7, when He says that "the morning stars sang together and all the Sons of God shouted for joy".

Job 22:12 Isn't God in the heights of heaven? See the height of the stars, how high they are!- This is similar to the terribly wrong claim in :3 that God is so far away that He is not so serious about human behaviour. Job however is then accused of misusing this to think that God is unable to see his sinful behaviour (:13). The final appearance of God is surely to demonstrate how close God is, and the height of His exaltation is no barrier to His relationship with and feelings toward man.

Job 22:13 You say, 'What does God know? Can He judge through the thick darkness?'- In fact, this was the very view of the exiles, and it was this subconscious belief that God could not see them which led to their sins in the first place (Is. 29:15; 40:27; Jer. 23:24; Lam. 3:44; Ez. 8:12). So even the experience of false accusation was used by God, so that Job felt the feelings of God's sinful people. Eliphaz was proven wrong enough when the God enveloped by the "thick darkness" of the Sinai theophany saw Israel's sin with the golden calf (s.w. Dt. 4:11; 5:22). The "thick

darkness" is created by God (Job 38:9), it is He who can shroud Himself from human understanding; but this doesn't mean that He cannot "judge through the thick darkness" (Job 22:13). The thick darkness was only from man's viewpoint; not from God's. The fact man feels God to be distant and shrouded doesn't mean He actually is. And this is a fundamental truth for all time, that our perceptions of God don't mean that this is what He actually is. For God was not created by man in his image and likeness, but the other way around. "The thick darkness" is the term used to describe the exile in Babylon (Is. 60:2; Jer. 13:16; Ez. 34:12). But God judged through this, and the exiles weren't hidden from God because of it. And He "reveals deep things out of darkness" (Job 12:22 LXX).

Job 22:14 Thick clouds are a covering to Him, so that He doesn't see- See on :13. Again, these were false representations of Job, attacking a straw man image of Job which had no real existence and was only in the mind of Eliphaz. God created these thick clouds and could dissolve them at will, and maintains them within a perfect balance (s.w. Job 37:11,16).

He walks on the vault of the sky'- The idea is alluded to in Is. 40:22, where the context is of assuring the exiles that in fact they are not forgotten, and the God who is enthroned over Heaven and earth has the absolute power to change their situation in a moment. Eliphaz is accusing Job of considering that God's concerns are simply up in Heaven where He walks around, and He is disinterested in what happens on earth, seeing He is so far away. God almost confirms this in His response, which speaks of His creation and massive power, and has very little to say about man.

Job 22:15 Will you keep the old way, which wicked men have trodden- The friends continually appeal to past history. Their wisdom is supposedly in line with that of the ancient sages; and they consider Job's behaviour to be in line with that of previous sinners, those who lived before the flood (see on :16).

Job 22:16 who were snatched away before their time- "Snatched away" is only s.w. Job 16:8, where Job complains his body is "shrivelled" or "snatched away". Eliphaz is claiming that Job is suffering just as those previously condemned by God had done.

Whose foundation was poured out as a stream- Literally, "whose foundation was poured out (so as to become) a stream or flood", possibly referring to how the foundations of the earth appeared to turn into gushing waters at the flood (Gen. 7:11). The friends argue that sin brings retribution, and therefore Job has sinned because he is suffering. His case proves them wrong; but the whole question is nuanced by the fact that indeed, there had been the flood and the destruction of Babel already in their period of history. Sin does bring Divine judgment in this life. And at their time, obedience did bring blessing, as we see from God's blessing of Job both before and after his period of suffering. What the friends failed to realize was the sovereignty of God- that He can make exceptions to His own principles, and in any case, the principles we observe are only what we perceive.

Job 22:17 who said to God, 'Depart from us'; and, 'What can the Almighty do for us?' - A misrepresentation of Job's words (Job 21:14,15). The friends reasoned that Job was a sinner because he was suffering, therefore he was to be seen as associated with other sinners such as those destroyed by the flood, and therefore the reported words and attitudes of those sinners must be those of Job. Like many today in pseudo dialogue, the false steps of logic all arose because they refused to engage with Job as

a unique person and hear his actual words; instead they pigeon holed him within a certain category they had in their minds. And treated him as if he were like all the others they had placed him with.

Job 22:18 Yet He filled their houses with good things, but the counsel of the wicked is far from me- A sarcastic quotation of Job's words, where he had denied association with the "counsel of the wicked" (Job 21:16). The descent into sarcasm is a sure sign that genuine dialogue is over. Perhaps Eliphaz is claiming that Job had justified the sinners destroyed by the flood by noting that God had "filled their houses with good things". Whilst there may be evidence of prosperity just before the flood (Mt. 24:38,39), Eliphaz is attributing words to Job which he simply never said- although in many ways he is not unfairly developing the implications of Job's words.

Job 22:19 The righteous see it, and are glad. The innocent ridicule them- Eliphaz equates the friends with "the righteous... the innocent". But they have earlier condemned Job for claiming he is "innocent", arguing that in fact all men are impure before God. Their obsession with condemning Job led them to contradict themselves, to even condemn themselves so that they might be seen as righteous and Job as sinful. And surely "ridicule" is never appropriate for the righteous in their relationship with the wicked. Job was indeed "the innocent", but he doesn't in this sense rejoice, gloat over nor ridicule the friends. Whereas the friends do "ridicule" Job (s.w. Job 21:3). This ridiculing of the innocent by those who wrongly thought they were innocent was exactly what happened to the Lord on the cross (Ps. 22:7 s.w.), and what was done to the exile (Is. 33:19).

Job 22:20 saying, 'Surely those who rose up against us are cut off- LXX "Has not their substance been taken away"; Heb. "Truly our *adversary* is cut down". Eliphaz is saying that the righteous, himself and the friends, would rejoice in Job's death because their satan / adversary would then have been cut down. This is how completely transformed was their reasoning. They were acting as the satan to Job; for the satan figure morphs with the friends after he disappears from the story. Job was treated now as the satan, the adversary. But thereby he came to save those who were adversarial to him. He thus bore their sins whilst innocent, which is one of the great themes of the story. And it is in this aspect that he points forward to the suffering, saving work of Lord Jesus.

The fire has consumed their remnant'- Alluding to how the fire of God consumed the wealth and family of Job.

Job 22:21 Acquaint yourself with Him, now, and be at peace. Thereby good shall come to you- Eliphaz orders Job to repent, and thereby receive "good" from God. He has overlooked Job's opening position, that the righteous receive both "good" and "evil" from God's hand (Job 2:10). Again we see the defining parameters of the prologue disregarded by the friends as they rush to judge Job according to their own assumptions about him. "Acquaint yourself with Him" is the very same Hebrew phrase just used by Eliphaz in :2: "Can a man be profitable to God?". Eliphaz has been arguing that being profitable to God is not something God is interested in and Job is wasting his time. But here he contradicts himself. There are many such bald and blatant contradictions within the words of the friends. This is what happens when a preexisting agenda becomes the basis for so called dialogue, and the other party

must be condemned at all costs. Although bear in mind that Eliphaz in :2,3 was likely summarizing Job's positions.

Job 22:22 Please receive instruction from His mouth, and lay up His words in your heart- "Instruction" is "the law", the word usually used of the law of Moses. Job was to receive it, as Israel received it (Dt. 31:26 s.w.). Again he is set up as the representative of Israel, who received the law but refused to put it in their heart. This was not the case with Job personally, but he was treated as if he had done what Israel did. ,

Job 22:23 If you return to the Almighty, you shall be built up-

We the readers see a strong irony here. For all Eliphaz says about Job will come true, but his successful prayer to God for the guilty is to be for Eliphaz: "If you return to Shaddai you will be restored... you will lift up your face to God, you will pray to Him, and He will listen to you, and you will pay your vows... He will deliver the guilty; he will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands".

This is language clearly relevant to the building up of the restored Zion which would happen if the exiles returned both to their God and their land. Job had not departed from the Almighty, but he was treated as if he had committed their sins.

If you put away unrighteousness far from your tents- Eliphaz quotes verbatim from the words of Zophar in Job 11:14. This again is a parade example of dialogue gone wrong. Those on the accusing side start quoting each other as authorities, whilst continuing to ignore the actual person and words of the accused. Although quite possibly both Zophar and Eliphaz were quoting a wisdom saying common at the time.

Job 22:24 Lay your treasure in the dust, the gold of Ophir among the stones of the brooks- The idea is that Job should stop valuing wealth. Gold was washed down from the upper reaches and was found "among the stones of the brook"; and Job is bidden leave it there. Yet again, the divinely given defining parameters of the prologue are ignored; Job's wealth was from God and not because he sought it, and it was removed from him in order to teach the "sons of God", the friends. But they had done what so many do in their interpersonal relationships and supposed dialogues with others; they had ignored the parameters defining the specific relationship in view, e.g. that we are to esteem our brother better than ourselves, we are to have the love which seeks to believe good rather than evil.

Job 22:25 The Almighty will be your treasure, and precious silver to you- "Treasure" is only s.w. "treasure" in :24, the word also meaning 'gold'. God was to be Job's gold and not literal gold his god. LXX "and he shall bring thee forth pure as silver that has been tried by fire". This is the image used of the intended effect of Judah's sufferings in Babylon (Is. 48:18; Ez. 22:18-22). If the LXX is correct, then Job quotes this back to Eliphaz in Job 23:10. Job is arguing back that he does not love gold over God, and that he will himself come forth as gold after the trials have finished. Unlike the friends, who generally refuse to engage with Job's words in their speeches, Job specifically engages with their words. See on :7.

Job 22:26 For then you will delight yourself in the Almighty- The exiles like Job were to finally delight themselves in God at the restoration, if they followed Job's path (s.w. Is. 58:14).

And shall lift up your face to God- Perhaps the Lord had this in view when He commended the man who like Job would not lift up his face to God (Lk. 18:13). The friends were only saved because Job was allowed to lift up his face to God for them (s.w. Job 42:8,9). This was all a powerful way of teaching the friends that they were being saved by absolute grace. The man Job, whose face they were sure God would not accept, saved them by lifting up his face to God. It was the exiles whose faces God would not accept (s.w. Mal. 1:8,9). Job was treated like them although he was not like them; he was bearing the punishment of their sins in order to save them, just as he did for the friends, whose faces were likewise unacceptable to God. LXX: "Then shalt thou have boldness before the Lord, looking up cheerfully to heaven".

Job 22:27 You shall make your prayer to Him, and He will hear you. You shall pay your vows- This turned around in a strange way; for it was due to God hearing Job's prayer that the friends were finally saved. God surely alludes back here when He says that Job will pray for them, "and him will I accept" (Job 42:8).

Job 22:28 You shall also decree a thing, and it shall be established to you. Light shall shine on your ways- LXX "And he shall establish to thee again a habitation of righteousness and there shall be light upon thy paths". Again this is the language of later Isaiah about Zion's light and the restored Zion.

The decree which is established is parallel to the prayer which is heard (:27,28). This was in fact true of Job, for it was thanks to his prayers that the friends were finally saved; when they had here insisted that God didn't hear Job's prayers. In fact it was their prayers which were not heard. But there is a wider principle here. Absolute faith in prayer which is according to God's broad desires results in our requests effectively being decrees of what is now going to happen! It is not difficult for us to know what the will of God in the sense of His desires is. We have been born again by the word of God. We were not born again by the will of man, but by the will of God. The will of God is therefore found in the word of God (James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23; Jn. 1:12-14). Thus if we pray according to our knowledge of God's desires as explained in the word, we are praying according to His will- and therefore if we have faith "He hears us". The Lord Jesus said as much: "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what *you* will, and it shall be done unto you" (Jn. 15:7). Notice He didn't say 'you will ask whatever is according to God's will, and it will be heard'. We ask whatever we desire, and we will receive. This is because our will should be the will of God if the word of God is in us. And as we mature, our experience of answered prayer gets better, because we more intuitively sense what is God's will.

Job 22:29 When they cast down, you shall say, 'Be lifted up'. He will save the humble person- See on :7. This is quoted in James 4:6. As noted earlier, the friends come out with some truths, but they are framed in the wrong context. What they say is so true it is even worthy of later quotation, but the context in which they use their 'truth' is so wrong. And this is an example for all time. The friends may be saying that Job now cannot lift up the cast down by his prayers nor save anyone (:27,28) because he is a sinner. All this was turned right around at the end, where it is the friends whose prayers cannot be heard, and who are saved from their "cast down" position by Job's prayers.

Job 22:30 He will even deliver him who is not innocent. Yes, he shall be delivered

through the cleanness of your hands- There are times and places where God is willing to save people for the sake of the spirituality of a third party, but if he or she fails in this, deliverance doesn't *necessarily* arise from another place, as it would have done in Esther's time. Eliphaz perceived all this when he told Job that a truly righteous man can "save the humble person. He shall deliver even him that is not innocent: yeah, he shall be delivered through the cleanness of *thine* hands" (Job 22:30 RV). And this was proved true later on- for Eliphaz was saved due to Job's mediation for him. And it was Eliphaz who was shown by God to be "not innocent".

JOB CHAPTER 23

Job 23:1 Then Job answered- Job's reply over Job 23 and Job 24 slips into self justification and fails to engage specifically with what Eliphaz has said in his last speech. Job 24 is largely a repeat of the general observation that the wicked prosper, and the suffering of anyone is therefore no sign they are sinning. This all indicates the overall decline of the dialogue. And it is a path followed by so many failed personal interactions.

Job 23:2 Even today- As if to say that yes, I am still going to keep complaining about my situation.

My complaint is grievous. His hand is heavy in spite of my groaning- AV "My stroke is heavier than my groaning". Job fell into the trap of thinking that his terrible situation somehow allowed him to speak whatever words came into his head. Job felt he hadn't been 'fed' and so he was entitled to "bray" and "low" over his misfortune (Job 6:5). Because of the weight of his sufferings, he thereby justified the fact that "Therefore have my words been rash (Job 6:3). Likewise "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit" (Job 7:11). "I will give free course to my complaint. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 10:1 RV). Zophar criticizes Job being "full of talk" and speaking "the multitude of words", "for thou sayest, my doctrine is pure" (Job 11:1-4)- as if Job felt that because he held true doctrine he was justified in pouring out words as he did. "Why should I not be impatient?" (Job 21:4 RV). "Today is my complaint bitter. My stroke is heavier than my groaning" (Job 23:2)- i.e. his complaining was due to his sufferings. "If I hold my peace, I shall give up the spirit" (Job 13:19 RVmg.). Job felt that the situation he was in *forced* him to use the words he did, and certainly justified it [we may well have used this reasoning ourselves when justifying the use of bad language]. But in the end, Elihu on God's behalf rebuked him for his wrong words. And Job himself recognized: "I am vile. I will lay mine hand upon my mouth" in regret of his words (Job 40:4). "Wherefore I loathe my words and repent" (Job 42:6 RVmg.). He realized his mistake: he had thought that the situation justified his words. Now he hung his head and admitted that there was no justification for speaking in the way he had. Especially in the matter of the tongue, we can so easily justify ourselves; 'I only said / did it [or didn't do it] because...'. And it is all so child-like. Once we leave off *all* attempts at self-justification, we will face up to our sins.

Job understood God to be in control in Heaven; he rejects the idea of a cosmic conflict going on 'up there' which the friends seem to allude to. More specifically, Job speaks of how God's hand forms and can pierce the "crooked serpent" and smite any monster (Job 26:11-14). It's as if Job is mocking the idea that God has let him go into the hands of the cosmic monsters which the friends believed in. For Job so often

stresses that it is the “hand of God” which has brought His affliction (Job 19:21; 23:2). That Divine hand was far greater than any mythical ‘Satan’ figure. The theme of his speech in Job 28 is that Yahweh alone is to be feared throughout the entire cosmos. Nobody else – such as the ‘Satan’ figures alluded to by the friends – needed to be feared.

Job 23:3 Oh that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come even to His seat!- This is Job's sarcastic response to Eliphaz's advice that Job repent and go to God (Job 22:21-23). Job sought to "probe" (AV "find out") the Almighty (Job 23:3; 28:12), whereas Elihu appears to agree with Zophar that "the Almighty" cannot be 'found out' (Job 11:7; 37:23). God's own appearance at the end is perhaps an answer to this. He cannot be 'found out' by intellectual argument or personal righteousness, but He still responds to the spirit of Job's request by appearing. Instead, He 'finds out' people and saves them by grace. Paul expresses the same idea when he writes that it is not so much a case of man 'knowing God', but rather of being "known of God" by grace (Gal. 4:9).

Job 23:3 perhaps epitomizes this desire of Job for judgment day: “Oh, that today I might find him, that I might come to his judgment seat!” (NAB). He wanted the judgment seat to come that very day! The invisible hand of God is working in every life that suffers from ones’ brethren ‘playing God’ in false judgment of us... to lead us to this wonderful and blessed attitude.

The use of the word "order" in Job's words in 23:3-6 repays examination: "Oh that I knew where I might find (God)! that I might come even to His seat!. I would *order* my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments... Will He plead against me with his great power? No". See on :10.

Job 23:4 I would set my cause in order before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments- Earlier, Job had judged himself, setting in order his legal case, but declaring himself righteous (Job 13:8). By Job 23:4, Job is realizing that he needs to set his case in order before God; but he can't find God, or get God to engage in this game of judgment. He needed the final appearance of God at the end of the book to review his case, and declare that he is in fact wrong and condemned. But by grace, God will count him as right. He was prepared for this by Elihu's speech in Job 37:19: "Teach us what we shall tell Him, for we can't make our case by reason of darkness". "Make our case" is s.w. "set my cause in order".

Job appeals for ‘witnesses’ (Job 9:33–35; 16:18–22; 19:20–27), an advocate in Heaven (Job 9:33), denies his guilt and demands a legal list of his sins (Job 13:19), he wishes for God to come to trial (Job 9:3), and thus Job is described as a man who has taken out a ‘case’ with God (Job 23:4; 40:2). Job 29–31 is effectively Job’s declaration of legal innocence and an appeal to God to hear his case more sympathetically (Job 31:35). And of course God pronounces a final legal verdict at the very end (Job 42:7), in response to Job’s earlier plea: “Sleeplessly I wait for His reply” (Job 16:22). It’s as if the whole experience of Job was [at least partly] in order to test out the Canaanite theories of ‘Satan’, suffering and evil in the court of Heaven; and also the various theories which arose to explain Judah's captivity in Babylon. The friends represent the traditional views of evil, and often make reference to the myths of their day about ‘Satan’ figures. They speak as if *they* are the final court– Eliphaz speaks of how the judges and elders of their day, the “holy ones”, had concluded Job

was guilty, and that they, the friends, were right: "To which of the holy ones will you appeal [legal language]?... we have [legally] examined this, and it [Job's guilt] is true" (Job 5:1,27). This is of great comfort to those who feel misjudged by man— above them in Heaven the ultimate Heavenly court is considering our case, and that is all that matters.

Job 23:5 I would know the words which He would answer me, and understand what He would tell me- Job promises to be obedient and acceptant of whatever outcome there was from his meeting with God. And when God does finally appear and in a way condemn him, he does accept this. Or perhaps the sense is simply as in GNB "I want to know what he would say and how he would answer me". Job's fantasy about having a day in court with God is quite frequent (Job 9:27-35 "Let us go to court together"; Job 10:2;13:23; 31:35-37). Such fantasies at times of huge loss and stress are quite psychologically credible. But he always comes back to reality- in :8,9 he brushes off his fantasy as unrealistic, because God makes Himself unfindable. Eliphaz understood Job's sufferings as God opening a court case against Job: "Is it because of your piety He reproves you? That He enters into litigation with you" (Job 22:4). Job's response is that he actually wants a court case with God, but God is avoiding it. He says in Job 14:1-3 that man is too tiny for God to bother bringing such a small thing into judgment with Him. So Job refuses to agree that his sufferings are a court case against him. We know from the prologue that there has already been a kind of court case about Job in the throne room of Heaven- and God has taken Job's side. Whereas Job believes that God wouldn't legally bother with tiny man, and that He would never turn up in court anyway because He abuses His power and knows He will be found guilty. If only we could see and feel how God feels about us! This is one window onto the question of "Why the cross?". It is to commend to us how very seriously God takes us, and how positive He is for us who are in Christ.

Job's legal challenge against God is the bravado of a drunken man. David begged not to enter judgment with God: "Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for no living being can be in the right before You" (Ps. 143:2)- as if David had learned the lesson from Job. To come into judgment with God is a threat of condemnation: "Yahweh is about to take the stand to prosecute, He is about to stand to judge his people, Yahweh is entering into litigation with the elders of his people" (Is. 3:13,14). Likewise "But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment" (Ecc. 11:9). God's final appearance was indeed an entering into judgment with Job, and he is terrified and repents. So much of the talk about 'struggle with God' is no more than the bravado of a drunken idiot. And Is. 1:18 as well as Romans 1-8 explain that God enters into judgment with man in the hope that He can somehow acquit man, rather than punish him: "Come and let us reason together / enter into judgment together, says Yahweh. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall become white as snow". God presents Himself, especially through His Son, as accuser, witness, judge and also advocate for the defence. As we see in the prologue to Job, He is very much on our side- even if we don't perceive it. The trial before God is indeed not "fair" in human terms- because it is so heavily weighted in our favour.

Job 23:6 Would He contend with me in the greatness of His power? No, but He would listen to me-

We could render: "Do I mean that God should exhibit His almighty power against me? far from that, but that He would listen to me". He wants God to stop flaunting His omnipotent power, stop crushing him, and get on with answering up to Job's

accusations. This complaint about God's abuse of power is frequent in Job (e.g. Job 9:32; 13:20). God's final answer is indeed to exhibit His power- with no further explanation.

AV "Would he plead against me...?". God, and Elihu on His behalf, *did* plead against Job by recounting God's power. Judgment before God was not quite as Job had imagined. When Elihu was established in Job's mind as God's true representative, he found that he had nothing to say, as he thought he would have. Elihu seems to refer back to this speech when he challenges the dumfounded Job: "If thou hast anything to say, answer me... if thou canst answer me, set thy words in *order* before me" (Job 33:32,5 AV). Elihu has in mind Job 23:4 "I would set my cause in order before Him". Job several times spoke of how he would fully explain himself to God, if he found Him. Yet in the presence of God and Elihu, he finds that all the words dry up. Words became irrelevant. All he can do is behold the majesty of God's righteousness, and declare his own unrighteousness. That spiritual pinnacle of Job still lies ahead for the majority of us. The desire to speak is a desire to express our *own* thoughts. Words are a construct which can trap us. Only *God's* words can liberate. There is a *wordless* element in being truly humbled before the Almighty.

Job 23:7 There the upright might reason with Him, so I should be delivered forever from my judge- Job's imagination of judgment day was that there would be some upright person present who would be as his advocate, and deliver him from God as his judge. Elihu appears according to Job's wish (Job 33:6); but he condemns Job. And God then appears in person to judge Job. Elihu couldn't save Job from that. "The upright / righteous one" is the imaginary advocate Job fantasized of having; see on Job 16:19. "There the upright *might* reason" suggests now Job again recognizes that in fact this figure doesn't exist. He dreams that this person might be able to eternally save him from his judge, i.e. God. He entertains the old popular [but wrong] idea of an angry God who is placated by an advocate.

Job 23:8 If I go east, He is not there; if west, I can't find Him- We note there was no God to be found to the east, whereas He is apparently present at the other compass points, although invisible to Job. Perhaps this would be a reference to the spiritual bankruptcy of the children of the east, from where the friends had come from. It would also be a statement from Job, as one of the greatest of the children of the east, that there was no God in his surrounding society.

Job 23:9 He works to the north, but I can't see Him. He turns south, but I can't catch a glimpse of Him- "The north" in Hebrew is 'the hidden place'. There appears to be the idea that God is indeed at work to the north and south, but Job can't glimpse God there.

Job 23:10 But He knows the way that I take- Job cannot discern the way God takes, not even the compass point He is working on; but the point is that God knows the way Job takes. Paul expresses the same idea when he writes that it is not so much a case of man 'knowing God', but rather of being "known of God" by grace (Gal. 4:9). See on :3.

When He has tried me, I shall come forth like gold- This appears to be an allusion to Job 22:25 LXX "and he shall bring thee forth pure as silver that has been tried by fire". This is the image used of the intended effect of Judah's sufferings in Babylon (Is. 48:18; Ez. 22:18-22). If the LXX is correct, then Job quotes this back to Eliphaz

here in Job 23:10. Job is arguing back that he does not love gold over God, and that he will himself come forth as gold after the trials have finished. Unlike the friends, who generally refuse to engage with Job's words in their speeches, Job specifically engages with their words.

But the context is Job's fantasy of having his day in court with God. We could translate: "If He tried me I should come forth as gold". Job's complaint is that God is avoiding meeting Job in court, because He knows Job's innocence.

Job 23:11 My foot has held fast to His steps. I have kept His way, and not turned aside- Job says this in the context of having lamented that he senses God's activity in various places, but cannot see God there (:9,10). But he has planted his feet in the footsteps left by the invisible God and not turned aside from that path. Job "held fast" to God's footprints, even though He didn't see Him, and yet he later realized that the afflictions God sent had taken hold [s.w. "held fast"] to him (Job 30:16). We see here the mutuality between God and man, achieved through the experience of suffering brought by Him.

Job 23:12 I haven't gone back from the commandment of His lips. I have treasured up the words of His mouth more than my necessary food- Job had had no fresh revelation from God since God gave the satan power over him. But there is a wider principle here. The Word of God should be our daily food - indeed, our dependence upon it, and natural desire for it, should be even greater than our instinctive appetite for physical food: "... I have treasured the words of his mouth *more* than my necessary food" was Job's feeling (Job 23:12). Jeremiah likewise: "Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jer. 15:16). Making time during each day for regular Bible reading is therefore a vital thing to build into our pattern of daily life. An uninterrupted 30 minutes of Bible study first thing in the morning is bound to start us off each day in the right spiritual gear. Such faith-forming habits are vital.

However, "food" is not present in the original. The idea could be "more than (or, above) my own law"; i.e. 'more than the law of my own mind or inclination'.

Job 23:13 But He stands alone- The idea may be that God remained "alone" from Job's perspective, refusing to allow Job to come to Him and enter into dialogue.

And who can oppose Him? What His soul desires, even that He does- The dramatic story of Job thrice uses the same phrase as in Is. 43:13, concluding that "who can hinder...?" God's way (Job 9:12; 11:10; 23:13). The exiles were to understand that no human opposition or discouragement can turn back or hinder God's purpose to save His people, even if they are as Job in suffering. His saving and restorative purpose will not be hindered, if we wish to identify with it.

Job 23:14 For He performs that which is appointed for me. Many such things are with Him- Again Job demonstrates his understanding that all his afflictions were from God, not any cosmic satan being. The "thing appointed" for Job is his death, which he considers God has decided upon. So often he ends his fantasies by returning to his baseline conviction that he is about to die, and so all his fantasies about a day in court with God, a mediator, salvation etc... were vain. Rashi: "For He will complete my sentence I know that He will not draw back His hand until He completes the sentence of His decrees, the retribution that He has decreed against me". In :12,13 Job has

spoken of God's foreknowledge and sees this as meaning that whatever He destined for Job must happen, and therefore all intercession and legal pleading with God is futile. Much as Job fantasized about his day in court with God. The prejudged sentence or outcome of any judgment meeting with God is going to be done, whatever evidence is presented to show God wrong.

Job 23:15 Therefore I am terrified at His presence. When I consider, I am afraid of Him- Job has lamented that he senses God but cannot see Him (:8,9). But clearly he felt His presence in a very real manner. So we conclude that the presence of God can be felt in His very absence. We like Job can sense His hand working through His very silence and apparent lack of direct engagement with us.

Job 23:16 For God has made my heart faint. The Almighty has terrified me- See on :17. We can read this 'terror' as a reference to the panic attacks which were apparently part of Job's sickness (s.w. Job 22:10). Job says that he faints at the thought that in fact God is unrighteous, and had preserved his life (:17) simply in order to afflict him for no reason.

Job 23:17 Because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither did He cover my face with the thick darkness- The Hebrew in :16,17 is difficult, and GNB offers "Almighty God has destroyed my courage. It is God, not the dark, that makes me afraid—even though the darkness has made me blind". The darkness was typically associated with cosmic forces of evil. Job sees through that and perceives it is God behind the darkness. The exiles had to learn the same (Is. 45:5-7).

JOB CHAPTER 24

Job 24:1 Why aren't times laid up by the Almighty? Why don't those who know Him perceive His days?-

This flows right on from Job's fantasy in Job 23 about having his day in court with God. "Why are not times [for judgment] appointed by the Almighty?" would then be a complaint that God doesn't appoint a day when man can meet Him in judgment; He is not a ruler who is open to engagement with His people.

This could be read as a complaint that God's people don't realize the time periods of His operations in advance. Job sensed that his afflictions were for a period (see on Job 23:12,14), but he didn't know the end point. There is a purpose to that. All attempts to understand Bible prophecy as history and time periods predicted in advance are missing the whole point; these prophecies are so that we will understand once the fulfilment comes, rather than presenting history in advance.

Job 24:2 There are people who remove the landmarks. They violently take away flocks, and feed them- Alluding to the taking away of Job's flocks. Probably his landmarks were removed at the same time. I have suggested that the satan figure morphs into the friends, and they may actually have been responsible for the theft of Job's flocks. The Bedouin tribes were certainly from the same areas as the friends came from. Job may be hinting that the theory that sin brought judgment was wrong, because the sins of the friends against him weren't being immediately judged.

Job 24:3 They drive away the donkey of the fatherless, and they take the widow's ox for a pledge- "Drive away" is the word used of the driving of God's people into captivity (Dt. 4:27; 28:37). The exiles were wondering why judgment had come upon them, and not upon their captors and abusers. The answer of the book of Job is that they were as Job, and the wicked whose day of judgment was surely to come ultimately refer to their captors.

Job 24:4 They turn the needy out of the way. The poor of the earth all hide themselves- Turning aside the poor out of the way is the very phrase used in Am. 2:7 of how the Jewish leadership had done this to the righteous remnant. Again, the idea is that sufferings of the righteous remnant were going to be finally judged, even though it appeared as if the wicked had got away with it. This had powerful relevance to the exiles.

Job 24:5 Behold, as wild donkeys in the desert, they go forth to their work, seeking diligently for food. The wilderness yields them bread for their children- It's unclear whether those referred to are the Bedouin tribes of the preceding verses, or the desperately poor who are not helped by them (as in the subsequent verses). Possibly the ambiguity is purposeful, as if to make the point that those Bedouin tribes didn't help their own people even, and they themselves became poor and desperate. See on :6.

Verses 5-12 describe the homeless misfits, rejected by society, who scavenge for food and are poorly clothed. Job clearly saw himself as one of them, or at least, he was able to identify with them. But his final point is that "God doesn't regard the folly" (:12), or "God doesn't consider anything wrong with this folly". Initially, it is noted that Job did not charge God with folly (Job 1:22). The usage of the same word here seems to make the point that now, he was doing so. Satan was indeed correct, and he was following his wife's advice to curse God and die. His complaint is that God doesn't care for the marginalized. We know from the Mosaic Law that this is absolutely not true- and the marginalized Job is the hero of God's whole story in this book.

Job 24:6 They cut their provender in the field. They glean the vineyard of the wicked- LXX "They have reaped a field that was not their own before the time: the poor have laboured in the vineyards of the ungodly without pay and without food". The impression is that they were themselves thieves and yet were also oppressed by others; see on :5.

Job 24:7 They lie all night naked without clothing, and have no covering in the cold- Particularly relevant to the cold desert nights in the region.

Job 24:8 They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for lack of a shelter- This could perhaps hint that through the experience of affliction, men "embrace the rock", a symbol of God and His Son, the Messiah Jesus. Job likewise was in essence led to the spirit of Christ through his experience of the abuse of others and lack of comfort from his own brethren.

Job 24:9 There are those who pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor- Perhaps a reference to the wealthy grabbing the children in repayment for

a debt; for he goes on to speak of the rich taking a pledge from the poor. Job labours the wickedness of it all, to lead up to his point that God sees all this and does nothing about it. Baby stealing was exactly the sort of thing practiced by the Bedouin Arab groups who had stolen Job's property, perhaps under the direction of the friends (see on :2). Job has accused the friends of abusing the fatherless (Job 6:27). The friends accused Job of doing so (Job 22:7). Job now insists that it is the wicked who do this (Job 24:3,9), and is dogmatic that he has in fact blessed the fatherless (Job 29:12; 31:17,21). As explained on Job 42:7, Job in various aspects suffers as if guilty for the very sins committed by the friends. He was their representative, and suffered the results of their sins, although he hadn't committed them. Therefore at the end, his prayer and further sacrifice for them was accepted, and they were thereby saved- by grace indeed.

Job 24:10 so that they go around naked without clothing. Being hungry, they carry the sheaves- Keeping the pledge of the poor so he is left naked (:9) was recognized from earliest times as wicked behaviour. It is condemned in the law of Moses. But Job is observing that those who do even such things are apparently not immediately judged, and the same death awaits both the abused and their abuser. The starving worker carries the wheat of the wealthy... and God doesn't care. Likewise the poor go thirsty whilst they tread the grape juice of the wealthy (:11). Job has no baseline belief in a future judgment or doing of justice; his reasoning assumes that this life is all man has.

Job 24:11 They make oil within the walls of these men. They tread wine presses, and suffer thirst- The wicked didn't even let their workers drink from the grape juice they were treading out. The law of Moses allowed even animals to eat bits of what they were treading out. This legislation clearly had a basis in very early standards of what was right and wrong, for the book of Job appears to be about a situation before the time of Moses.

Job 24:12 From out of the populous city, men groan. The soul of the wounded cries out, yet God doesn't regard the folly- Because God doesn't judge the abuses listed in the previous verses, it is therefore wrong to suggest that He immediately judges sin with suffering, and rewards obedience with material blessing. That's Job's point. But Job also feels he has 'cried out' to God for justice and not been heard (Job 19:7; 30:20); and that there is nothing wrong with crying out to God in distress, it is a perfectly natural reaction (Job 24:12). One comment upon this is that the young ravens cry out to God for food and yet are not always heard (Job 38:41 s.w.). But God in the wider picture sustains all of creation by grace. Job did well to cry out to God even if there was no answer, because the hypocrites do not 'cry out' to God when they are facing judgment (Job 36:13 s.w.). Job feels hurt that God has not responded to his 'crying out' because he says that when the needy cried out to him, he had heard (Job 29:12 s.w.). But here we see his works based approach; he thought that his response to those who cried out to him meant that therefore God must respond to *his* crying out. And God is not so primitive. His apparent silence is because His response is not predicated upon human works and charity. It is by grace alone, as is taught in His final appearance to Job. The exiles likewise were to finally see the response to their crying out to God in the restoration (Is. 58:9), just as their representative Jonah cried out to God from the belly of *sheol* amidst the sea of nations, and was heard (s.w. Jonah 2:2).

Job 24:13 These are of those who rebel against the light. They don't know its ways, nor stay in its paths-

The idea may be that Job has been commenting upon those who sin in broad daylight, in abusing the poor. And God pays no attention [so he implies]. Now he will go on to reflect upon those who sin in the darkness, or more secretly: murderers (:14), adulterers (:15) and robbers (:16). His point is that whether men sin openly or secretly, God doesn't care nor bring them to justice.

The implication could be that these people knew the light but refused to walk in the way of light nor its paths; whereas Job insists he has held to the true path (Job 23:11). He perhaps is making oblique reference to the friends; who may be the wicked who had stolen his flocks (see on :2). But this attacking of the partner in dialogue is an indication that the dialogue is failing: 'I held on to the true path, you didn't' is not engagement with what has been said.

Job 24:14 The murderer rises with the light. He kills the poor and needy. In the night he is like a thief- Job is appearing to overly labour his point; that the wicked are not immediately judged, nor are the righteous immediately rewarded. He almost revels in his description of wicked deeds which go unpunished, making the point that light or darkness make no difference to the wicked. Darkness is not a deterrent to them; they sin equally using both the light and the darkness. Therefore the accusation that Job has sinned in darkness is therefore untrue. But Job appears to be labouring his point. This too is a feature of how dialogue goes wrong once the actual words of our partner are ignored; lengthy digressions are made to prove a relatively minor point, and the essential thrust of the arguments is thereby lost.

Job 24:15 The eye also of the adulterer waits for the twilight, saying, 'No eye shall see me'. He disguises his face- As noted on :14, the idea is that the wicked sin as much in the light as in the darkness. Murderers take the light as a signal to murder (:14), whilst adulterers wait for darkness to commit adultery.

Job 24:16 In the dark they dig through houses. They shut themselves up in the daytime. They don't know the light- As commented upon on :14, Job is far over labouring his point- that sinners sin in both the light and the darkness.

Job 24:17 For the morning is to all of them like thick darkness, for they know the terrors of the thick darkness- Perhaps the idea is that they are disappointed when the morning comes, because they have to stop their wicked works. But AV "the shadow of death" for NEV "thick darkness" suggests that the morning is the time of their death. Job envisaged a morning coming which would mean judgment and death for the wicked. In the end this was to be the hope of the exiles too, that a day of judgment would come with the arising of Messiah as the dawn (Mal. 4:2).

Job 24:18 They are foam on the surface of the waters. Their portion is cursed in the earth. They don't turn into the way of the vineyards- GNB "The wicked are swept away by floods, and the land they own is under God's curse; they no longer go to work in their vineyards". This is relevant to the Jews exiled from their inheritance in the land and their vineyards. AV "He is swift as the waters" may refer to the swift coming of Divine judgment, like a flash flood of waters. The same word is used of the judgment of God's people (Lam. 4:19).

Job 24:19 Drought and heat consume the snow waters, so does Sheol those who have sinned- In Job 6:17, Job sees the melting of the snow waters as representing the failing comfort of his three friends; now he uses the figure about the destruction of the wicked; he comes towards the conclusions that his friends, his fellow "sons of God" of Job 1:6, were in fact sinners, they are the wicked Bedouin people who have brought his trials (see on :2). And this is all preparing the way for him to finally pray for their forgiveness and salvation at the end of the book. Job, the righteous remnant amongst the captives, were to pray for and save the unspiritual majority; but they had to be convinced of how far astray their brethren really were. We note too that *sheol*, the grave, is understood by Job as the destruction of sinners; although he himself speaks of how *sheol* is waiting for him, although he believed he would be resurrected to justification in a bodily form. He therefore believed that the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23) in the grave [*sheol*, where both righteous and wicked alike go], and not eternal torment in some other place.

Job 24:20 The womb shall forget him. The worm shall feed sweetly on him. He shall be no more remembered. Unrighteousness shall be broken as a tree- GNB "Not even their mothers remember them now; they are eaten by worms and destroyed like fallen trees". As noted on :19, Job understood the judgment of the wicked as being eternal death, rather than conscious eternal torment. In Job 17:14, Job uses the same language about his own impending death. He believed that both he and the wicked were going to the same place in death; the difference was therefore in that Job would be resurrected, whereas the wicked would remain dead.

The language of judgment as a tree being broken down was relevant to the exiles, who were bidden see their hope in the revival of the cut down stump, shooting forth as the shoot who would be known as Messiah.

Job 24:21 He devours the barren who don't bear. He shows no kindness to the widow- Job appears unable to resist the temptation to dwell yet further upon the wickedness of the wicked; for this further comment upon them appears slightly out of context between verses 20 and 22. He begins to bring God into the equation, but then in this verse flips back to relishing how wicked are the wicked, and how they avoid judgment in this life. Such an attitude would be appropriate if indeed the wicked he had in view were the friends who were seated before him (see on :2).

Job 24:22 Yet God preserves the mighty by His power. He rises up who has no assurance of life- The 'rising up' could mean that the wicked mighty people are not only preserved alive by God, but at times rise up from their temporal sufferings.

Job 24:23 God gives them security, and they rest in it. His eyes are on their ways- The apparent security of the wicked is from God, somehow; but God's eyes [a reference to the Angels?] are on their ways, and therefore [by implication] they will come to judgment. Or Job's idea may be that God sees all this sin, in great detail [for Job has described the suffering caused by sinners in some detail]- and does nothing. The good and the bad share the same fate of eternal death. And God doesn't seem to really care. Indeed, God even seems to favour sinners and make the righteous suffer- as Job has earlier complained: "He shines upon the counsel of the wicked" (Job 10:3; 12:6). And despite the suffering of innocent people which Job describes, Job complains that God apparently does nothing. Whereas Job has elsewhere claimed that

he has done all he could to relieve poverty. God makes no engagement with these complaints- He simply talks of the vastness of the cosmos and His power and ultimate rightness.

Job 24:24 They are exalted; yet a little while, and they are gone. Yes, they are brought low, they are taken out of the way as all others, and are cut off as the tops of the ears of grain- This was how the Egyptians harvested corn, cutting off the entire ear of corn at the top of the stalk, and lends support to the impression that these things really happened "in the land of Uz" to a historical Job (see on Job 1:1). The death of the wicked "as all others" implies to Job that there must be a future point of justification for the righteous; for the wicked and the righteous die the same death, as other scripture also makes clear. And yet Job's point is surely that the wicked die, they are cut off, when they have come to full fruit, as mature ears of grain- unlike himself, who has been cut off in his relative youth. Eliphaz has used this figure, when claiming that if Job repented, he would come to his death "in a full age, like a shock of corn comes in his season" (Job 5:26).

Job 24:25 If it isn't so now, who will prove me a liar, and make my speech worth nothing?- Job has argued himself into an invincible position, in his own eyes. Indeed, all he says is true; but like the friends, truths are expressed but within a wrong context. Finally Job is to lay his hand upon his mouth in repentance (Prov. 30:32; Mic. 7:16) and recognize he has not spoken rightly (Job 40:4), although he earlier demanded the friends lay their hands upon their mouths before the power of his arguments (Job 21:5). God confirms this by remarking that whoever has hope of overcoming Leviathan, His great beast (perhaps representing death and human mortality) is a liar to think he has such hope (Job 41:9 s.w. "liar"). Job has forgotten his humanity, despite being 'right' in his arguments. This is the problem with possessing truth; it can lead us to wrongly forget our humanity and consider ourselves invincible.

JOB CHAPTER 25

Job 25:1 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered- Here Bildad is merely using the previous arguments of Eliphaz in Job 11:17; 15:15. This is another sign that dialogue has failed- when one side starts quoting the words and arguments of their own side, rather than engaging with the actual words of the other side. These dialogues are recorded to teach us how not to dialogue, and to see the extreme consequence of refusing to even want to understand each other.

Job 25:2 Dominion and fear are with Him. He makes peace in His high places- Again, this is true, but it is a truth used in a wrong context. For Bildad's argument here is a repeat of what Eliphaz has said, that God is so great and high, considering even the Angels unclean, that He is really not that concerned with man, and Job's idea that God ought to be passionately concerned about him is therefore blasphemous.

Job 25:3 Can His armies be counted? On whom does His light not arise?- The armies presumably refer to His Angels (as GNB). Job didn't disagree with this; he has just argued in Job 24:14-17 that indeed God's light is everywhere, but sinners refuse to walk in it, and the presence of darkness or His light is no deterrent to sinners. But that

argument is totally bypassed by Bildad here because he is set on repeating earlier arguments of his friend Eliphaz. Again, this is all a parade example of dialogue gone wrong.

Job 25:4 How then can man be just with God? Or how can he who is born of a woman be clean?- We know from the prologue what Bildad didn't- that Job, born of a woman, was considered absolutely just with God. Being born of a woman doesn't make you irredeemably unclean before God. Paul surely has this wrong argument in view when he describes the Lord as "born of a woman" (Gal. 4:4). Bildad considers God's greatness and vastness (:3) to be such that He wouldn't pay much attention to man. But he, and Job, contradict themselves by then arguing that God is mad with Job. Bildad isn't engaging with Job's arguments now, he is simply repeating the false statements of Eliphaz that the human condition is such that we can never be just with God. Bildad has forgotten the parameters imposed by God in the prologue- that in His eyes, Job was perfect. The final justification of Job with God, by grace, was an answer enough to this wrong view of human nature. See on :6.

The question "How can a man be just with God?" is the same question as 'How can a man ever be clean before a perfect God?', and is repeated in this form in Job 9:30; 15:15; 25:4. The exiles had considered themselves cleansed whiter than snow because of their obedience to some parts of the Mosaic law (Lam. 4:7), but failed to accept that such cleansing to be whiter than snow is only possible by doing what David did, and casting ourselves upon God's grace outside of justification by works (Ps. 51:7). Job was to learn this lesson at the end. It was this offer which was made to Job just as it was to Judah under judgment (Is. 1:18).

Job 25:5 Behold, even the moon has no brightness, and the stars are not pure in His sight- It can be argued that the book of Job is a dialogue concerning evil and suffering, with three popular views being represented by the three friends. These views are examined and corrected by the personal history of Job, as well as by the epilogue and prologue to the book. Eliphaz seems to be representative of the idea that Job is being hit by supernaturally controlled evil- Eliphaz speaks of a force of darkness (Job 22:10,11) and sinful or faulty Angels living in an unclean Heaven (Job 4:18; 15:15). Yet the *answer* to all this is that the Satan figure is under God's control, all Job's misfortunes come from *God* and His Angels- one of whom may have been called 'the adversary' ('Satan')- are in fact perfectly obedient to Him and not disobedient. And finally, Eliphaz and the friends are rebuked for their various wrong understandings, with God declaring Himself supreme and ultimate sovereign. Likewise Bildad's view of Angels in Job 25:5 "The stars are not pure in God's eyes" is corrected by God in Job 38:7, when He says that "the morning stars sang together and all the Sons of God shouted for joy".

Job 25:6 how much less man, who is a worm, the son of man, who is a worm!- Bildad is simply wrong to argue that because man is a worm, therefore he is of no particular value to God, seeing that his nature means that he can never be clean nor just before God (see on :4). This is not the case. The Lord Jesus had human nature but was clean and just before God, showing for all time the possibilities intrinsic within human nature. The same word is used of how He on the cross felt as a worm (Ps. 22:6). It is the very message to the exiles: "Fear not, you worm Jacob, and you men of Israel: I will help you" (Is. 41:14). Though their sins were red as the crimson worm (s.w.),

they would be made white as wool (Is. 1:18). The lowness of man is no barrier to being clean before God, nor to being revived and used by Him.

JOB CHAPTER 26

Job 26:1 Then Job answered- The speech of Job recorded in Job 26-31 is the longest in the book. The pattern of each of the three friends giving a speech and Job replying, spread over three speeches, appears to slightly break down in that Zophar doesn't give his third speech. We note that Bildad's final speech was very brief, and was really only quoting previous words from Eliphaz (Job 25). This could all create the intentional impression in the drama that the friends were running out of steam in their arguments. Job now makes a very long speech... but that is not his victory nor justification. That is only provided by God's appearance at the end, when Job repents of his words. It is usual for the genre of drama to play with audience expectation and dash it to make a point. That is what is happening here, with Bildad's final speech really a flop, and Zophar not giving the speech which the structure of the drama requires him to make. And we are also led to expect Job's final long speech to be his justification, seeing most of what he says is true in itself. But this too is a dashed expectation; for God appears and condemns them all, and then justifies Job by grace. But see on Job 27:11.

Job 26:2 How have you helped him who is without power! How have you saved the arm that has no strength!- The reference may again be to Cain, who was cursed with the ground being "without power" to him (Gen. 4:12 s.w.), as an apostate Israel were (s.w. Lev. 26:20). In this case Job would be saying that even the condemned in this life could be helped to revival. That was what he had learnt of God, and he expected men to act with a similar saving grace. Elihu confirms the argument by saying that although God has all power, He doesn't despise those who have none (Job 36:5). The exiles were also without "power" (Lam. 1:6 s.w.), represented by Daniel in just that position (s.w. Dan. 10:8,16,17), with "no strength" (Ez. 19:14), but would "renew their strength / power" (Is. 40:31 s.w.). That revival would not be by human power but by God's spirit (Zech. 4:6), after the pattern of Job's revival. The Zion who had "no strength" would put on strength (s.w. Is. 51:9; 52:1).

Job 26:3 How have you counselled him who has no wisdom, and plentifully declared sound knowledge!- Job felt he had been deprived of everything, including wisdom and knowledge. But this was not because he was unwise; he is presented as a perfect man (Job 1:1). God is able to give and take wisdom, as is seen in the natural creation (Job 39:17 s.w.).

Job 26:4 To whom have you uttered words? Whose spirit came forth from you?- To ask this question is to imply that they were false prophets (1 Kings 22:24). And God confirms this at the end, in saying that the friends had not spoken rightly about Him (Job 42:7).

Job 26:5 Those who are deceased tremble, those beneath the waters and all that live in them- AV "Dead things are formed from under the waters". "Waters" are a clear figure for judgment. Job's great theme is that out of death, there can be revival and restoration. Death itself is no barrier to this revival. This was the lesson taught to the

exiles by the vision of the dry, dead bones of Israel reviving. The LXX therefore speaks of "giants be born from under the water".

Job in :5-13 will tell the friends that he needs no reminder from them as to how great God is- he gets it, or so he thinks. Job argues that he comprehends how huge God is, and he therefore accepts that he cannot bring God to judgment. God's response is simply to show how little Job understands His greatness. Job of course claims to admit that God is far more than he comprehends: "Lo these are the outskirts of His ways; and how small a whisper is that which we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?" (Job 26:14). But in reality, God will later mock how little Job understands and how Job's conception of His greatness is still pathetically small. Part of Job's conversion was to understand that he had only heard of God "by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You".

Job 26:6 Sheol is naked before God, and Abaddon has no covering- This is a deconstruction of Mot, the god of death; see on Job 10:8. He sees God is the real attacker, not, therefore, Mot or any other such being. Note too how Num. 16:31–35 describes *God* as swallowing up Korah, Dathan and Abiram into death in the earth – as if to deconstruct the idea that Mot did things like this. But in the context noted on :5, death is no barrier to God's work of revival and restoration.

Job 26:7 He stretches out the north over empty space, and hangs the earth upon nothing- This continues the ideas of :5,6; God can revive and restore from death, He can create matter, and can hang great weights upon nothing. Emptiness and deserted space can be used by Him. And this was the challenge of faith to the exiles. To believe that the empty space of the Jerusalem temple and the ruined land could again be stretched out by God as a tabernacle is stretched out, and revived (s.w. Is. 54:2); just as Job's ravaged body and life could be restored in a moment. Creation itself had been brought about from that which was "without form" (Gen. 1:2, s.w. "empty space"), and so the new creation of Job and Israel would be likewise.

Job 26:8 He binds up the waters in His thick clouds, and the cloud is not burst under them- Job likes to reason from the hints found within the natural creation, and Elihu and God Himself will speak to him in these very terms which he clearly so appreciated. Here, Job's point is that great weight can be carried by that which is nothing, and will not be broken by the great weight. This is in harmony with the preceding verses; Job believed that God would and could revive from nothing, from death itself.

Job 26:9 He encloses the face of His throne, and spreads His cloud upon it- As so often in the drama of Job, truths are presented but without context. This is indeed true; but Job and the exiles had to learn that the cloud that came between God and themselves was that of human sin (Is. 44:22), even though God responded by bringing that cloud (Job 36:32). The years of exile were the day of cloud (Ez. 34:12; Lam. 3:44). But through that cloud, the light of God's saving glory was still visible (Job 37:15). GNB "He hides the full moon behind a cloud".

Job 26:10 He has defined a boundary on the surface of the waters, and to the confines of light and darkness- GNB "He divided light from darkness by a circle drawn on the face of the sea". Job understands that it is *God* who sends the good and evil, the light and the darkness, into his life (Job 30:26). Significantly, he states his faith that *God*

even marks out the boundary between light and darkness (Job 26:10) – a similar idea in essence to the reassurance of Is. 45:5 that God creates both light and darkness. The ‘darkness’, however we experience and understand it, is framed and limited by God; it is not a power or being with independent existence outside the realm of God’s power. God confirms Job’s understanding later, when He says that it is He who can swaddle the sea [another figure for uncontrollable evil] in bands of darkness (Job 38:9) – as if to say that it is God who gives things like darkness and the sea their sinister appearance and perception by men; but He is in control of them, using them in His hand. See on Job 38:10.

Job 26:11 The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at His rebuke- Job understood God to be in control in Heaven; he rejects the idea of a cosmic conflict going on ‘up there’ which the friends seem to allude to. More specifically, Job speaks of how God’s hand forms and can pierce the “crooked serpent” and smite any monster (Job 26:11–14). It’s as if Job is mocking the idea that God has let him go into the hands of the cosmic monsters which the friends believed in. For Job so often stresses that it is the “hand of God” which has brought His affliction (Job 19:21; 23:2). That Divine hand was far greater than any mythical ‘Satan’ figure. The theme of his speech in Job 28 is that Yahweh alone is to be feared throughout the entire cosmos. Nobody else – such as the ‘Satan’ figures alluded to by the friends – needed to be feared.

Job 26:12 He stirs up the sea with His power, and by His understanding He strikes through Rahab- Rahab is a term used for Babylon and so this becomes all the more relevant to the restoration context. "The sea" was understood by the contemporary people to be awfully mysterious, and a radical power in its own right. Just as Babylon and the forces arraigned against Job seemed invincible and a law to themselves. Just as we may consider we are in the hands of forces which are mysterious and too great for us to grapple with. But Job's simple faith was that God was in total control of all those things. "He stirs up the sea..." is quoted in Is. 51:15 of God's power available for the exiles against Babylon.

"The sea" is a reference to Yamm, the sea monster. Perhaps this is picking up Job's bitter question in Job 7:12: "Am I Yamm or am I the Sea Beast, that You should put a watch on me?". To which Job is now saying that yes, this is how God is treating him. Quite possibly God alludes to this complaint when He speaks of His relationship with Leviathan, another sea beast, possibly meant to be understood as Yamm. God simply says that He likes playing around with Leviathan. Just as we read in Ps. 104:26,27: "this Leviathan You fashioned to play with. All of them look to You to give them their food in its season". "Could *you* play with [Leviathan]?" God asks Job (Job 41:5,19). God is not against Leviathan, He is a friend of Leviathan. Job and the friends have a simplistic view of good and evil, as many do today, imagining a cosmos split between God and the Satan. The book of Job often deconstructs this, showing God to be all powerful, all the scary monsters thought to be interfering with Job are in fact all at peace with God and under His control. Of course this is all stated in the account of God creating the sea monsters at creation (Gen. 1:20,21). And man was created to have dominion over all God's creations both in the sea and on the land (Gen. 1:26).

Job 26:13 By His Spirit the heavens are garnished. His hand has pierced the swift

serpent- See on :11. Here the hand and Spirit of God are equated- both are Angelic phrases, and thus provides further evidence that the Angels actually performed the creation. Many passages clearly identify God's spirit with His power. In order to create the earth, "the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen. 1:2,3). God's spirit was the power by which all things, e.g. light, were made. "By His spirit He has created the heavens; His hand has formed the crooked serpent" (Job 26:13). A comparison of Mt. 12:28 and Lk. 11:20 shows that "the finger of God" and "the spirit of God" are parallel - God in action is His spirit. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (Ps. 33:6).

Thus Job associates God's Spirit with His hand, which is Satan's hand. It seems far more fitting that this hand and spirit should be Angelic rather than human. Again, it was Angelic work that formed the Heavens. Job recognized that his trials came from the hand of God, but knew that His hand would not kill him- "with Thy strong hand Thou opposest Thyself against me... howbeit He will not stretch out His hand to (bring me to) the grave" (Job 30:21,24). This was exactly the brief given to Satan- to try Job, but "preserve his life". The hand of God creating evil (Job 2:10,11) must surely refer to God's "Angels of evil" (Ps. 78:49) rather than to man- Cyrus had to be taught that no one except God (including human satans!) created evil (Is. 45:5-7).

Job 26:14 Behold, these are but the outskirts of His ways. How small a whisper do we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?- There are only some things which God makes known to us about Himself; we do not have the total truth about God, we see but parts of His ways and hear only a little portion of Him (Job 26:14). Our perception and definition of "the truth" needs to bear this in mind. Absolute truth claims aren't simply ignorant, they lead to all manner of relationship breakdown, arrogance and deformation of spirituality both in ourselves and others. See on Rom. 1:19. Job is right that that we know so little of God nor can we understand. But then Job's words demand that understanding and demand to hear far more than a whisper of Him. Or possibly Job has the idea that although we know but the outskirts of God's ways, our lack of understanding His ways shouldn't matter- because His power is so great, and He is on our side. But what he understood in theory, he failed to live by.

To complete the cycle, we now expect a speech from Zophar. It isn't here. And Bildad's final speech is very short. We are thereby given the message that Job and the friends have all gone down rabbit holes. The whole dialogue breaks up and we need God's intervention. This will come after Job now gives his speech of self justification.

JOB CHAPTER 27

Job 27:1 Job again took up his parable and said- In what sense is Job's pouring out of his very personal reflections about his situation "a parable"? I suggest the answer is that we are intended to understand his situation as parabolic or representative of other situations; particularly that with the exiles in Babylon, who would also be led to restoration if they followed Job's path.

Job 27:2 As God lives, who has taken away my right- Job is specifically criticized by

Elihu for saying this (Job 34:5 s.w.). I have suggested that Elihu was not always specifically reflecting God's viewpoints, but instead is a literary device within the drama who serves to summarize the arguments so far delivered. "Right" is literally "judgment". Job has lamented that he sought in vain for God to meet him in judgment. But the very same phrase is used of how by grace God would 'take away Israel's judgments' in no longer condemning them (Zeph. 3:15). It was therefore a good thing that God did not meet Job in judgment; and by grace He was to justify Job and take away his judgment of condemnation.

The Almighty, who has made my soul bitter- The phrase used by Hezekiah, another possible fulfilment of the suffering servant based upon Job (Is. 38:17). Job blames his bitterness with God on God Himself- not the satan.

Job 27:3 For the length of my life is still in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils- This is obviously referring to the record of God's creation of Adam in Gen. 2:7. See on Job 10:9; 9:17. Job may be wrongly suggesting he is merely suffering because he is a son of Adam, whilst personally innocent. Although in Job's case he did need to repent, his situation pointed forward to that of the Lord Jesus, the suffering servant based upon Job who was the second Adam.

Job 27:4 surely my lips shall not speak unrighteousness, neither shall my tongue utter deceit-

We can read all this now as Job swearing that he will never admit any of the accusations against him are true, and he goes on now to basically say that he has not only been innocent in the past, but he will never be anything but innocent. This is the problem with false accusation. We may know that to be false, but that doesn't mean we never sinned or never will sin. We can be led to the very self righteousness of Job which God and Elihu will later rightly condemn. The dialogues [including Job's responses] progressively deteriorate as they develop, until only Divine intervention can bring Job and the friends to learn what they have to. Human dialogue didn't achieve that and only clouded the issues, driving all concerned down rabbit holes.

Job was bending all his self will to avoid not sinning with his lips, as he is initially commended for doing (Job 2:10). But finally he is taught that for all that steel willed self control, he must lay his hand upon his mouth and realize he has not spoken rightly (Job 40:4). He may have controlled his specific words, but the general thrust of his understanding had been so badly wrong.

Job 27:5 Far be it from me that I should justify you. Until I die I will not put away my integrity from me- The friends had specifically accused Job of things he had never done (e.g. Job 22:5-9). He would not justify them by saying they had been right after all; he is a great example of not taking false guilt. For in such situations, people often break down and accept guilt for what they never actually did. He held on to God's view of him which had been made clear in the prologue- that he was "perfect", of integrity, and he would not be made to feel as if that was not the case. What he had to learn was that he was after all a sinful human and that high estimation of him had been the result of imputed righteousness by grace. And he had to be taught that in God's final appearance to him.

Job 27:6 I hold fast to my righteousness, and will not let it go- God had stated in Job 2:3 that Job held fast (s.w.) to his integrity. And here Job uses this word about himself. He will not "curse God, and die". His argument against the friends, that he

did maintain his integrity still, was effectively arguing back against this position of the Satan.

"Hold fast" is the same word as in Is. 56:2: "And the son of man who holds it fast". To "hold fast" means to keep covenant (2 Chron. 7:22). The "it" the exiles were to hold fast to was God's righteousness and not their own (Is. 56:1). But they refused to do so because like Job, they held fast (s.w.) to their own righteousness (s.w. Job 27:6).

My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live- Paul was like Job, determined to "have always a conscience void of offence, both toward God and toward man" (Acts 24:16); but later he learnt the lesson of Job, and realized that although his conscience doesn't condemn him, this is not to say he is ultimately right before God (1 Cor. 4:4). For the final appearance of God convicted Job of sin, of the fact that his status as "perfect" before God was by imputed righteousness through grace; and that his spotless personal conscience was not therefore the ultimate decider of his acceptability before God. Just as we must learn that at the last day, we will be judged by God's word and our conscience will not as it were jump out of us and judge us.

Job realized his sinfulness, and yet at the same time he was in a quandary over whether he really had sinned. In Job 27:6 he even feels that his heart does not reproach him over any of the days he has ever lived (RV). This is such an accurate caricature of so many Christian consciences, of so much of our self-examination, both individually and collectively. We of course have to admit that we are sinners, riddled with weakness in so many ways; and of course we *do* admit this. And yet there is a quandary over whether we really are big time sinners. We feel ourselves to be little sinners, whatever we may theoretically admit. And as such, we fail to appreciate the grace of God's salvation, and therefore we fail to dynamically respond to this as we should do, and thereby our community and our own lives are characterized by the all too evident apathy with which they are; there is so little of the real flame, the fire of true spirituality, which there might be. And dear Job, like us, for all his good works, for all his being such a truly and really nice guy and brother, through and through... he had to be brought down to his knees: "I am vile... I know (*now*, by implication) that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee... therefore have I uttered that I understood thee; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not" .

Or we can translate the second half of the verse "My heart reproaches [me for] not one of my days". This is very doubtful. How can we look back on our lives and find not one day where our heart rebukes us for how we lived that day. This increasing refusal to accept he has ever sinned comes to a climax in Job 31, which is why the friends give up arguing with someone so conceited, and Elihu steps in to rebuke Job on God's behalf. Earlier Job had admitted that he is a sinner and had "sins of my youth". Job implies that he has not only always been perfect, but he always will be. The arrogance and spiritual self assurance is terrible.

Job 27:7 Let my enemy be as the wicked. Let him who rises up against me be as the unrighteous- I wonder whether this specific enemy was Eliphaz. He is singled out by God at the end (Job 42:7), and the other two friends largely repeat his arguments in their speeches. He was from Teman, the very place from where the bands of marauders had come upon Job's encampment. He was one of the sons of God of Job 1:6 who had heard the Satan's opening arguments, and it seems he and the friends replaced the satan in the narrative; and therefore the distress brought by the satan may partly have been brought by Eliphaz and his team. He had risen up against Job, and

therefore the descriptions of "the wicked" given by Job were all relevant to him and the friends.

Job 27:8 For what is the hope of the godless, when he is cut off, when God takes away his life?- GNB "What hope is there for the godless in the hour when God demands their life?". This appears to have been a source for the Lord's parable of the rich fool. "The godless" is AV "the hypocrite". This would be so true of the friends if indeed they were the ones behind Job's loss of cattle at the hand of the Bedouin tribesmen.

Job 27:9 Will God hear his cry when trouble comes on him?- Job 27:9,10 seems to be saying [although the Hebrew text is rather obscure] that every man on his deathbed cries to God in some kind of prayer; but a belief in the mortality of man will result in the righteous man having lived *a life* of prayerful crying to the Father, which will be in context with his final cry to God in his time of dying. The final truth was that God did not hear the cry of the friends- but He asks Job to pray for them, and He heard Job's cry for them.

Job 27:10 Will he delight himself in the Almighty, and call on God at all times?- As noted on :9, "at all times" means that the wicked only cry to God on their deathbeds and not "at all times" in their lifetimes. The exiles like Job were to finally 'delight themselves' in God at the restoration, if they followed Job's path (s.w. Is. 58:14). But Job is saying that whilst sinners refuse to repent, then they can never do this; and that was the fate of the exiles.

Job 27:11 I will teach you about the hand of God. That which is with the Almighty will I not conceal- See on Job 6:10. Some consider that there is textual corruption in Job, and Job 27:11-23 are Zophar's apparently missing third speech. But I would argue otherwise, apart from a dislike of positing textual corruption in order to explain away what may otherwise be hard of explanation. The speech of Job recorded in Job 26-31 is the longest in the book. The pattern of each of the three friends giving a speech and Job replying, spread over three speeches, appears to slightly break down in that Zophar doesn't give his third speech. We note that Bildad's final speech was very brief, and was really only quoting previous words from Eliphaz (Job 25). This could all create the intentional impression in the drama that the friends were running out of steam in their arguments. Job now makes a very long speech... but that is not his victory nor justification. That is only provided by God's appearance at the end, when Job repents of his words. It is usual for the genre of drama to play with audience expectation and dash it to make a point. That is what is happening here, with Bildad's final speech really a flop, and Zophar not giving the speech which the structure of the drama requires him to make. And we are also led to expect Job's final long speech to be his justification, seeing most of what he says is true in itself. But this too is a dashed expectation; for God appears and condemns them all, and then justifies Job by grace.

Job 27:12 Behold, all of you have seen it yourselves; why then have you become altogether vain?- The intensity of accusation and language gets worth on both sides. He calls them "altogether vain" in that they had come to argue and reason from a purely secular, Godless perspective. But Job has used the same word for "vain" about his own vain life experience: "My days are vanity" (Job 7:16; 9:29). Their comfort was likewise "in vain" (Job 21:34). But God through Elihu will rebuke Job also for

speaking "in vain" (Job 35:16). What Job accuses the friends of, he is himself guilty of. And it is only through the experience of judgment with God that he comes to recognize this- just as we may repent of some things in this life but not others. And it will be the purpose of the day of judgment to reveal this to us. Particularly as we see others judged, we will learn so much- for in them we will see elements of ourselves.

Job 27:13 This is the portion of a wicked man with God, the heritage of oppressors, which they receive from the Almighty- The "this" refers to the description of the fate of the wicked which we now have in :13-23. Nearly all the descriptions have reference to Job's own experience. But his point is that he the righteous is suffering exactly the judgment of the wicked; he is now starting to realize that his sufferings were on behalf of others, even perhaps of the friends. And this comes to final term when at the end, he becomes their saviour, by grace. And yet the "wicked man" he has in view is surely the friends, whom he has just called "altogether vain" (:12). Only recently in the dialogues have the friends called Job "wicked" (Job 22:5). They have upped the language about him, and he now responds to them likewise. This is typical of dialogue and relationship breakdown. For the first time in a conversation, one side uses an expletive- and then the respondent will do likewise. It all builds up to a sense of relief when Job and the friends cease their dialogue.

Job 27:14 If his children are multiplied, it is for the sword. His offspring shall not be satisfied with bread- Seeing his own children had been destroyed by the sword, Job presumably was accepting that he was among the "wicked", as he does elsewhere (e.g. Job 9:2). Hos. 9:13,16 repeats such language regarding the punishment of sinful Israel: "Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer". Dt. 28:41 has the same idea.

Job 27:15 Those who remain of him shall be buried in death. His widows shall make no lamentation- Alluding to how Job's wife turned against him and was making no lamentation over his grief.

Job 27:16 Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare clothing as the clay- The sense is "Even if he..." had done these things. Job clearly has himself in view (see on :13), hence his conditional language (also in :17).

Job 27:17 he may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver- The friends insisted Job was not innocent (s.w. Job 4:7). Job said he was. So he recognizes that whilst it appears that his wealth is being taken away by others because he has sinned, there will yet come a day when he is justified, and 'divides the silver'; and he as the innocent (Job 9:23) will condemn his hypocritical friends (Job 17:8). It was perhaps in recognition of this that those who had once rejected him come and give him silver (Job 42:11).

Job 27:18 He builds his house as the moth, as a booth which the watchman makes- Again Job refers to himself (Job 4:19; 13:28), recognizing that indeed he is suffering the judgment of the sinner, whilst personally righteous. Being consumed by a moth was to be the fate of apostate Israel (s.w. Is. 50:9; 51:8). But they could follow the path of Job to restoration, despite feeling and being condemned to death.

Job 27:19 He lies down rich, but he shall not do so again. He opens his eyes, and he

is not- Perhaps as GNB "One last time they will lie down rich, and when they wake up, they will find their wealth gone".

Job 27:20 Terrors overtake him like waters. A storm steals him away in the night- A reference to the terrors or panic attacks which Job complained of (Job 6:4; 31:23), and the whirlwind storm which had suddenly taken away Job's family and wealth.

Job 27:21 The east wind carries him away, and he departs. It sweeps him out of his place- Job felt he too had been swept out of his place (Job 7:10). The wind from the east was the wind which swept in out of the wilderness to destroy Job (Job 1:19).

Or, "As a storm hurls...". This is how Job felt God had treated him, hurling him as with a storm (Job 9:17; 30:22, "You lift me up to the wind; you... dissolve me in the tempest"). Likewise :22 speaks of God shooting at the wicked, which is how Job feels God is treating him in Job 6:4; 16:13: "His arrows compass me round about, He does not spare". Or again in :23, "men shall clap their hands" against the wicked, which is what was done to Jon (Job 17:6; 30:9-14). So much of Job's description of the fate of the wicked accords with how he has earlier spoken of his own afflictions. Perhaps his idea is that although the wicked often don't suffer for their sins, God is treating him, the righteous, as the wicked, i.e. the wicked whom He does judge and condemn. For Job's idea is that God is totally unjust and inconsistent, absolutely lacking integrity, and he would love to get God in court over these things and condemn Him.

Job 27:22 For it hurls at him, and does not spare, as he flees away from his hand- AV "For God shall cast upon him, and not spare: he would fain flee out of his hand". Zophar claims that Job was going to flee from the arrow of Divine judgment, but would all the same be struck through by it (Job 20:24,25). God's response was that His creatures didn't flee from His arrows (s.w. Job 41:28). Neither did Job flee from God, although he wanted to (see AV); he was in harmony with the natural creation. Zophar was wrong. Job didn't flee from God but quite the opposite- he keeps begging God to reveal Himself, and He does so at the end of the book.

Job 27:23 Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place- It was the friends who did this to Job, just as Zion's abusers did to her (Lam. 2:15 s.w.), hissing her into captivity (Jer. 19:8). Again, Job is presented as bearing the judgments of God's apostate people, who were also moved out of their place into exile.

JOB CHAPTER 28

Job 28:1 Surely there is a mine for silver, and a place for gold which they refine- Job in chapter 28 prides himself on his appreciation, as he thought, of God's hand in creation, and how creation reveals the greatness of God. But at the end he was taught that what he thought he so appreciated, he really didn't; and he learnt the true knowledge of God. Unclean animals are brought to his attention in Job 39; he then repents in Job 40:2-4, as if he finally saw in them symbols of himself. And then chapters 40 and 41 go on to speak of the joy of clean animals in their relationship with God, and the inability of man to come between them and their maker.

The theme of his speech in Job 28 is that Yahweh alone is to be feared throughout the entire cosmos. Nobody else – such as the ‘Satan’ figures alluded to by the friends – needed to be feared. Job understood God to be in control in Heaven; he rejects the idea of a cosmic conflict going on ‘up there’ which the friends seem to allude to. More specifically, Job speaks of how God’s hand forms and can pierce the “crooked serpent” and smite any monster (Job 26:11–14). It’s as if Job is mocking the idea that God has let him go into the hands of the cosmic monsters which the friends believed in. For Job so often stresses that it is the “hand of God” which has brought His affliction (Job 19:21; 23:2). That Divine hand was far greater than any mythical ‘Satan’ figure.

Job 28:2 Iron is taken out of the earth, and copper is smelted out of the ore- This is leading up to Job's contrast with the way that wisdom cannot be found by as it were mining the earth, and then processing what has been taken out. These reflections lead him to be ready for God's final appearance, announcing that grace is indeed a gift, and it is not so much knowing God as God knowing us which is so critical (Gal. 4:9). And theoretical knowledge and human wisdom play little part in that. All the extraction and processing of such knowledge will not lead us to personal relationship with Him.

Job 28:3 Man sets an end to darkness, and searches out, to the furthest bound of thick darkness, in order to find the stones of obscurity- "Darkness" is a term often used in the dialogues about what Job was enduring. Man, and the reference is to the friends, thinks he can understand it right to the ends of that darkness. But he can't. Only God can (:27). The darkness of Job's trials and their limit was to be defined by God alone, as made clear in the prologue. The finding of some obscure nugget of truth is therefore irrelevant compared to realizing that God has set far wider horizons that man has set himself.

But in the context of mining, the idea may be that man digs deep and very cleverly and makes shafts into the darkness, in his search for precious stones. But finding wisdom isn't like that. The mining analogy is to make the point that man makes great efforts to go to lonely places, where man has never been before, in order to extract valuable things out of deep darkness. Job too felt he had gone to where other men hadn't gone, to try to extract something valuable from his depth of darkness. And he hadn't found anything; for the poem concludes with the lament that wisdom cannot be found. All man's efforts to find truth and wisdom, to mine something valuable from his own darkness, his going where no other man has gone... is all in vain. Job had earlier spoken of how God has the power to "uncover deep things out of darkness" (Job 12:22). But his point here in Job 28 is that man cannot do this, no matter how he slogs through the gloom and darkness of his mine shafts and bashes against the rock face... and whatever deep things God extracts from darkness, He doesn't share with man- because wisdom cannot be found by man. In fact, God has hemmed Job in with the darkness (Job 23:17). Truth is not to be found by such searching, nor will meaning be extracted from life's darkness; rather, truth and wisdom are to fear Yahweh and repent from evil (:28). And God confirms this, in that Job's brief word of repentance was seen as speaking about Him what was right.

We ask why there is such a detailed description of the mining processes of those times. One possibility is that Job's amazing wealth came from mining; God led him to the precious stones. For his wealth is presented as somehow hugely greater than that of any other man. We know from Job 31:24 that he did indeed have much gold: "If I

have made gold my hope, and have said to the fine gold, 'You are my confidence'". The story concludes with him becoming even twice as wealthy as he was at the start- possibly we are to conclude he again was led by God to finding precious stones. That's why Job knew so much about mining technology, as reflected in this poem. But he comes to realize that just as he had sought so zealously for precious stones, so he was desperately zealous to find 'wisdom', the answers as to 'why' his sufferings had happened. And he concludes that there are no precious stones of wisdom accessible to man; it is for us to simply trust and obey. This is all in the immediate context of Job being accused by the friends of being guilty of sin because he is suffering- and they justified that accusation by appealing to well established "wisdom" traditions. Job's poem about wisdom is basically claiming that "wisdom" doesn't exist in that it is there, but isn't accessible to man. This is his way of shutting down their repeated appeals to human wisdom traditions. His point is that he considers an appeal to "wisdom" in any legal case against him to be irrelevant and inadmissible. Whether that is the case or not... is a wider question. Because the rest of the Bible does teach that God is eager to communicate His wisdom to man. Elihu appears to take issue with Job on this point in Job 32:8 GNB "But it is the spirit of Almighty God that comes to us and gives us wisdom". This could be seen as a rejoinder to Job's claim in Job 28 that wisdom is not accessible to man, with the implication that man is left adrift in the cosmos with no moral compass apart from to try to obey God.

The wisdom poem also ends with Job justifying himself, for he concludes that wisdom can't be found but man must just avoid evil- that is wisdom. And we know from the prologue, and Job's self portrait of his own integrity in Job 31, that he has done specifically that. So he concludes with himself in view. He will then go to make his final speech of Job 29-31, pointing out how blessed he was [as he was so righteous] in Job 29, how far he had fallen, because he had been so unfairly judged (Job 30), and then his legal challenge to God justifying himself (Job 31). He clears the way for all that through this poem which denies the wisdom tradition, and ends by declaring himself as "wise".

Job 28:4 He breaks open a shaft away from where people live. They are forgotten by the foot walking above. They hang far from men, they swing back and forth- This is a picture of ancient mining, with men descending shafts on ropes in desperate search for precious nuggets (:3). Again, Job's point is that wisdom cannot be found by as it were mining the earth, and then processing what has been taken out. All the extraction and processing of such knowledge will not lead us to personal relationship with God.

Job 28:5 As for the earth, out of it comes bread; underneath it is turned up as it were by fire- GNB "But underneath the same earth all is torn up and crushed" i.e. by man's mining operations. He may tear up and crush the rock in search of gold nuggets, but he will never find wisdom even if he makes such efforts. This could be saying (in line with :2-4) that mining can be dangerous; under the earth is fire, and man is best to use the surface of the earth to grow bread. The whole enterprise of mining is being contrasted to man's search for meaning and knowledge. Job is not as it were anti intellectual, but is coming to appreciate that relationship with God is beyond mere nuggets of knowledge, "stones of obscurity" (:3) strung together. And this is confirmed when God finally appears and condemns the wisdom of the friends. See on :11.

Job 28:6 Sapphires come from its rocks. It has dust of gold- Job doesn't doubt that

great beauty and value can indeed be mined. See on :2-5. But his point is that there is another set of values, invisible to the naked eye (:7), which is experience with God when we have a clear conscience (:28). Or the idea may be that there is gold that can be found on the surface without mining, and sapphires are found in alluvial soil embedded in gneiss on the surface, and not by mining. Perhaps the idea is that mining isn't needed to find nuggets of 'truth' but rather gathering what is on the surface of life.

Job 28:7 That path no bird of prey knows, neither has the falcon's eye seen it- The pagan peoples thought that birds had the gift of divination and wisdom. Again, as so often in Job, there is a deconstruction of popular beliefs in order to demonstrate the utter supremacy of God.

Job 28:8 The proud animals have not trodden it, nor has the fierce lion passed by there- "The proud animals" are literally a pride of lions. Physical strength and reputation will not bring one to the wisdom of relationship with God which the argument climaxes with in :28.

Job 28:9 He puts forth his hand on the flinty rock, and he overturns the mountains by the roots- The "he" could be the miner, or wisdom personified, or the reference could be to God. For He alone can overturn mountain roots. This section of the argument concludes in :12 "But where shall wisdom be found?". God can upturn mountains for us to look underneath, but still we will not find wisdom. Because wisdom is not knowledge which can be dug out and processed as if by the mining enterprise; rather is it live relationship with God which is of the essence (:28).

Job 28:10 He cuts out channels among the rocks. His eye sees every precious thing-

Perhaps a reference to the canals excavated by men to draw off the water that accumulates in a mine. Or perhaps to men panning for gold, their eye sharply discerning any gold in the water channel. But no sharp eyed man can find wisdom. As noted on :9, God can reveal everything physical, if He wishes. But man will still not find "wisdom" if he is searching for it as a 'physical' thing, obtained by a process of mining and subsequent refining. That reveals merely "stones of obscurity" (:3), nuggets of isolated truth. This message needs to be heeded by those who consider the Christian duty is to search out academic truth, mining it from the pages of the Bible and further processing it. This of itself is not to be despised, but this can be done as the Pharisees did it, and as the friends did- without coming to the awesome personal encounter with God and His grace with which the book of Job concludes.

Job 28:11 He binds the streams that they don't trickle. The thing that is hidden he brings forth to light-

This is the same argument as explained on :10. God can dry up the streams so that those panning in them thigh deep for precious stones- find them. He can bring them to light, but this is not the same thing as the "wisdom" of personal relationship with Him and departing from evil in our hearts (:28). This is what was happening on Job's life; God was 'bringing forth' light from death, deep things from darkness (s.w. Job 12:22). And this was realized by *God* bringing it forth, and not man's search for 'truth'. Job as a person was to be 'brought forth' *by God* as gold from that fire of affliction (Job 23:10 s.w.). Just as plants are 'brought forth' from the earth without the need for mining under the earth (Job 28:5 s.w.). This is why God's reply to Job keeps on using this word for 'bring forth', labouering the point that *God* 'brings forth' by His

processes and initiatives, and not man. And that is as a code stamped upon all of creation (Job 38:8,29,32; 39:4,21; 41:20,21).

Or, "He binds up the streams that they drip / weep not", alluding to the use of lime or clay to stop water percolating into the mine. Wisdom isn't found on the surface nor beneath the surface of this world (:22), not by man nor animal (:21). Job seems to be saying, as many do, that wisdom / truth is out there, but impossible to attain. And yet "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom". The appearance of Yahweh will lead Job to repentance and self abhorrence. And that is the only wisdom man can come to. All intellectual searching for answers to questions, done as cleverly and zealously as man mines diamonds, will never come to it.

Job 28:12 But where shall wisdom be found?- "Found" is the word used of how Job sought to "probe" (AV "find out") the Almighty (Job 23:3; 28:12), whereas Elihu appears to agree with Zophar that "the Almighty" cannot be 'found' (Job 11:7; 37:23). God's own appearance at the end is perhaps an answer to this. He cannot be 'found out' by intellectual argument or personal righteousness. Instead, He 'finds out' people and saves them by grace. Paul expresses the same idea when he writes that it is not so much a case of man 'knowing God', but rather of being "known of God" by grace (Gal. 4:9). See on :9-12.

Where is the place of understanding?- The origin of "wisdom" is simply from God; it has no location on planet earth, no holy place somewhere which can be visited and wisdom obtained there; it is from Him rather than being mined and processed by man. This would have been relevant to the "sons of God" of Job 1:6, Job and his friends, who apparently regularly came to a defined place for worship and instruction.

Job 28:13 Man doesn't know its price; neither is it found in the land of the living- The wisdom of true relationship with God (:28) cannot be bought with money (see on :15). It can only be found beyond "the land of the living", which implies 'in death'. Job believed that his final justification and restored relationship with God could only come through his death and subsequent resurrection. And he, along with Hezekiah and later the captives in Babylon, had to pass through a living death to get to that point. See on :22.

Job 28:14 The deep says, 'It isn't in me'. The sea says, 'It isn't with me'- *Hum* ["the deep / abyss"] and *yam* ["the sea"] are references to the monsters supposed to live there, much feared by the folk of Job's day. Believing in them and trying to appease them by sacrifice (think of the casting of Jonah into the sea) wouldn't reveal wisdom. That was in repentance and relationship with God (:28), as the story of Jonah also demonstrates.

Job 28:15 It can't be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for its price- The same phrase translated as "without money and without price" is found in Is. 55:1 as to how the greatest wisdom was to leave Babylon / Persia and return to Judah, with all the inversion of values this required. The book of Job is full of connections to Isaiah, as it was rewritten to encourage the exiles in captivity.

Job 28:16 It can't be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire- Earlier in this chapter, Job has contrasted man's mining for precious stones on his initiative with God's working upon man to give him, by grace, something more precious- relationship with Him. Gold, onyx and sapphire were all stones in the

Mosaic breastplate, and this is perhaps also be understood as an oblique reference to how the Mosaic system couldn't of itself bring about that relationship with God which is the true wisdom.

Job 28:17 Gold and glass can't equal it, neither shall it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold- Once a man comes to the true wisdom of relationship with God with a pure conscience by His grace (:28), he will never want to exchange it. This is the sense likewise of Prov. 23:23 "Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding". "The truth", true understanding, is not a series of isolated academic truths mined and processed by man (see on :3-6). It refers to relationship with God. Many Christians obsessed with 'finding the truth' have yet to realize this.

Job 28:18 No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal. Yes, the price of wisdom is above rubies- The words of Job 28:18 are repeatedly quoted in Proverbs (Prov. 3:15; 8:11; 20:15). "Wisdom" in Proverbs refers not so much to nuggets of truth, but to a way of life in relationship with God; for that is the context in the source passage in Job 28:18 cp. 28.

Job 28:19 The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold- "Equal" is the word used to the exiles in Is. 40:18, where they are told that "God" has no equal. But I suggest in that context we must read in an ellipsis; 'relationship with God' cannot be equaled. It is totally inappropriate to compare it to human strength of any category.

Job 28:20 Where then does wisdom come from? Where is the place of understanding?- Possibly the contrast is between wisdom coming to man, from God; and on the other hand, man's vain search for wisdom within the earth, just as he searches for precious metals. Wisdom comes, rather than is found by cunning physical and intellectual effort. But the conclusion, in :23-28, is not that 'Wisdom can't be found by effort and hard searching, instead, it is given by God'. Rather the conclusion is that God hid wisdom and no man can find it; instead of the search for answers, man must just trust and obey and get on with life'. The origin of "wisdom" is simply from God; it has no location on planet earth, no holy place somewhere which can be visited and wisdom obtained there; it is from Him rather than being mined and processed by man. This would have been relevant to the "sons of God" of Job 1:6, Job and his friends, who apparently regularly came to a defined place for worship and instruction.

Job 28:21 Seeing it is hidden from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the birds of the sky- The wisdom of true relationship with God and restoration by grace (:28) cannot be discerned by the human senses. The naked eye cannot perceive it. Thus Job is coming closer to the New Testament teaching about the Spirit, which the exiles were also taught in Is. 64:4: "... neither has the eye seen... what He has prepared for him who waits for Him", to the end of the 70 year period of exile. These words are applied to all in our age who receive the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:9).

Job 28:22 Destruction and Death say, 'We have heard a rumour of it with our ears' - As noted on :13, Job believed that through death he would thence ultimately pass to a bodily resurrection and restored relationship with God. In this sense, therefore, death has a rumour of this wisdom which nothing in the world of the living can have. A true

sense of our mortality will lead to our prayerful, urgent contact with the Father all our days. Thus destruction and death give insight into the true wisdom.

Job 28:23 God understands its way, and He knows its place- Just as there is a sense in the natural creation that things such as the dawn have a specific "place" known by God alone (Job 38:12 s.w.), so the way of true relationship with Him, "wisdom", is known by Him alone. We do not find that "place" by intellectual effort, searching hither and thither, but by being open to God's leading of us as Job was.

Job 28:24 For He looks to the ends of the earth, and sees under the whole sky- The implication may be that man sees only what is before his face, whereas God has an infinitely wider perspective. Job in his intense suffering is to be commended for realizing this; for physical pain tends to make the sufferer focus only upon the immediate.

Job 28:25 He establishes the force of the wind. Yes, He measures out the waters by measure- This is quoted in Is. 40:12 as encouragement to the exiles; the power of wind and waters, both representative of God's judgments for sin, are totally under His control. They are measured, the exile period would come to a defined end, just as Job's sufferings did.

Job 28:26 When He made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder- This "decree" for the rain is the word used of how the waters are "bounded" (Job 26:10), just as Job's sufferings were "appointed" or 'bounded' (Job 23:14), as the sufferings of the exiles were also time limited. The idea may be that when that 'bound' of the rain and darkness is reached, the end of the appointed suffering, then we find the wisdom of true relationship with God. He has set it there (:27), at that point. And that is the true wisdom, which we are led to and arrive at, rather than seeking to mine it out in human strength and enterprise.

Job 28:27 then He saw it, and declared it. He established it, yes, and searched it out- See on :3. In Job 13:9 Job asks the friends: "Is it good that He should search you out? Or as one deceives a man, will you deceive Him?". The idea seems to be that if God searched out the friends, they would have to try to deceive Him, lest He find the truth about them. But Job later realizes that God does indeed search out all things (s.w. Job 28:27). He begins here by saying that *if* He were to search things out, He would not find a nice scene in the hearts of the friends. But Job moves on to realize that indeed this is what God is doing, on a cosmic scale- searching out all things.

Job 28:28 To man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom. To depart from evil is understanding'- Wisdom is thereby presented as essentially being experience of God and relationship with Him. Wisdom is not found by going to a certain location, to a guru here or a holy book there, digging like miners dig, in search of it. It is experience with God, and all the things summarized in "the fear of the Lord". Job was aware it seems of God's estimation that he had indeed "turned away from evil" and feared God (Job 1:1 s.w.); it was those things, rather than the traditional wisdom of the friends, which he came to see was the true "understanding".

I discussed on Job 2:6 and elsewhere how one message of Job is that the search for logical justice is futile when it comes to God's ways with man. The cosmos is not human centric, and we have no right to even enquire let alone complain. This is the

point of the wisdom poem in Job 28- man cannot find it, cannot somehow locate the answers he wants, despite sensing they are out there somewhere; and hence the conclusion: "To man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom. To depart from evil is understanding' (Job 28:28). But in Job we see the end of the Lord, that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy, and saves His people. The answers to all man's questions is indeed 'out there', but God has placed it in such a way that those answers aren't accessible in this life. Whether we read Job 28 as speaking about mining expeditions or some theoretical journey to the end of the earth, the answer is clear- man cannot find "wisdom" in this sense. And so we have to just get on with doing what Job had done so well, according to the prologue- depart from evil, and get on in practice serving the Lord. That is wisdom. Wisdom is life lived in practice in submission to God; and not some intellectual nuggets that were found after great searching. Perhaps God responds to all this by commenting that He has a relationship with the ostrich, who in His opinion lacks wisdom: "God made her forgetful of wisdom" (Job 39:14-17).

JOB CHAPTER 29

Job 29:1 Job again took up his parable and said- In what sense is Job's pouring out of his very personal reflections about his situation "a parable"? I suggest the answer is that we are intended to understand his situation as parabolic or representative of other situations; particularly that with the exiles in Babylon, who would also be led to restoration if they followed Job's path.

Job's final presentation in Job 29-31 is one piece. In Job 29 he recalls what a blessed life he once had- and that, he implies, was evidence that he was righteous. He then laments in Job 30 his loss of everything despite being righteous; and then with great passion in Job 31 he presents himself as utterly blameless and spotless, eager for any meeting with God in judgment to demonstrate that God has been totally unjust.

Job 29:2 Oh that I were as in the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me- That Job was indeed depressed can be seen by the vast number of times Job speaks of "I" or "myself". There are some 40 occurrences of these words in Chapter 29 alone. "Watched over" is the same word used for how God had set the parameters for Job's trials in the prologue; his life was to be preserved (s.w., Job 2:6). But Job like the friends became obsessed with immediate suffering and issues to the point that he overlooked these basic parameters set by God. We can do the same. He complains that God watches over him too closely (Job 13:6; 33:11 s.w.), and yet complains that God isn't watching over him (Job 29:2). God's response is to direct him again to the natural creation, where God's constant 'watching over' His creation is evident. He even watches over the exact gestation time of mountain goats, who were invisible to human eyes (Job 39:1 s.w.). And likewise Job was to understand that the time of his sufferings, like the period of exile for the captives, was likewise intensely noted by God and had not been forgotten.

Job 29:3 when His lamp shone on my head, and by His light I walked through darkness- Job had experienced the darkness of trial before (see on Job 3:26), but felt he had been led by God's light through the darkness. This walking in darkness was exactly the experience of an apostate Israel (s.w. Is. 9:2; 59:9; Lam. 3:2). Job understandably struggles with being treated as wicked, and under judgment for serious sin; when he knew he was "perfect" in God's eyes, according to the prologue.

And at this point he appears to be on the pole of focusing upon his being judged for sin which he hadn't committed. But this was all because he was suffering as representative of sinners, as the Lord Jesus did to a far greater extent, seeing He unlike Job was actually sinless.

Job 29:4 as I was in the ripeness of my days, when the friendship of God was in my tent- "Friendship" is 'secret'. Job was a prophet (Job 29:4 cp. 15:8; 23:12; Prov. 3:32; Amos 3:7; the secret of God being with him made Job a prophet) and it is in his role as such that he is commended in James 5:10,11- i.e. for the words concerning God which he spoke. The words for which God and Elihu rebuked him were perhaps therefore about other things. We can conclude from this that the gift of prophecy had been withdrawn from Job whilst he was passing through his affliction, and something similar happened with the exiles; the sun went down on their prophets (Mic. 3:6), but that didn't mean that the previous prophetic words of restoration would not come true for them.

Job 29:5 when the Almighty was yet with me, and my children were around me- The same phrase is found in Job 6:4, "the arrows of the Almighty are with me". Job is struggling to accept that the presence of God "with" him was manifest through his afflictions, just as much as it had been in God's more visible, tangible presence with him he had experienced in the past.

Job 29:6 when my steps were washed with butter, and the rock poured out streams of oil for me- Loss of the blessings of oil and butter makes Job representative of an Israel who lost those blessings through their rebellion (Dt. 28:40,51; Dt. 32:13,14). Again and again we see Job set up as representative of God's people, and achieving the salvation of his friends through suffering for their sins whilst innocent (see on Job 42:6). The whole story of Job is designed to encourage Israel's faith in a representative saviour, the Lord Jesus, who bore the judgment for their sins whilst personally sinless.

Job 29:7 when I went forth to the city gate, when I prepared my seat in the street- Job recalls in great detail his former greatness, and laments his loss of power. This is all absolutely credible and appropriate to a real historical male figure who was cast down from a position of power and respect.

Job 29:8 The young men saw me and hid themselves. The aged rose up and stood- The fact those older than Job respected him is perhaps an oblique self justification against the idea of the friends that the wisdom of the aged condemned Job.

Job 29:9 The princes refrained from talking, and laid their hand on their mouth- Job was later to be the one who laid his hand upon his mouth (Job 40:4). In this part of the dialogues, Job seems to come very low. He is consumed with self pity and regret concerning the power and prestige he has lost.

Job 29:10 The voice of the nobles was hushed, and their tongue stuck to the roof of their mouth- By implication, Job's voice was now hushed and his tongue stuck to the roof of his dried mouth, just as was to happen to the Lord Jesus, the ultimate suffering servant after the pattern of Job (Ps. 22:15), and to a condemned Israel (Lam. 4:4). Ezekiel passed through the same experience (Ez. 3:26), again as a representative

sufferer for the sake of Israel's sins- likewise in an attempt to save them by bearing the judgment of their sins.

Job 29:11 For when the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it commended me- Job in his depths came to know God as his “witness in heaven” (Job 16:19); in his former life, “when the eye saw me, it gave witness [s.w.] to me” (Job 29:11). But Job was brought to learn that the only ultimate witness in life is God, and it is His testimony and not man’s which is meaningful. He confesses that he had only heard of God by the ear, and only upon recognizing his humanity did he 'see' God (Job 42:5). The fact others' eyes and ears had seen and heard him with respect was to become of no value to him at all.

Job 29:12 because I delivered the poor who cried, and the fatherless also, who had none to help him- Bildad assumes Job must have done the very opposite, to deserve his sufferings (Job 20:19). Job engages with what Bildad says and denies it (Job 29:12; 31:17). Again we note that Job engages with the actual words of the friends, whereas they tend to attack him in terms of the straw man image of him they had built up in their minds, ignoring him as a person and the actual words he says. This is typical of how dialogue goes wrong.

Job feels he has 'cried out' to God for justice and not been heard (Job 19:7; 30:20); and that there is nothing wrong with crying out to God in distress, it is a perfectly natural reaction (Job 24:12). One comment upon this is that the young ravens cry out to God for food and yet are not always heard (Job 38:41 s.w.). But God in the wider picture sustains all of creation by grace. Job did well to cry out to God even if there was no answer, because the hypocrites do not 'cry out' to God when they are facing judgment (Job 36:13 s.w.). Job feels hurt that God has not responded to his 'crying out' because he says that when the needy cried out to him, he had heard (Job 29:12 s.w.). But here we see his works based approach; he thought that his response to those who cried out to him meant that therefore God must respond to *his* crying out. And God is not so primitive. His apparent silence is because His response is not predicated upon human works and charity. It is by grace alone, as is taught in His final appearance to Job. The exiles likewise were to finally see the response to their crying out to God in the restoration (Is. 58:9), just as their representative Jonah cried out to God from the belly of *sheol* amidst the sea of nations, and was heard (s.w. Jonah 2:2).

Job 29:13 the blessing of him who was ready to perish came on me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy- "I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy (by his charity). I (thereby) put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgement was as a robe and a diadem" (29:13,14). This has clear reference to the clothing of the Mosaic High Priest with his outward show of righteousness. Job was probably the family priest, seeing that the head of the household appears to have been the priest in patriarchal times; thus Job could offer a sacrifice for the sins of his children (Job 1:5). Job's likening of himself to a moth-eaten garment due to God's changing of his circumstances (Job 13:26-28) must connect with the disciples of the Law as an old, decaying garment in Heb. 8:13. The priestly clothing "for glory and for beauty" (Ex. 28:2) is certainly alluded to by God when He challenges Job "Deck thyself *now* (i.e. like you used to) with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty... then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee" (Job 40:10,14)- as if God is saying that Job's previous life represented the Mosaic

priestly system with its external pomp and implication that one's own righteousness can bring salvation ("that thine own right hand can save thee"). Job's humiliation meant that, by implication, he no longer felt able to clothe himself with the priestly garments of glory and beauty; he had learnt the spirit of the Christian dispensation, to trust on the grace of God rather than a system of salvation depending on personal righteousness. The descriptions of Job rending his "mantle" (priestly robes) recalls that of Caiaphas; his falling on his face perhaps indicates his recognition that reliance on the outward show of the Law needed to be replaced by humble faith. Job thus described his experiences as God leading "priests away stripped" of their robes (Job 12:19 N.I.V.).

Job 29:14 I put on righteousness, and it clothed me. My justice was as a robe and a diadem- This would mean that his merciful acts to the poor were done in a 'charitable' spirit, thinking that such public acts declared him outwardly righteous: "I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy (by his charity). I (thereby) put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgement was as a robe and a diadem" (Job 29:13,14 AV). And yet Job's words of Job 30:1 certainly smack of arrogance: "Whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock". His charity was done to some whilst despising others and judging them. This works based, judgmental righteousness can so easily be our weakness. See on :13.

Job 29:15 I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame- This is quoted in Rom. 2. It is in the context of Paul's rebuke of the Jews in Rom. 2:17-23 for their reliance on a mixture of worldly wisdom and the Mosaic law. The passage has many similarities with Job: ""Thou art called a Jew... and makest thy boast of God, and knowest His will, and triest the things that differ (AVmg.) ["Doth not the ear try words?" (Job 12:11)], being instructed out of the law [A fair description of Job before his trials]... and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness ["I was eyes to the blind" (Job 29:15)], an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law... Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? ["Thou hast instructed many... thy words have upholden him that was falling... but now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest" (Job 4:3-5)]. Thou that preachest a man should not steal... commit adultery... (worship) idols... dost thou? [These were the three main things of which the friends accused Job]. Thou that makest thy boast of the Law, through breaking the Law dishonourest thou God?" [Elihu, on God's behalf, says that Job's boasting of his righteousness implied God was doing wickedly in punishing Job (Job 34:10).

Their belief that they possessed such great wisdom led the Jews to be self-righteous, in that they reasoned that if they were wicked, then their wisdom would reveal this to them. Job and the Jews were in this sense similar. But as ever, Job is being set up as representative of sinful Israel, bearing their judgments (see on :3,6); and yet personally innocent.

Job 29:16 I was a father to the needy. The cause of him who I didn't know, I searched out- It is one thing to meet needs which come right before our face on life's path; but Job went beyond that, in searching out the needs of others. "The cause" could be legal language; Job expected his legal case against God and man to be upheld, because he has taken the side of others in legal matters and upheld the downtrodden. But again, we have here a legalistic attitude. He expects better from life right now, because of his

previous good deeds. He has at this point forgotten his conclusions about a future recompense at a point of future resurrection and judgment.

Job 29:17 I broke the jaws of the unrighteous, and plucked the prey out of his teeth-

This suggests Job was proactive in even orchestrating physical punishment and violence against the wicked. But now he feels as if he is the prey within the teeth of his abusers and of God Himself. Again, he expects better from life right now, because of his previous good deeds. He has at this point forgotten his conclusions about a future recompense at a point of future resurrection and judgment.

Job 29:18 Then I said, 'I shall die in my own house, I shall number my days as the sand- Job lived in patriarchal times, and so we can legitimately detect here an allusion to the promises to Abraham of a seed as numerous as the sand. Job had thought that the promises spoke of a long life in this world. He was to come to realize that they rather spoke of eternal inheritance of the earth at a future point, thanks to the work of Abraham's great seed, the Lord Jesus.

Job 29:19 My root is spread out to the waters. The dew lies all night on my branch-

This connects with the thought of Job's words in Job 14:8: "Though its root grows old in the earth, and its stock dies in the ground". "Earth" is *eretz*, the land (of Israel). If merely "soil" was intended, a different word would have been used. Again, we see the drama of Job has been tweaked, under Divine inspiration, to become the narrative for the exiles. The root had indeed largely died in the land at the time of the Babylonian invasion, but it still had some life and would "bud" again (Job 14:9). Job was the man with great roots who had been cut down but hadn't completely died (Job 8:17); his roots had been dried up (Job 18:16; 29:19). He represented Judah, whose roots were throughout the land as a tree transplanted by God (s.w. Ps. 80:9). Those roots were withered by the invasions (Is. 5:24), but out of those dry roots would grow up a "tender plant / branch" (Is. 11:1,10; 53:2), using the same word for "tender" as in Job 14:7. This Messianic suffering servant was to be based upon Job, and representative of all God's restored people. They were to again spread their roots in the land of promise in a restored Kingdom (Is. 37:31; Jer. 17:8), after the pattern of Job's restoration.

Job 29:20 My glory is fresh in me. My bow is renewed in my hand'- Perhaps as GNB

"Everyone was always praising me, and my strength never failed me". Job's bow or strength was however broken, just as Israel's was (Hos. 1:5); he was their representative.

Job 29:21 Men listened to me, waited, and kept silence for my counsel- We note the

parallel with how Elihu on God's behalf listened, waited, and only then spoke (Job 32:4). Job was to be taught that the fact men listened, waited and kept silence before him needed to be reversed; so that *he* would wait, listen and keep silence before God, laying his hand upon his mouth (Job 40:4).

Job 29:22 After my words they didn't speak again. My speech fell on them- This is

what happened at the end of the book; God's speech through Elihu fell upon Job, and after God's words Job didn't want to speak again (Job 40:4). Job was to be taught that it was God's word and greatness and not his which was of the essence.

Job 29:23 They waited for me as for the rain. Their mouths drank as with the spring rain- Job was to realize that men should wait for God's word as the rain, and the latter rain of His blessings. Job had previously functioned as those blessings for men, and he was to realize the utter insignificance of this. For he needed Divine blessing and grace, rather than being an apparent provider of that blessing to others. All his good works were therefore given a quite different context when he was made to realize *his* need for blessing. GNB "they had nothing to add when I had finished. My words sank in like drops of rain; everyone welcomed them just as farmers welcome rain in spring" (:22,23).

Job 29:24 I smiled on them when they had no confidence. They didn't reject the light of my face- GNB "I smiled on them when they had lost confidence; my cheerful face encouraged them". But Job was to realize that it was God's face smiling upon man which was the only important thing; the smiling of man's face upon man was therefore of no account compared to that.

Job 29:25 I chose out their way, and sat as chief. I lived as a king in the army, as one who comforts the mourners- Job was to realize that it was God and not him who chooses out the way of men (Ps. 25:12); like Job, the exiles failed through choosing out their own way (s.w. Is. 66:3) rather than seeking God's way.

JOB CHAPTER 30

Job 30:1 But now those who are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to put with my sheep dogs- Job has just boasted of how his charitable giving earned him his righteousness: "I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy (by his charity). I (thereby) put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgement was as a robe and a diadem" (Job 29:13,14 AV). And yet Job's words of Job 30:1 certainly smack of arrogance. His charity was done to some whilst despising others and judging them. This works based, judgmental righteousness can so easily be our weakness.

Job 30:2 Of what use is the strength of their hands to me, men in whom ripe age has perished?- Here in :2-9 we have a rather unpleasant streak in Job revealed. He clearly despised some men deeply, and it was deeply irksome to him that the children of those he had despised should now mock him. The way he speaks of these men indicates a deep disdain which is inappropriate in any man for other men, who are all made in the image of God. GNB "They were a bunch of worn-out men, too weak to do any work for me". Here we see the importance Job placed upon "work"; for it was also by works that he felt justified before God, and deserving of a better deal in life than what he was having. His finer insights into his sufferings are now absent, as he walls in the self pity of the moment.

Job 30:3 They are gaunt from lack and famine. They gnaw the dry ground, in the gloom of waste and desolation- "Waste and desolation" is the language of condemnation (s.w. Zeph. 1:15). But God makes the point that He sends rain "to satisfy the desolate and waste ground" (Job 38:27 AV)- the very place where the

condemned lived whom Job despised in his prosperity (Job 30:3 s.w.). But God doesn't despise even the most desperate of society. He sends rain to cheer them whom the righteous despise. And this was to help Job be convicted of his own desperation, of how wrong he had been to despise others and trust that he was righteous; and to further convict him that God still sought to revive him, as He did those deserted lands.

Job 30:4 They pluck salt herbs by the bushes. The roots of the broom are their food- This plant grows in the wilderness regions where the book of Job is set; the roots are famed as being bitter but nutritious for the desperately hungry and perishing Bedouin. Again we have evidence that Job was a historical person who lived where the prologue says he did.

Job 30:5 They are driven out from the midst of men. They cry after them as after a thief- These desperate people whom Job so despised had been driven from their societies so that they wandered the deserts, surviving by eating wild roots, and robbing travellers and encampments like Job's. But now they were despising Job, so desperate and rejected was he. He was surely being taught how wrong he had been to despise even the spiritually desperate.

Job 30:6 so that they dwell in frightful valleys, and in holes of the earth and of the rocks- AV "in the cliffs of the valleys", where Moses cowered and saw the glory of Yahweh. And it was the faithful who lived in holes, caves and amongst the rocks (Heb. 11:38). The connections may mean that God is a God of the desperate- and Job had despised those on the bottom rung of society. But now he had been placed there, and would be saved if he repented of his former despising of the desperate.

Job 30:7 Among the bushes they bray; and under the nettles they are gathered together- The impression is given that Job considered them as animals, braying under bushes and huddling together under nettles. This treating of human beings as less than human was deeply wrong, and was something which Job had to be convicted of when he finally realized the depth of his own desperation.

Job 30:8 They are children of fools, yes, children of base men- This was how Job had seen them, but now he was beneath even them (:9). He was being made to see that God has a saving purpose even for the desperate, those "without name" (Heb., NEV "base men"), treated by Job as if they were of no name, without personhood in his eyes. And he was now lower than them. We recall how the Lord taught that such was the Divine value of the human person, that whoever called his brother a fool was in danger of Gehenna's condemnation (Mt. 5:22).

They were flogged out of the land- AV "viler than the earth". This was how Job had so utterly despised people; and we marvel at God's grace in still calling him "perfect" and without guile. This therefore had been by imputed righteousness and grace alone.

Job 30:9 Now I have become their song. Yes, I am a byword to them- Job is presented as representative of the exiles, who were a song and byword to the Gentiles whom they had once despised. The Hebrew for "byword" is literally 'a word or speech'; and Job was the subject of the friends' speeches / words (s.w. about the speeches / words of the friends, Job 16:4; 19:2; 32:11). We must consider the possibility that Job considered these desperate Bedouin people to be somehow connected with the friends

who were mocking him; see on :10. These people spat in Job's face (:10), just as it seems the friends did (see on Job 17:6).

Job 30:10 They abhor me, they stand aloof from me, and don't hesitate to spit in my face- See on Job 16:17 for more connections with the suffering servant. This abhorrence of Job by the friends is related to the way they considered mankind to be "abominable and corrupt" (Job 15:16). "Abhor" is the same word as "abominable". The simple truth is as Job put it- God has a tender desire to man, the work of His hands (Job 14:15). And whatever we posit about human nature, we say about the Lord Jesus. He fully shared that nature and yet was holy, harmless and undefiled (Heb. 7:26). Man by nature, just standing there as flesh and blood before God, is not "abominable" to Him of himself. It is sin which is the problem; and sin is not inevitable. We must bear full responsibility for our sins and cannot just pass them off as an inevitable function of our humanity. The wrong view of human nature held by the friends affected their view of Job and people in practice. The lower our view of human nature, the more likely we are to despise human beings rather than value them and speak well of them because they are made in the image of God (James 3:9). In this experience of being spat at, Job again was experiencing the abuse of the suffering servant (s.w. Is. 50:6).

We must consider the possibility that Job considered these desperate Bedouin people to be somehow connected with the friends who were mocking him; see on :9. These people spat in Job's face (:10), just as it seems the friends did (see on Job 17:6).

Job 30:11 For He has untied his cord, and afflicted me; and they have thrown off restraint before me- The desperate Bedouin were seen by Job as having been unleashed upon him by God when he brought affliction upon Job. He is therefore describing the marauding bands who came and stole his cattle in the prologue. And they have an undoubted connection with the friends. Job sees God as capable of binding and loosing him, untying the cords that restrain affliction and then binding them up again (Job 30:11). God's response is that indeed this is the case, and such binding and loosing is seen throughout the natural creation (s.w. Job 38:31; 39:5; 41:14). And therefore, Job and the exiles are to live in hope of being bound up in safety from affliction, just as God "untied His cord and afflicted me" in Job 30:11.

In :11-15 we appear to have Job describing his literal, physical persecution by "the rabble" (:12). Job appears to be bitterly describing the class of Bedouin marauders who had destroyed his family and stolen his flocks. His bitterness with them is clear. He is incensed that people so much lower than him have had the better of him. This is a far cry from how he began, blessing the name of Yahweh who both gives and takes. He now feels it is so unfair for such low life vermin of people to do this to him, a man who has been so spiritual and righteous. And by implication, he accuses God of being unjust in doing this. Again, the Satan was not far wrong. When his blessings were removed, Job did curse God. Like us so often, he began by humbly accepting it all, but over time, began bitter and resentful about it all. This deep resentment and sense of spiritual superiority will lead on to his preening of his righteousness in Job 31.

Job 30:12 On my right hand rise the rabble. They thrust aside my feet, they cast up against me their ways of destruction- This sounds like these desperate Bedouins were

in physical proximity to Job and were actually involved in his persecution (also :13). I have argued throughout the book that the Satan figure morphs into the friends, and they actually perform part of the physical trials upon Job, with the Bedouin attackers of Job partly under the control- leading to Job to charge them with insincerity and hypocrisy. They are in fact guilty of all he is apparently suffering for, and so he becomes their representative saviour by the end of the book.

Job 30:13 They mar my path, they set forward my calamity- These words would be so appropriate if the Bedouin Arab marauders whom Job is cursing were in fact under the control of the friends, into whom the Satan figure has morphed. Eliphaz was from the same area as the Sabeans of Job 1:15. Job's experiences were of "calamity" (s.w. Job 6:2) and affliction set in his "path" (s.w. Job 19:8). And the Bedouins he curses in Job 30:1-12 were those who had abused him in that "path" (Job 30:13). So it seems he has in view the Sabeans who had abused him in the prologue, and yet this section also has clear reference to the friends. Yet that "path" of affliction which God had given Job was the path of wisdom and relationship with Him which was indiscernible to the human eye (Job 28:7 cp. 28); the fact that the ultimate path is invisible to the secular, naked eye is a truth stamped upon the natural creation (Job 38:20), and yet after the affliction or trouble, this path shines clearly (Job 41:32). And this was to be Job's experience at his restoration, as it could have been likewise for the exiles.

Without anyone's help- The idea may be that they were unprovoked to do what they did to Job. But he has just used the term of how he helped those "without anyone's help" (s.w. Job 29:12); as if to say that in return for the grace he had shown them, they now persecuted him.

Job 30:14 As through a wide breach they come, in the midst of the ruin they roll themselves in- "The ruin" is s.w. 'the desolate place', the wilderness from where these Bedouins came (Job 30:3). This is the same picture as in Job 1:15 of the Sabeans rolling in from the wilderness, associated with the whirlwind (:15), coming upon Job like waters (symbolic of enemy forces) gushing through a breach. The accusation of the friends / "sons of God" and the Satan was that God had made a fence around Job protecting him from misfortune (Job 1:10). God had agreed for this to be as it were 'widely breached'. And in came flooding the desert tribes to despoil Job. My point is that the desperate Bedouin whom Job here curses are associated with the friends, it is they who sent their own forces against Job, making him understandably accuse them of being hypocrites and false brethren.

Job 30:15 Terrors have turned on me. They chase my honour as the wind. My welfare has passed away as a cloud- These Bedouin are associated with the whirlwind which struck Job (Job 1:15-18). "Chase" is the word translated "persecute" and is specifically applied by Job to the friends' persecution of him (Job 19:22,28), albeit under God's control (Job 13:25); for Satan's hand is God's hand, as the prologue makes clear. Again we have a fairly solid path of identification of the friends with the Satan and with the Bedouin marauders under their control, whom they sent against Job.

Job 30:16 Now my soul is poured out within me. Days of affliction have taken hold on me- Job "held fast" to God's footprints, even though he didn't see Him (Job 23:11), and yet he later realized that the afflictions God sent had taken hold [s.w. "held fast"]

to him. We see here the mutuality between God and man, achieved through the experience of suffering brought by Him.

Job 30:17 In the night season my bones are pierced in me, and the pains that gnaw me take no rest- This pain in the bones at night clearly looked ahead to that experienced by the Lord Jesus, the suffering servant based on Job, during the darkness of the crucifixion. Hezekiah, another possible fulfilment of the suffering servant, suffered likewise with bone pain at night (Is. 38:13).

Job 30:18 By great force is my garment disfigured. It binds me about as the collar of my coat- LXX "With great force my disease has taken hold of my garment: it has compassed me as the collar of my coat", AV "By the great force of my disease is my garment changed". Job offered sacrifice for his children as if he were the family priest, and he likely had a priestly garment which accompanied this. But this garment had become defiled by Job's skin disease, covered with blood and secretions; and in fact Job felt it was choking him. This is another hint that legal apparatus was unable to save Job, nor those who would follow his path to restoration and revival.

Job 30:19 He has cast me into the mire. I have become like dust and ashes- Abraham, who would have been recent history for Job, had described the human condition as "dust and ashes". Job was dust and ashes anyway, but he feels he has "become" dust and ashes. Clearly, he is being made to realize his humanity, and God's final appearance will do this in ultimate terms. It is a denial of our humanity which leads people to a path in which they refuse to repent, reject any idea that they desperately need God, and leads to the pride of effectively playing God rather than accepting we are but dust and ashes.

Job 30:20 I cry to You, and You do not answer me. I stand up, and You gaze at me- Job feels he has 'cried out' to God for justice and not been heard (Job 19:7; 30:20); and that there is nothing wrong with crying out to God in distress, it is a perfectly natural reaction (Job 24:12). One comment upon this is that the young ravens cry out to God for food and yet are not always heard (Job 38:41 s.w.). But God in the wider picture sustains all of creation by grace. Job did well to cry out to God even if there was no answer, because the hypocrites do not 'cry out' to God when they are facing judgment (Job 36:13 s.w.). Job feels hurt that God has not responded to his 'crying out' because he says that when the needy cried out to him, he had heard (Job 29:12 s.w.). But here we see his works based approach; he thought that his response to those who cried out to him meant that therefore God must respond to his crying out. And God is not so primitive. His apparent silence is because His response is not predicated upon human works and charity. It is by grace alone, as is taught in His final appearance to Job. The exiles likewise were to finally see the response to their crying out to God in the restoration (Is. 58:9), just as their representative Jonah cried out to God from the belly of sheol amidst the sea of nations, and was heard (s.w. Jonah 2:2).

Job 30:21 You have turned to be cruel to me- As God (in the Angel of the presence) "was turned to be (Israel's) enemy" because of their sin (Is. 63:10).

With the might of Your hand You persecute me- Satan asks God: "Put forth Your hand". The hand of God is an Angelic phrase. God agrees- "he is in your hand" (Job

2:6). Thus Satan's hand is God's hand, which in practice was articulated through an Angel, working through the friends and their Bedouin tribesmen who are the subject of this chapter. Job seems to emphasize the place of God's hand in bringing his trials- Job 2:5,6,10; 6:9; 10:7; 13:21; 19:21; 27:11 AVmg; 28:9. Job in Job 12:9 feels that in the same way as God's hand had created the natural creation- and the Angels did this- so that same Angelic hand was upon him for evil. "By His Spirit (God makes His Angels spirits) He hath garnished the Heavens; His hand hath formed the crooked serpent" (Job 26:13). Thus Job associates God's Spirit with His hand, which is Satan's hand. It seems far more fitting that this hand and spirit should be Angelic rather than human. For no one human being could bring these sufferings upon Job. The human Satan, the fellow worshippers, the sons of God, was reflected in an Angel in the court of Heaven. Again, it was Angelic work that formed the Heavens. Job recognized that his trials came from the hand of God, but knew that His hand would not kill him- "with Thy strong hand Thou opposest Thyself against me... howbeit He will not stretch out His hand to (bring me to) the grave" (Job 30:21,24 AV). This was exactly the brief given to Satan- to try Job, but "preserve his life". The hand of God creating evil (Job 2:10,11) must surely refer to God's "Angels of evil" (Ps. 78:49) rather than to man- in the restoration context, the people and Cyrus had to be taught that no one except God (including human satans!) created evil (Is. 45:5-7). See on Job 26:13.

Job 30:22 You lift me up to the wind, and drive me with it. You dissolve me in the storm- Job recalls the whirlwind which had destroyed his family and encampment, in tandem with the attacks of the Bedouins (Job 1:19). But he insists that for all he has suffered, God was behind it. Job was representative of the exiles, who were likewise 'dissolved' in judgment (s.w. Is. 64:7).

Job 30:23 For I know that You will bring me to death, to the house appointed for all living- In line with Job's emphasis that God is behind all his sufferings, perhaps the focus is upon "You". God would bring him to death, although the friends and their Bedouin friends wanted to- but God in the prologue had not permitted them to do this. See on :24.

Job 30:24 However, doesn't one stretch out a hand to stop a fall? Or in his calamity therefore cry for help?- LXX presents Job as suicidal: "Oh then that I might lay hands upon myself, or at least ask another, and he should do this for me". AV "Howbeit he will not stretch out his hand to the grave, though they cry in his destruction" would connect with the same phrase being used of Satan asking God to stretch out His hand against Job (Job 1:11); but telling Satan that Job must not be brought to the grave. Although the Satan sought to move God to do so (Job 2:3). Again we have the impression that the Satan was manifest through the Bedouin tribesmen described here, under the control of the friends; who did every conceivable evil to Job apart from taking his life.

Again Job is back to justifying his reactions to his sufferings: "Yet does not one stretch out the hand in his fall? When he is destroyed does he not because of this utter a cry?". In Job 29 he fondly recalls his prosperity and in Job 30 he laments where he has fallen to. This is a far cry from the Job who blessed God for both giving and taking from him when the losses first happened.

Job 30:25 Didn't I weep for him who was in trouble? Wasn't my soul grieved for the

needy?- "Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? was not my soul grieved for the poor? When I looked for good, then evil came unto me: and when I waited for light, there came darkness" (Job 30:25,26). Note the past tenses; even in the past, it seemed that evil came when he deserved blessing; but despite this, he hadn't become inward looking; he had wept and grieved for the misfortune of others. "Weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12:15) seems to be quoting from here; as if to say: Job is really our pattern in all this. But again we note that Job is very works-based in his thinking; he thinks that his kindness to the needy ought to mean that his sufferings are cut short (:26). And thereby he is failing to discern the Divine path which no eye can see.

Job 30:26 When I looked for good, then evil came; when I waited for light, there came darkness- Job understands that it is God who sends the good and evil, the light and the darkness, into his life (Job 30:26). Significantly, he states his faith that God even marks out the boundary between light and darkness (Job 26:10) – a similar idea in essence to the reassurance of Is. 45:5 that God creates both light and darkness. The 'darkness', however we experience and understand it, is framed and limited by God; it is not a power or being with independent existence outside the realm of God's power. God confirms Job's understanding later, when He says that it is He who can swaddle the sea [another figure for uncontrollable evil] in bands of darkness (Job 38:9) – as if to say that it is God who gives things like darkness and the sea their sinister appearance and perception by men; but He is in control of them, using them in His hand. See on Job 38:10.

Even if God slew him, Job would still be patient or wait (Job 13:15), he would 'patiently wait' for his "release" (AV "change") to come at some point after his death (Job 14:14), and waited for light to somehow come out of his current darkness (Job 30:26). This was the legendary "patience of Job" which we are bidden follow (James 5:11). He was impatient, but he was "patient" in the Hebrew sense of enduring in faith; faith that even if things didn't work out at all in this life, even if God was apparently unfair in this life, he would be finally restored at the resurrection. This was his 'endurance', and it is a parade example for all who struggle with the justice of God and the incomprehensible problem of suffering.

Job 30:27 My heart is troubled, and doesn't rest. Days of affliction have come on me- AV "My bowels boiled". This is the word used for the boiling of the exiles under Divine judgment (Ez. 24:5). God is able to make things boil in the natural creation and then make them perfectly still (Job 41:31 s.w.); and the message was that the days of affliction, the intense boiling of Job and later the exiles, could be made still in a moment.

Job 30:28 I go mourning without the sun. I stand up in the assembly, and cry for help- The prologue described the sons of God in assembly. This would have included Job and the friends, the "sons of God". He appealed to them for comfort when they came to the next assembly, but instead he got the bitter condemnation and false accusation which is recorded in their speeches.

Job 30:29 I am a brother to jackals, and a companion to ostriches- The concept of clean and unclean animals was known even before the flood, so Job is accepting that

he has become ritually unclean. All this was necessary for him to come to realize that his restoration was not going to be upon the basis of obedience to the law, such as it was at the time. According to that, he was unclean. Likewise the exiles had broken the old covenant, and could only be saved by the grace of the new covenant offered to them through Jeremiah and Ezekiel. See on Job 31:7.

Job 30:30 My skin grows black and peels from me. My bones are burned with heat- Again Job is presented as suffering as the exiles had (Lam. 5:10), possibly with allusion to leprosy (Lev. 13:31). The exiles could share Job's path to restoration if they too repented and were humbled.

Job 30:31 Therefore my harp has turned to mourning, and my pipe into the voice of those who weep- No longer is Job able to rejoice as he once had, in his own strength and exaltation. The pictures painted of the mourning exiles in Lamentations is so clearly based upon Job. See on :30.

JOB CHAPTER 31

Job 31:1 I made a covenant with my eyes, how then should I look lustfully at a young woman?- This chapter is Job's clearing of himself, and has similarities to Babylonian legal documents. An accused person could begin his court case by such a statement of detailed denial. The accusers could respond with silence, in which case they dropped their case; or continue. The friends are reduced to silence after this great clearing of himself. Job's righteousness in a legal sense was unassailable. We may consider that their silence after this speech means that Job has 'won'. After his great clearing speech, the audience is expecting his justification. But then we have the interlude with Elihu, and then God appears Himself- and condemns yet saves Job, justifying him by condemning him, in the spirit of Paul's legal arguments in Rom. 1-8. See on :2.

Job has several times demanded to meet God in court, where he says he will present and order his case very well and God will be unable to answer him- and will be convicted of injustice, gross abuse of power and unlawful murder of Job if he dies. Job 31 is Job making his legal case against God, even though he admits that he can never actually get God into court, and there is no judge between the two of them to decide the case anyway. This is his answer to Bildad's question "How can a man be just before God?" (Job 25:4). Job's answer to Bildad is to present his own righteousness. And so here he presents himself as spotlessly righteous, in a quite sickening way. The friends leave off the dialogue with him in disgust at this. The more we read and re-read his case here, the more we agree with them. Elihu correctly summarizes Job's statements here in Job 31: "I am innocent, but God denies me justice" (Job 34:5 RSV). And God's response is "Would you discredit My justice? Would you condemn Me to justify yourself?" (Job 40:8 TNIV). Paul argues likewise in Romans, that justification by works is putting God in the dock and condemning Him. But He will always overcome when judged by man in this way.

Job concludes his speech by saying "The words of Job are ended", possibly a legal phrase used at the end of a deposition of legal evidence. This bringing down oaths and curses upon oneself if they were to be lying is typical of how an ancient court case opened. Job is opening the case against God by this speech of self-clearance. He fantasizes about God's response in :14: "What then would I do when

God rises in court? When He examines me, how will I answer?". Yet all this was so unnecessary. We know from the prologue that God considered Job righteous. Job had no accusations to answer- from God. The friends had accused him of all manner of things, because they assumed that suffering meant sin. Job had so absorbed that reasoning that he feels that God is accusing him, and so he makes this great clearing of himself speech, calling down curses upon himself if he is anything less than perfect. The reality was that God wasn't accusing him of anything. And if only we would accept our righteousness before God in Christ, disregarding all that others say or imply about us, we would spare ourselves so much angst.

Job surely overstates his righteousness, on issue after issue. Thus we query the way he wishes his wife to be sexually abused ["grind to another", :10] if he had ever had one sexual fantasy about another woman. Job 19:17 LXX speaks of Job having sons by concubines: "I entreated the sons of my concubines". We wonder how he got them pregnant with no thought for anyone but his wife. See on :8.

Job 31:2 For what is the portion from God above, and the heritage from the Almighty on high?- Job considers it unthinkable that he would have looked lustfully on a woman, because there was such an obvious judgment for adultery. He was well ahead of his time in considering that looking lustfully is the same as adultery- especially considering he was living at a time when "sin" was not a concept dwelt upon in religious circles, and the idea that we can sin in our minds was a new idea.

Job 31:3 Is it not calamity to the unrighteous, and disaster to the workers of iniquity?- This is an example of where Job shares the view of the friends, that sin brings retribution. Elihu will condemn Job for 'walking with wicked men', and he seems to mean 'sharing the wrong view of the friends'. The wrong view motivated Job, however; and it is not altogether wrong. As demonstrated by the allusions to the flood and destruction of Babel throughout the dialogues, God does indeed judge sin visibly- at times. And that is what Job and the friends missed- that God does also operate according to a far wider perspective that we cannot understand.

As noted on :2, Job sees thoughts as 'working' iniquity, a conception well ahead of his time, and reflective of his deep spirituality; see on Mt. 5:27-30. Here Job uses the same Hebrew phrase used regarding the punishment of Cain's iniquity in Gen. 4:13, thus saying that it was the wicked of the world, not him, who were the real counterparts of Cain; and he was only suffering as Cain, when he was as righteous Abel. See on 31:39.

Job 31:4 Doesn't He see my ways, and number all my steps?- Job knew that it was impossible that, e.g., he would lust after a woman, if he really believed (as he claimed he did) that God was omniscient. "Why then should I think upon a maid [as the friends implied he had done]?... doth not he [God] see my ways, and count all my steps?" (Job 31:4 AV). Likewise God had to remind Israel: "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? Saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth?" (Jer. 23:24). The context is appealing to the people to quit their sins. We should labour to enter the Kingdom, *because* God knows absolutely every thought and action of ours and will ultimately judge them (Heb. 4:11-13). The Sermon on the Mount is really based around translating the knowledge that God sees and knows all things into practice.

Job 31:5 If I have walked with falsehood, and my foot has hurried to deceit-
"Falsehood" is likely a reference to idol worship.

Job 31:6 (let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know my integrity)-
The same word is used in the prologue of how God already considers Job to be of "integrity" (Job 2:3,9). Job has forgotten, as we can forget, that He counts us as if we are righteous- by grace. Instead Job seeks to establish that 'righteous' status, his own integrity, by his own good deeds and avoidance of sin, seeking now to legally establish it- rather than accepting that God simply loved him and would count him of integrity by grace.

Job 31:7 if my step has turned out of the way, if my heart walked after my eyes-
Again, as noted on :3, Job perceives ahead of his time that the essence of sin is in the heart.

If any defilement has stuck to my hands- Job has been made ritually defiled by his illness, and being forced to live with unclean animals (Job 30:29). All this was to try to make him realize that all his protestations of legal purity, of not being defiled because he had avoided sin and done good deeds, could not make him undefiled. And this was to come to full term in God's appearance at the end.

Job 31:8 then let me sow, and let another eat. Yes, let the produce of my field be rooted out-

Throughout this chapter, Job calls down detailed curses or imprecations upon himself if in fact he has sinned. Many of them are found in the curses for disobedience to the old covenant (:8 = Lev. 26:16; :9,10 = Hos. 4:14 etc.). Yet Job has spoken of the sins of his youth, and of current sins and imperfection. His point is "I didn't do anything really bad to warrant what God has done to me". We wonder whether any man would be as super righteous as Job claims to be here. We query the way he wishes his wife to be sexually abused ["grind to another", :10] if he had ever had one sexual fantasy about another woman. Job 19:17 LXX speaks of Job having sons by concubines: "I entreated the sons of my concubines". We wonder how he got them pregnant with no thought for anyone but his wife. Earlier in this speech Job has claimed utter perfection: ""My heart reproaches [me for] not one of my days" (see on Job 27:6).

And so God appears, and he lays his hand upon his mouth, realizing he is condemned, and all these curses must come upon him. No wonder that in his final capitulation he says that he loathes himself, and repents in dust and ashes (Job 42:6,7). It is a sober, dramatic reminder for all time that sin is sin and we are not to divide between surface level sins, as we see them, and 'big sins'. Every man must come to that final capitulation. It is again a challenge to take the lesson from Adam and Eve's sin. "Just" one sin... led to so much. Job concludes his grand self justification by saying "Let thorns grow instead of wheat" (:40), in clear allusion to the curse of Gen. 3:18. He is saying that the curse upon man in Eden shouldn't affect him, because he is righteous. He has missed the entire point of Gen. 3. He is a sober warning to many 'good living' religious folks who minimize their sins... and thereby miss the point of God's great salvation.

Sowing and another eating was the judgment to come upon Israel for disobedience. The reality was that Job was living in deserted houses and had lost his property. So he is saying 'This should only have happened to me if I were a sinner'.

He had lost his realization that his sufferings were not related to himself; they were his bearing of the judgments of others, the just for the unjust.

The Lord likened His preachers to men reaping a harvest. He speaks of how they fulfilled the proverb that one sows and another reaps (Jn. 4:37,38). Yet this 'proverb' has no direct Biblical source. What we *do* find in the Old Testament is the repeated idea that if someone sows but another reaps, this is a sign that they are suffering God's judgment for their sins (Dt. 20:6; 28:30; Job 31:8; Mic. 6:15). But the Lord turns around the 'proverb' concerning Israel's condemnation; He makes it apply to the way that the preacher / reaper who doesn't sow is the one who harvests others in converting them to Him. Surely His implication was that His preacher-reapers were those who had known condemnation for their sins, but on that basis were His humbled harvesters in the mission field.

Job 31:9 If my heart has been enticed by a woman, and I have laid wait at my neighbour's door- Again Job reflects some spiritual insight in recognizing the process of temptation as beginning in the human heart (James 1:13-15). We noted this on :3 also.

Job 31:10 then let my wife grind for another, and let others sleep with her- This could imply that despite Job's wife not spiritually supporting him in the prologue, they remained married.

Job 31:11 For that would be a heinous crime. Yes, it would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges- "Heinous crime" is "lewdness", the word used of the moral apostasy of God's people and their unfaithfulness to Him (s.w. Jer. 13:27; Ez. 16:27,43,58; 23:27 etc.). Job was refusing to hold to his sense that his sufferings were a bearing of the condemnation of others; he is now crying out against this, and requires the rebukes he is soon to be given by God. This too is where we go wrong; in focusing upon the injustice of situations to the point that we forget that we are called to use our experiences to minister to others.

Job 31:12 for it is a fire that consumes to destruction, and would root out all my increase- All Job's increase had been rooted out; his argument is that this ought to only have happened if he had committed adultery, which he says he had not done so, not even in his heart. He had lost his realization that his sufferings were not related to himself; they were his bearing of the judgments of others, the just for the unjust.

Job 31:13 If I have despised the cause of my male servant or of my female servant, when they contended with me- Job is coming out with the reasoning of Bildad, that God will not despise a perfect man (Job 8:20 s.w.). And now he is getting angry that he is being despised when he has not despised others. He is logically building up a strong case for his self-justification. But he is omitting to factor in God's wider plan of wisdom. In spiritual terms, this final speech of Job appears to be Job at his lowest. And he lacks the humility to accept that although he had apparently not despised his servants, he had despised others (Job 30:1).

Job here seems to say that his slaves had taken out some legal case with him ["contended" has a legal sense, and is used in that way 22 times in Job], and he had considered their case and acted with integrity; and this gave him every confidence that in court with God, he would also prevail (:14). Hence GNB paraphrases: "When any of my servants complained against me, I would listen and treat them fairly. If I did

not, how could I then face God? What could I say when God came to judge me?". LXX reads the tenses as conditional future: "And if too I despised the judgment of my servant or my handmaid, when they pleaded with me; what then shall I do if the Lord should try me? and if also he should at all visit me, can I make an answer?". The fact is, Job will face God in judgment- and be condemned. But he thinks that because he judged his slaves generously and with integrity, therefore he will be judged likewise by God. Instead, God and Elihu condemn Job when he does enter into judgment with God. His idea of justification by works fell flat to the ground. It is no good to reason 'Because I did good to this man, God must therefore do good to me'. Again, Job is not seeing any wider picture of God.

Job 31:14 what then shall I do when God rises up? When He visits, what shall I answer Him?- Job's point was that as he had not despised the cause of his servants (:13), therefore he did not have anything to fear before God's judgment. God's final appearance was proof enough that he of himself had no right to answer back to God. "What shall I answer You?" (Job 40:4) was his final word. But here, Job insists he could only be speechless before God if he had committed sins like adultery- which he was insistent he hadn't. Job is led to realize that he has sinned and fallen short of God's glory, although he had avoided the sins like adultery which counted as major sins in the view of his society.

Job 31:15 Didn't He who made me in the womb make him? Didn't One fashion us in the womb?- Job had just argued that some men he despised as almost less than human (Job 30:1); now he argues that all human beings are formed by God in the womb and therefore no human should ever be despised. This could be just put down to the oscillations of a depressed person; or it appears Job is not being completely honest, using spiritual truths to justify himself as needed rather than accepting their true implication.

Job 31:16 If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail- This is Job's direct answer to the false accusation of Job 22:7 (s.w.). Again we note how Job actually engages with the words of the friends, whereas they respond to him in terms of vague generalities and knocking down a straw man image of him they had created in their own minds. The whole drama is an example of how dialogue breaks down.

Job 31:17 or have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless has not eaten of it- Bildad assumes Job must have done the very opposite, to deserve his sufferings (Job 20:19). Job engages with what Bildad says and denies it (Job 29:12; 31:17). Again we note that Job engages with the actual words of the friends, whereas they tend to attack him in terms of the straw man image of him they had built up in their minds, ignoring him as a person and the actual words he says. This is typical of how dialogue goes wrong.

Job 31:18 (no, from my youth he grew up with me as with a father, her have I guided from my mother's womb)- In summary, as GNB "All my life I have taken care of them". Job is at pains to now claim that he had not sinned even in his youth, even from a baby he claims to have cared for the poor. This is a protestation of innocence too far. He has moved away from his earlier acceptance of sin to now claim he had not sinned even from the womb. No wonder he needed the rebuke which is soon to

come from him. The audience is intended to wince at this point, and to expect a rebuke and conviction of sin- which indeed comes.

Job 31:19 if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or that the needy had no covering- Job has a strong awareness of his past good works; the blessing of people ready to perish came upon him, for he recalled how he had saved them (s.w. Job 29:13). Job now was ready to perish (s.w. Job 4:7; 14:19; 18:17; 20:7). He feels that he ought to be saved from perishing because he had saved others from perishing. In this final speech, Job becomes very works based. He becomes the epitome of justification by works; and God's display of *His* works in creation and salvation was going to convict him that his works were irrelevant, and salvation was by grace alone.

Job 31:20 if his heart hasn't blessed me, if he hasn't been warmed with my sheep's fleece- Job in a legalistic way (see on :19) seems to consider that the blessings given him by those whom he had helped (Job 29:13) ought to have actual meaning; instead of his perishing in shame and lack of clothing. Again, he is arguing for justification by works and human blessing. He was to be taught that Divine blessing is the only blessing which can save.

Job 31:21 if I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, because I saw my help in the gate- The idea is as LXX "if I lifted my hand against an orphan, trusting that my strength was far superior to his" and GNB "If I have ever cheated an orphan, knowing I could win in court". Job was confident that he had not misused legal process, and so he longs for some kind of court case with God whereby he can be justified. He was to learn that his apparent justice was as nothing compared to Divine justice.

Job 31:22 then let my shoulder fall from the shoulder blade, and my arm be broken from the bone- The arm may represent his power. But his power, his arm, had been broken. So he is arguing that what has happened to him should only have happened if he had done the things he was accused of. And seeing he hadn't, this breaking of his life shouldn't have happened. He totally forgot the parameters set in the prologue; that his suffering was not punishment for sin. And he has moved away from his earlier perception that he was in some sense suffering for the sake of others' salvation, even if he only dimly perceived that.

Job 31:23 For calamity from God is a terror to me. Because of His majesty, I can do nothing- The idea is as GNB "Because I fear God's punishment, I could never do such a thing". And here we have a window into Job's motivation; he feared condemnation and therefore he was careful to be strictly legally obedient. It was this mindset which was to be dismantled by God's final appearance. See on :28. He says he served God in order not to experience "God-sent calamity", as we could translate. But we know from the prologue that in fact he served God for nothing, and God saw that and was pleased with Job in his earlier life. So again, Job has taken false guilt from the friends. He has actually absorbed their false accusations and feels they are true for him. When God knows they were not.

Job 31:24 If I have made gold my hope, and have said to the fine gold, 'You are my confidence' - Job 31:24,25,28 speak in dire and chilling terms of trusting in wealth- and note that these words come from a rich believer who lost it all: "had I put my trust in gold, or called fine gold my security [cp. assurance and insurance policies, bank

balances, portfolios of investments... banknotes stored under the carpet, jewelry hidden in a corner of some peasant home]... this would be a crime for condemnation; for I should have denied God above". It's noteworthy that Job claims that despite having been one of the wealthiest men in the Middle East, he never put his trust in it. But that shouldn't lead us to think that we can so easily handle the possession of wealth. For to possess wealth leads most people to trust in it. And if we do this... this is a crime calling for our condemnation, it's a denial of God, an effective atheism. Attitudes to wealth are that important.

Job 31:25 if I have rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because my hand had gotten much- Again we see Job moving outside of the parameters provided in the prologue. There it was made clear that his wealth was given by God's hand; but now he claims it was from his own hand. This is the problem with suffering and false accusation; it can make us terribly self congratulatory, listing our own good deeds, rather than serving to humble us and recognize our humanity. Job previously has had points where he does indeed appear to be responding rightly; but finally now he reveals his essential self justification. No longer does he groan about his physical sufferings; instead he is pouring out self justification.

Job 31:26 if I have seen the sun when it shined, or the moon moving in splendour- The reference is to worshipping the sun and moon. This was common enough at the time, and was called Sabaism (from *tsaba*, "the heavenly hosts"). It could be argued that the term "Lord of Sabaoth" ["Yahweh of hosts"] was a deconstruction of this common view, presenting Yahweh as the God of the heavenly hosts.

Job 31:27 and my heart has been secretly enticed, and my hand threw a kiss from my mouth- Again as noted on :1,7, Job perceives that the essence of idolatry is in the human heart. He realized what James was to later make explicit (James 1:13-15)- that the process of temptation begins within the heart. Idolatry is essentially an affair of the heart.

Job 31:28 this also would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges; for I should have denied the God who is above- And here we have a window into Job's motivation; he feared condemnation and therefore he was careful to be strictly legally obedient. He was careful not to follow his wife's advice to deny or curse God and die; and he as it were parades his faithfulness to God by recalling how he had refused to yield to her. It was this mindset which was to be dismantled by God's final appearance. See on :23.

Job 31:29 If I have rejoiced at the destruction of him who hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him- Job had not had an altogether easy life even before the sufferings came. He had experience of being hated, and had seen the destruction of those people. But he insists he had not rejoiced; instead he had been sad. And this sorrow for the lost is revealed several times in his genuine concern for the friends' salvation. This basic desire is to be used by God when Job is made the one whose prayer and representational suffering saves the friends.

Job 31:30 (yes, I have not allowed my mouth to sin by asking his life with a curse)- Again we get the impression of Job parading his steel willed self control, not allowing his mouth to sin. Acceptability with God is not a function of how strong is our will.

For some have more steel in their will than others. It's about believing in grace and accepting it. Perhaps the Lord alludes to Job favourably at this point (despite his surrounding words being so full of self justification); for He taught that instead of doing evil to our enemies, "I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you" (Mt. 5:44). And this is what Job did- his prayer for the friends, who apparently were his actual persecutors, bringing many of the trials upon him, was finally answered.

Job 31:31 if the men of my tent have not said, 'Who can find one who has not been filled with his meat?' - Job's own family were bound to recognize that Job had been generous to the hungry and stranger (:32). But his wife turned away from him, and his wider family only appear on the scene at the end. They knew he was of integrity, but Job's wife had urged him to curse God and resign his integrity.

Job 31:32 (the foreigner has not lodged in the street, but I have opened my doors to the traveller)- Job may be alluding to the well known hospitality of Abraham and Lot in fairly recent history. Again he is presenting himself as a seed of Abraham by works rather than by faith.

Job 31:33 if like Adam I have covered my transgressions, by hiding my iniquity in my heart- Here Job denies that he is like Adam in that unlike him, he has no sin to hide. The same word for "hiding" is used in Gen. 3:8,10, of Adam *hiding* himself from God. But Job was like Adam, and part of the lesson is that he was denying his humanity. And so like Adam he was humiliated by God's questioning at the end of the book. Job is associated with Adam several times in the book- see on Job 9:17; 10:9; 13:20-22. But he was denial of his humanity, unable to accept that he was a son of Adam who was also a sinner, even if seen as righteous. Job denies he had sinned like Adam, but on the other hand he admits he has sinned- just he didn't hide it from God as Adam did. What he means is 'Sure I did some sins, but nothing major, to warrant what's happened to me'. And that was exactly his problem. As it is the besetting sin of so many relatively good living religious people. The reality is that in Adam all have sinned (Rom. 5:12). This devaluing of his own sin was his great undoing. Quite possibly all he says about his good deeds was more or less true, hence God's very high opinion of him. But he failed to fully recognize the fact he was all the same a sinner and only human.

LXX "or if too having sinned unintentionally, I hid my sin; (for I did not stand in awe of a great multitude, so as not to declare boldly before them:)". Job recognizes that sins of ignorance are still sins and apparently confessed such sins before others, perhaps at the regular meetings of the "sons of God" (Job 1:6). But even this he cites as a reason for his justification; rather than recognizing that therefore he is not in fact perfect and sinless.

Job 31:34 because I feared the great multitude, and the contempt of families terrified me, so that I kept silence, and didn't go out of the door- I noted on :32 that Job compares his hospitality to that of Abraham and Lot. He alludes to how Lot went out of the door to the great crowd in order to defend his guests' honour. Again he presents himself as a seed of the faithful family by works rather than by faith. He has little to say about the great promises to Abraham and the patriarchs; he felt his own works eclipsed their importance.

"Terrify" is the word elsewhere translated 'dismay', and is used of how the exiles were urged not to be dismayed but to believe that God would indeed bring them from exile to restoration in His restored Kingdom (Is. 51:7; Jer. 30:10; 46:27). Job begins by being dismayed / scared (Job 7:14), but develops to not be dismayed (Job 31:34 s.w.), following the example of the Lord's battle horse (Job 39:22).

Job 31:35 oh that I had one to hear me!- Job appeals for 'witnesses' (Job 9:33–35; 16:18–22; 19:20–27), an advocate in Heaven (Job 9:33), denies his guilt and demands a legal list of his sins (Job 13:19), he wishes for God to come to trial (Job 9:3), and thus Job is described as a man who has taken out a 'case' with God (Job 23:4; 40:2). Job 29–31 is effectively Job's declaration of legal innocence and an appeal to God to hear his case more sympathetically (Job 31:35). And of course God pronounces a final legal verdict at the very end (Job 42:7), in response to Job's earlier plea: "Sleeplessly I wait for His reply" (Job 16:22). It's as if the whole experience of Job was [at least partly] in order to test out the Canaanite theories of 'Satan', suffering and evil in the court of Heaven; and also the various theories which arose to explain Judah's captivity in Babylon. The friends represent the traditional views of evil, and often make reference to the myths of their day about 'Satan' figures. They speak as if *they* are the final court – Eliphaz speaks of how the judges and elders of their day, the "holy ones", had concluded Job was guilty, and that they, the friends, were right: "To which of the holy ones will you appeal [legal language]?... we have [legally] examined this, and it [Job's guilt] is true" (Job 5:1,27). This is of great comfort to those who feel misjudged by man – above them in Heaven the ultimate Heavenly court is considering our case, and that is all that matters.

Behold, here is my signature, let the Almighty answer me; let the accuser write my indictment!- Or, "Behold my sign". The legal mark made on statements of defence in those days was originally a *cross*; and hence the letter Tau or T. We are invited to see him swearing as it were by the cross. His challenge to God to write an indictment was arrogant, and is answered by God's personal appearance, convicting him of sin. Again we note that Job perceives his "adversary" (AV) or accuser as effectively God. Although it was the satan, who morphs into the friends, who in practice accused him- of only believing in God because he had received Divine blessing.

GNB "If the charges my opponent brings against me were written down so that I could see them" invites us to reflect that the ones making the charges were the friends; they are the opponent, the satan. And yet it seems that Job is again on about his fantasy of meeting God in court. He has declared his absolute innocence, has put his signature to it, and dearly wishes to have a "book" from God listing His accusations against Job. Job has earlier said that if God were to try him, he would come forth as gold, i.e. be totally justified. This is all legal language, and he is challenging God to come to court.

Job 31:36 Surely I would carry it on my shoulder; and I would bind it to me as a crown- His desire that the accusations be written down was ultimately answered by the production of the book of Job. But the whole story is hardly a crown of glory to Job, because at the end he is humiliated and condemned.

Job 31:37 I would declare to Him the number of my steps. As a prince would I go near to Him- Job is saying that every one of his steps in life was perfect. This is similar to his earlier statement that there was not one day of his life he felt bad about. He feels he can come before God in judgment confidently, as a prince. His earlier

mentions of his sins and "sins of youth" he clearly discounts as irrelevant; again, like many religious people, he is not convicted of his sin and considers that whilst he had done 'little sins', he had not done anything significantly wrong. It is exactly this position that has to be challenged and broken down. Job definitely had to be humbled from this arrogant position. He was no prince before God. And in this we see him as representative of Israel, 'prince with God'. Through repentance and recognizing his humanity, he would eventually become 'prince with God', as Israel could have done, and as the exiles were bidden do by following Job's path.

Job 31:38 If my land cries out against me, and its furrows weep together- The land is put by metonymy for the workers of it, who would have cried out against him for being deceived of their wages (:39). But they didn't. Job had acted with integrity. Just as he had not caused people to lose their lives in tending his land (:39), so perhaps he farmed his land sensitive to the land itself, not greedily seeking the maximum gain from it, so that its furrows didn't as it were weep.

Job 31:39 if I have eaten its fruits without money, or have caused its owners to lose their life- See on :38. James 5:4 alludes here, condemning the early Christians for abusing their workers, and thereby holding up Job and his repentance as their pattern. Perhaps here we have another example of Job saying that he was being unfairly treated like Cain: "If I have eaten the strength (of my land) without money... let thistles grow instead of wheat" (31:39,40 AVmg.). This is referring back to the curse on Cain, that "when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength" (Gen.4:12). Job is saying that his land has yielded its strength to him, and that only if he sinned should the Adamic curse of thistles come upon him. We too can resent the limitations of our own nature, not least in the proneness to sin which it gives us, and become bitter against God because of it as Job did. See on 11:15; 13:27; 16:17,18; 31:3.

Job 31:40 let briars grow instead of wheat, and stinkweed instead of barley. The words of Job are ended- This is the final one of the 16 curses Job calls upon himself if he has been anything less than perfect. He goes through every aspect of personal integrity- before God, to your wife, to your family, to society, in your business life, to animals, to the land you farm. It is in the spirit of the law of Moses and general Old Testament example, when a man called down curses on himself to show that he disowned an accusation (Ex. 22; Num. 5:11-31; 1 Sam. 12:3; 1 Kings 8:31,32; Ps. 7:3-5; Peter's oaths in the NT). These were oaths of innocence, typically taken before God or His representative or at His sanctuary. This is why God is going to appear, to show that these oaths were taken before Him- and were somehow false. Yet all Job says is true: he was a very good living man, and that is confirmed by God's comments about Job in the prologue. God said that Job was unique amongst men, blameless, upright, one who feared God and shunned sin. But now Job himself states it like this, drawing such a portrait of his own integrity, Elihu and God will sharply reprimand Job. Because he is not factoring in his humanity and God's Divinity, and he is not considering the fact that he is all the same a sinner. All his protestations of perfection are only relatively so; he is as Paul would say, comparing ourselves amongst ourselves. Job's self-investigation isn't what justifies him (cp. 1 Cor. 4:4). Even if his sins were relatively 'small' compared to those of other men. And this is the huge lesson for self congratulatory, relatively good living Christian men and women. They

too have to go through Job's terrible experience of conviction of sin and of their own smallness compared to God, morally, physically and in every way.

Thistles were part of the curse. Again we see Job failing to recognize his humanity, acting as if he were not under the curse of Eden, and arguing that it was unfair that it applied to him, concluding that it should only apply to him if he had sinned. He was counted righteous by God at the beginning and at the end of the book, but he was a sinner. He was not the Lord Jesus. Had he been in Adam's place, he would have done the same thing; and in that sense, we all sinned "in Adam" (Rom. 5:12). Job has now to be convicted of his humanity.

"Ended" can read strangely since Job will speak again in the book. It is the same Hebrew word which Job has used about himself in protesting his complete innocence and total spirituality, translated "blameless": "Though I am blameless, He will twist me. I am blameless..." (Job 9:20-22). Quite possibly he has presented himself as spotless, and concludes by stating that his words of self justification are "blameless". In which case his self righteousness is intense, leading to the friends turning away from further dialogue with him and Elihu's anger with him in the next chapter.

JOB CHAPTER 32

Job 32:1 So these three men ceased to answer Job- The preceding chapter has been Job's clearing of himself, and has similarities to Babylonian legal documents. An accused person could begin their court case by such a statement of detailed denial. The accusers could respond with silence, in which case they dropped their case; or continue. The friends are reduced to silence after this great clearing of himself. Job's righteousness in a legal sense was unassailable. We may consider that their silence after this speech means that Job has 'won'. After his great clearing speech, the audience is expecting his justification. But then we have the interlude with Elihu, and then God appears Himself- and condemns yet saves Job, justifying him by condemning him, in the spirit of Paul's legal arguments in Rom. 1-8.

Because he was righteous in his own eyes- The contrast is with the fact that God doesn't remove His eyes from the righteous (s.w. Job 36:7).

Job 32:2 Then the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel, the Buzite, of the family of Ram, was kindled against Job. His wrath was kindled because he justified himself rather than God- The role of Elihu is difficult to perceive. He repeats the arguments of the friends in some detail, summing them up, as it were, in his own words. We must remember that Job is poetry, it is a drama, although that doesn't take away from the existence of a historical Job (see on Job 1:1). In terms of the drama, we have here a series of speeches, full of accusations, followed by Job's rebuttals. For an illiterate audience, or any audience hearing / watching rather than reading the drama, by this point we have all rather forgotten the arguments. So simply in terms of the drama, Elihu could function as an appropriate way of summarizing what has been said so far. And many of his arguments against Job are repeated afterwards by God- so his function is also to introduce us to the revelation of God's own perspective which is coming. Job did indeed justify himself, but he did not completely *not* justify God; although perhaps the sense is that he focused more upon his own rightness ['justification'] rather than God's. The suffering servant of Isaiah is indeed based upon Job, but at times by way of contrast. By His sufferings, He justified "many" (s.w. Is. 53:11), whereas Job at best only justified himself.

Elihu is the mediator Job wanted, "according to your wish in God's place" (Job 33:6), but he doesn't take Job's side against God in the way Job hoped. Job's hopes for Elihu were that he would somehow get him out of his issues with God, just as people in a blanket way like to imagine "Jesus is the[ir] answer" without any real introspection. Much of what Elihu says about Job and God is repeated by God in His speeches. Elihu's claim to speak on God's behalf is never challenged by God; when the friends are criticized by God, He has nothing to say against Elihu. We note how often Job interrupts the friends but not Elihu; even when Elihu asks Job to respond (Job 33:5,32,33). At the end of Elihu's speech, there seems a natural, smooth transition into God's own speech (Job 36:22-41), as if God continues where Elihu stopped. Much of what Elihu says is repeated by God in His speeches, both by explicit quotation and also by using the same broad arguments, e.g. from the natural creation. So taking Elihu seriously means that we are led to a very negative view of Job's behaviour during the sufferings. For that is what Elihu takes issue with. He says that Job has served God for his own profit (Job 34:9). The view of the Satan was not far wrong. And Elihu accuses Job of being a blasphemer (Job 34:7), speaking like wicked men (Job 34:36), and a rebel against God (Job 34:37). Comparing this with the prologue, Elihu clearly has in view Job's behaviour during the trials and not before.

The friends claim Job's sufferings are because he had sinned before the trials start. Elihu however takes issue with what Job says during the time of his sufferings. In this context, Elihu speaks about suffering at times being intended to correct man (Job 33:13-30). In Job's case, the correction was not of any moral issue, but of his pride and his wrong view of God. That was why the sufferings continued for so long. Initially there was no "cause" for them; but they continued because Job needed to be brought to repentance for what he had so wrongly said about God after they first happened. The friends had wrongly assumed that his sufferings were retribution for sins he had kept hidden in his previous life. Elihu says that Job's sufferings were to teach him and lead him to repentance for his wrong attitudes that were displayed during the sufferings.

We note that Elihu is related to Buz, the nephew of Abraham: "Abraham learned that Milcah had borne eight children to his brother Nahor: Uz the first-born, Buz his brother" (Gen. 22:20,21). "Elihu" is the only character in the book with a Hebrew name ['He is my God']. His father's name is also Hebrew, Barachel, meaning 'God has blessed'. His ancestor Ram could be the same "Ram" listed as one of David's ancestors (Ruth 4:19,22; 1 Chron. 2:9-15; Mt. 1:3-6). He is presented, surely, as having solid credentials to speak for the God of Israel. A case can be made that Elihu's section divides into three or four speeches, possibly aimed at Job and the three friends.

Job 32:3 Also his wrath was kindled against his three friends, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job-

Elihu is angry with Job because he has spoken so blasphemously about God, and he is angry with the friends because they have not answered Job's blasphemy. They have just fantasized about Job's possible earlier sinfulness. God takes the same perspective; He is angry because the friends didn't speak what was right about *Him*.

Job feels God's wrath kindled against him (Job 19:11). The innocent Job experienced the judgments of God's people, against whom God's wrath was kindled (Dt. 11:17; 2 Kings 23:26). Significantly, we find Elihu's wrath kindled

against both Job and the friends (Job 32:2,3), but the wrath of God was kindled only against the friends (Job 42:7). I have repeatedly demonstrated that the innocent Job was suffering the judgment for the sins of God's people. In the end, this came to full term in the salvation of the friends on account of Job's intercession. God's wrath was not personally against Job, it was against the friends. But Job suffered God's wrath against him, because he was to be the saviour of the friends by offering sacrifice for them and praying for them. This looks forward to the work of the Lord Jesus, the suffering servant based upon Job; experiencing the judgment for our sins, and through the representative nature of His sacrifice, being able to save us.

Job 32:4 Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job, because they were elder than he-

I suggested above that Elihu is indeed speaking on God's behalf. Wisdom and truth were thought to reside in older people and in the views of those who had gone before. But that wisdom hasn't answered Job's situation. A totally fresh perspective is needed, and Elihu being so much younger than the others provides that. If indeed "Job" was originally a play, a drama, then we imagine Elihu sitting to one side of the friends and Job all through the dialogues.

Job 32:5 When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, his wrath was kindled- This phrase "his wrath was kindled" is that used of how God's wrath was kindled against the friends (Job 42:7); but significantly not against Job. Elihu is therefore presented as not completely in step with God and is not totally His representative when he talks about Job. This all adds to the intentional enigma of Elihu; he functions also to elicit *our* response as the audience to the speeches. We are all beginning to form our opinions of the characters, and then Elihu appears and gives his take, and we raise our eyebrows and wonder whether... he is right or wrong, just as we too struggle to come to a correct and just opinion about what we've just heard. But the book of Job is designed to reveal truth only by repeated reading / hearing, and prayerful reflection. Elihu, I suggest, appears at first blush enigmatic. But on reflection we come to see that he was in fact speaking for God, and therefore the negative things he says about Job have to be taken very seriously. As Job finally took them seriously, and repented.

Job 32:6 Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered, I am young, and you are very old; therefore I held back, and didn't dare show you my opinion- "Very old" may be sarcasm, seeing Job lived 140 years after this (Job 42:16) and his father was still alive (Job 15:10), and the friends appeal to the wisdom of men older than them, in which case we immediately begin to doubt whether Elihu is indeed totally God's representative; this enigma of Elihu is intentional, as explained on Job 32:5. As a Buzite, Elihu was from the same geographical area and the same broad ethnic background as the friends (Gen. 22:1; Jer. 25:23).

Job 32:7 I said, 'Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom'- On this point Elihu agrees with Job, that traditional wisdom and religion has failed and was not being taught by the friends (Job 26:3). The old men were not teaching wisdom.

Job 32:8 But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives them understanding- I suggest the idea is not that every man is inspired, but that just as God breathes the physical breath of life into man, so He can choose to inspire some

men; and this is the source of teaching, as we have it today in the inspired writings known as the Bible; rather than through appealing to sages and tradition, as the friends were doing. But see on Job 33:4. GNB "But it is the spirit of Almighty God that comes to us and gives us wisdom". This could be seen as a rejoinder to Job's claim in Job 28 that wisdom is not accessible to man, with the implication that man is left adrift in the cosmos with no moral compass apart from to try to obey God.

Job 32:9 It is not the great who are wise, nor the aged who understand justice- This idea that age and position were effectively the basis for inspired wisdom was well entrenched. Even the disciples marvelled that the great men of Jewish society would not be saved (Mt. 19:23-25). The dialogues have been based around the assumption that traditional wisdom must be right, and the older a person is and the older the tradition, the more likely they are to be correct. Elihu turns this on its head by saying that he is younger than all of them. His words can read arrogantly, but if indeed he was inspired of God in order to overthrow the traditional idea of received wisdom, then his words make perfect sense and need not be read as arrogance.

Job 32:10 Therefore I said, 'Listen to me; I also will show my opinion' - By implication, Elihu considers himself to be inspired by God (see on :8). "Opinion" really means "knowledge", and the Hebrew word is used only by Elihu (Job 32:6,10,17). He claims his knowledge comes from "afar", from God (Job 36:3), but he also recognizes that God alone has totality of "knowledge" (Job 37:16). So we are again left with Elihu as an enigma, not totally reflecting God's knowledge, although considering that his view is in line with God's. This enigma of Elihu is purposeful; as explained on Job 32:5, his function is to elicit *our* opinions; we too who like to think our view is in line with God's, and yet admitting we lack His total knowledge.

Job 32:11 Behold, I waited for your words, and I listened for your reasoning, while you searched out what to say- The friends claimed they had "searched out" their response (s.w. Job 5:27). One theme of the book is that God alone searches man and searches out final truth in judgment (Job 28:3,27). The exiles were comforted that no matter how they were judged by human judgment, God alone searches out man (Ps. 139:1,23; Jer. 17:10). The exiles were to search themselves not others (Lam. 3:40 s.w.). God's final appearance is evidence enough that He alone can search out His own creation, including humans.

Job 32:12 Yes, I gave you my full attention, but there was no one who convinced Job, or who answered his words, among you- As often noted on expounding the speeches, the friends tend not to engage with Job's actual words but rather attack their straw man image of him which they have created. They tend to respond to Job in terms of vague generalities, whereas Job more specifically engages with their actual words. The whole dialogue, on one level, is an example of human dialogue and personal relationship gone wrong. We are left with the impression that Job needs to be convicted, but he hasn't been convicted by the friends. Their legal case has failed. And this sets the scene for God's final conviction of Job.

"Convinced" is the same word translated "umpire" when Job fantasizes about having an "umpire between us, that might lay his hand on us both" (Job 9:33). Elihu is clearly aware of this, and understands himself as the mediator figure that Job had fantasized about having. So we can render "There is no arbiter for Job, none among

you to answer his charges". And therefore, Elihu was stepping up as that umpire figure.

Job 32:13 Beware lest you say, 'We have found wisdom, God may refute him, not man' - GNB "How can you claim you have discovered wisdom? God must answer Job, for you have failed". Their failure was in that they had not convicted Job is sin. Only God can do that, and indeed that is what happens at the end. This is one of those points at which the audience has to nod in agreement with Elihu. Or we can read with LXX "lest ye should say, We have found that we have added wisdom to the Lord". They were acting as greater than God, assuming their wisdom was above His.

Job 32:14 for he has not directed his words against me; neither will I answer him with your speeches- The idea may be that even if Job had been answering Elihu, he wouldn't have spoken as they had.

Job 32:15 They were amazed. They answered no more. They didn't have a word to say- It could be that this is the narrator's description of how the friends were unable to answer Elihu. Or it could be that this is Elihu commenting upon how they had been closed down by Job's reasoning, looking forward to how at the end, men feared to ask the Lord any more questions or seek to answer Him back. Mt. 22:46 appears to allude here, confirming Job as a type of the Lord Jesus: "No man was able to answer Him a word, neither dared any man from that day onwards ask Him any more questions". Some see in :15,16 the implication that Elihu actually wrote the book of Job. *He* was therefore the fulfilment of Job's desire that someone would sympathetically write his grief and record his mental agonies (Job 19:23).

Job 32:16 Shall I wait, because they don't speak, because they stand still, and answer no more?- The drama in performance likely included a significant silence after Job finishes his last speech, and the silence of the friends leads us to wonder whether for all Job's self righteousness in his final speech, they have been trounced. But then Elihu speaks.

Job 32:17 I also will answer my part, and I also will show my opinion- Whether Elihu is directly from God or not is an open question. It is purposefully ambiguous- initially. But I suggest that repeated reflection leaves us with no option to accept that he is speaking for God. The audience 'hear' the lengthy silence after Job finishes, and the friends are unable to continue arguing with him. His righteousness appears genuine, if arrogantly presented and recounted. And we are left to ponder how much of what he says is just the views of an angry young man, and how much is really of God. The enigma of Elihu is therefore to give us the audience a chance to ponder whether we accept or reject Job's argument and legal case. We wonder whether Elihu speaks for us, in places, or completely, or not at all.

Job 32:18 For I am full of words. The spirit within me constrains me- Elihu sounds exactly like Zophar, who says the same (Job 20:2,3) as well as Job, who likewise feels he just has to speak (Job 13:13,19). The book ends with Job, Elihu and the friends all in humbled silence. We feel that our earlier impression has been confirmed- that it would've been better had they remained in silence as they were at the start of the drama. The book opens and closes with Job and the friends sitting in silence. The implication is that all the words were inappropriate. And this impression initially

applies to Elihu too. Again we are purposefully presented with Elihu as an enigmatic figure.

Job 32:19 Behold, my breast is as wine which has no vent; like new wineskins it is ready to burst- Elihu's description of being filled with the Spirit and Word of God is similar to that of Jeremiah, who spoke of "a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I can't" (Jer. 20:9). This connection leads us away from any sense that Elihu is just a pompous windbag. He acts and speaks as a young man would who has just been inspired by God. But we could argue that the implication is that he has old wine in new wineskins, and this is an image used negatively by the Lord (Mt. 9:17). He could also be read as a literary device to summarize the friends' arguments, reminding us of Job's weaker moments in his self-righteousness, and giving a foretaste of God's argument which is yet to come.

Job 32:20 I will speak, that I may be refreshed. I will open my lips and answer- Job opened his mouth at the beginning (Job 3:1), just as Elihu now does, and we have the impression that he would have been better to be as the Lord Jesus, and remain silent through His trials.

Job 32:21 Please don't let me respect any man's person, neither will I give flattering titles to any man- As noted on :9, Elihu is correct in realizing that titles and human respect are no basis for truth. 'To give flattering titles' is s.w. "surname himself" in Is. 44:5, where the exiles are to surname themselves by Yahweh and not by man.

Job 32:22 For I don't know how to give flattering titles; or else my Maker would soon take me away- This is confirming Job's similar condemnation of flattery in Job 17:5. If we accept God is our maker, then other human beings are likewise made by Him. This means we should respect them, but not make them more than human by giving them flattering titles.

JOB CHAPTER 33

Job 33:1 However, Job, please hear my speech, and listen to all my words- This recalls the plea of Job (Job 13:17; 21:2). Just as Job was desperate to be heard, so God was in fact desperate for him to hear His voice through Elihu.

Job 33:2 See now, I have opened my mouth. My tongue has spoken in my mouth- Again we see a similarity with Job, who is silent for a period and then opens his mouth and speaks (Job 3:1). But our natural reflection is that Job would've been better to remain silent. Whereas Elihu actually does speak for God and is the only one so far worth listening to.

Job 33:3 My words shall utter the uprightness of my heart. That which my lips know they shall speak sincerely- The very phrase "words of uprightness" is only found when Job complains about the words of the friends in Job 6:25: "How forcible are words of uprightness! But your reproof, what does it reprove?". This experience led Job to long for "words of uprightness", and thereby he came to be ready for the final revelation of God's words at the end of the book. Likewise our disillusion with human

words and relationships leads us to be the more eager and ready for God's revelation. Again we see Elihu as the mediator and friend that Job had longed for. Although he is not at all totally on Job's side, as Job had wrongly assumed.

Job 33:4 The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life- LXX "The Divine Spirit is that which formed me, and the breath of the Almighty that which teaches me". Elihu has used the same argument in Job 32:8. He stresses his humanity (:6), but also how he is filled with the Spirit which gave him life. He does indeed look forward to the Lord Jesus, the ideal mediator (1 Tim. 2:5).

Job 33:5 If you can, answer me. Set your words in order before me, and stand forth- Elihu seems to be responding to Job's words in Job 23:6 "Would He contend with me in the greatness of His power? No, but He would listen to me"- AV "Would he plead against me...?". God, and Elihu on His behalf, *did* plead against Job by recounting God's power. When Elihu was established in Job's mind as God's true representative, he found that he had nothing to say, as he thought he would have. Elihu seems to refer back to this speech when he challenges the dumfounded Job: "If thou hast anything to say, answer me... if thou canst answer me, set thy words in *order* before me" (Job 33:32,5 AV). Elihu has in mind Job 23:4 "I would set my cause in order before Him". Job several times spoke of how he would fully explain himself to God, if he found Him. Yet in the presence of God and Elihu, he finds that all the words dry up. Words became irrelevant. All he can do is behold the majesty of God's righteousness, and declare his own unrighteousness. That spiritual pinnacle of Job still lies ahead for the majority of us. The desire to speak is a desire to express our *own* thoughts. Words are a construct which can trap us. Only *God's* words can liberate. There is a wordless element in being truly humbled before the Almighty.

Job 33:6 Behold, I am toward God even as you are. I am also formed out of the clay- The degree to which Elihu was Job's exact representative helps us appreciate the precision of our Lord's representation of us. Indeed this appears to be one of the roles of Elihu in Job. The LXX brings this out well: "Stand against me, and I will stand against thee. Thou art formed out of the clay as also I: we have been formed out of the same substance". It seems that Elihu had been through Job's very experiences, of 'death' and rising again: "He has delivered *my* soul from death, that my life may praise him in the light. Harken, Job, and hear *me*" (33:30,31 LXX). And this is exactly what Job did. But again we are left wondering whether Elihu really is the answer to Job's desire for a sympathetic mediator with God. Here at the beginning of his speech, we have hopes he might be. But as we see how tough he is on Job, we wonder. We look for someone else. And that person doesn't arise, at the time. God Himself then appears, without any mediator. But our sympathy with Job's desire for a mediator leads us in essence to an understanding of the Lord Jesus.

Understanding the real import of the speeches rests largely on a correct understanding of Elihu. Job longed for one like Elihu, who could reconcile God with Job's righteous life, his sufferings, and all his intellectual doubts. Elihu points out that he is the fulfilment of Job's need (Job 33:6 cp. 9:33). With this, Job has no disagreement. Elihu can be seen as a type of Christ. The speeches of Job therefore make us see the desperation of man's need for Elihu / Jesus; especially the need of those who lived under the Old Covenant. Job's weakness, morally, physically and intellectually, becomes representative of the weakness of each of us. We breathe a sigh of relief when Elihu appears on the scene. But we are not completely relieved

as Elihu's speeches continue. Because he condemns Job. It's like Malachi warning Judah that just 'desiring the day of the Lord' is not enough- that day will be a day of judgment for them.

Job 33:7 Behold, my terror shall not make you afraid, neither shall my pressure be heavy on you- Clearly God's "hand" (s.w. "pressure") had been upon Job, and God had made Job feel His "terrors" (s.w. Job 7:14; 9:34). Elihu is saying that he is not going to be like this; he had no power to hurt Job, he is just making observations.

Job had stated this fear of God's terror making him afraid in Job 9:34; 13:21, and Elihu alludes to it when he uses the same phrase in assuring Job that *his* terror will not make Job afraid (Job 33:7). The terror is perhaps "the terror of the Lord", the fear of condemnation at the last day (so Paul uses the phrase, 2 Cor. 5:11). That terror should "persuade men" to accept grace, Paul argues. To have that terror unexperienced by men would mean they had no persuasion toward grace. Elihu however argues that he is not going to as it were pressurize Job with such fears.

It might be possible to speculate as to the tone of voice in which Elihu spoke. By contrast to the friends' "hard speeches", Elihu assures Job at the start of their dialogue: "My fear shall not terrify thee, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee" (33:7 LXX). A similar contrast is pointed by Elihu's claim to be speaking as a result of God's spirit within him (Job 32:8), whereas Zophar and the friends spoke from their *own* spirit (20:3). Apart from God's specific confirmation of Elihu's words, Job evidently perceived Elihu to be the answer to his pleas to find God. Job's desire for "a daysman" was answered by Elihu: "I am according to your wish". Job did not dispute this. If one of the friends had claimed to be such a "daysman", we can imagine Job's indignant denial of it!

Job 33:8 Surely you have spoken in my hearing, I have heard the voice of your words, saying- Elihu has been present all along. Although the reader hasn't seen him, the audience watching the drama would have seen him there.

Job 33:9 'I am clean, without disobedience. I am innocent, neither is there iniquity in me- Indeed Job had said these things: "How many are my iniquities and sins? Show me my transgressions and my sins" (Job 13:23). "I am blameless... I will never deny my righteousness" (Job 9:20,21; 27:5,6). Quite rightly, Elihu wants Job to see all this another way; for although this was how God saw Job in the prologue, Job was wrong to justify himself with his own righteousness and conveniently ignore his own current sins and "sins of youth" that he several times mentions in his earlier speeches (Job 13:26). Discerning and feeling one's own sinfulness is an undoubted part of conversion. Elihu on God's behalf rebukes Job for thinking that "I am clean without transgression" (33:9,12); and Elihu's exhortation to Job to say "I have sinned" (33:27) is finally obeyed by Job, as if he at the end accepted the truth of what Elihu was saying. How we see the role of Elihu determines how we understand Job's claims of innocence. I have earlier suggested that he may have been inserted as a literary device to summarize the arguments so far and to give us a foretaste of God's argument which is yet to come. But there is no reason to think this; we can just accept all that he says as indeed from God.

Job 33:10 Behold, He finds occasions against me. He counts me for His enemy- These indeed were Job's words in Job 13:24, "You consider me Your enemy". Yet it could be argued that this is a rather uncharitable twist of Job's words in Job 7:17-19; 10:3-6.

And even when Job feels God is his enemy (Job 16:9), this surely must be balanced against what Job elsewhere says about maintaining his faith in God, even if God slays him. We are expecting Elihu to be sympathetic, and instead we find him showing the real implications of Job's words even though they were the words of a man clearly in great pain and anguish. It could be argued that God's statement that Job has spoken what is right about Him (Job 42:7) refers only to Job's words of repentance, not his words in the dialogues.

I would say that all Elihu says can be understood as God's true word to Job and a fair summary of his statements and positions. God was not Job's enemy; He is portrayed in the prologue as completely on Job's side. He had fantasized about having an "umpire" to judge between God and himself, and to actually require God's blood for having murdered him. Elihu appears as that figure (see on Job 32:12)- but condemns Job for failing to believe in God's love for him. What Job self-admittedly, momentarily fantasized about... was taken so seriously by God and Elihu. And Job is condemned for this. Although he is also forgiven, we are left with the sober lesson that our own momentary thoughts and fantasies are likewise going to be judged, even if, as in Job's case, we might argue that they were generally out of character with us.

Job 33:11 He puts my feet in the stocks. He marks all my paths - This is indeed a quote of Job's words in Job 13:27, but it could be argued that Elihu rather overlooks the context in which Job spoke of God marking all his paths (Job 7:17-19). But all the same it is true that Job considered God to be treating him like Cain who had a mark on him because he was condemned. We rather expect Elihu to encourage Job from the prologue, that God actually had a great love and respect for Job. Instead he rebukes Job in his next words. One take away from the Job story is that words matter, no matter if they are spoken under duress or in acute suffering. And by our words we will be justified or condemned, the Lord taught. Our words will be cited back to us at the judgment, as happened to Job.

Job 33:12 Behold, I will answer you. In this you are not just, for God is greater than man- Job has often said that God is greater than man. And yet indeed Job is "not just" for no man can be just with God of himself, as Job has recognized (Job 9:2). What Job theoretically recognizes, that God is greater than man and that man is "not just", he didn't really feel. Thanks to Elihu, Job finally admits that he had heard of God by the ear, but now his eye 'sees' God. The theory was turned to reality and felt experience.

Job 33:13 Why do you strive against Him, because He doesn't give account of any of His matters?-

Job has frequently complained that God refuses to come to court with him (Job 9:2,14-19, 32-35; 13:22; 19:7; 23:2-7; 30:20); Job wishes to "strive", a legal term for having a legal case. Elihu is right, that God doesn't have to explain Himself to man. LXX "But thou sayest, Why has he not heard every word of my cause?". Job wanted his cause to be listened to. We know what he didn't know- that he was being afflicted "without cause". Or, better, we can translate without the question mark. Elihu is criticizing Job for his continual fantasies about getting God into court, and legally contending against Him to prove Him guilty. This is most inappropriate- and Elihu is right to sharply condemn Job for doing so. Elihu goes on to argue that suffering, in Job's case, should have taught him- and it is listening to God which is required rather than railing against Him and fantasizing about taking Him to court.

Job 33:14 For God speaks once, yes twice, though man pays no attention- Job has wanted God to speak to him (Job 13:22; 23:5), and Elihu is saying that God has spoken to Job through his sufferings, which Elihu now proceeds to allude to in the next verses. But God will finally speak, plainly and directly.

Or we can argue that Elihu is saying that although He doesn't give account of His ways with man, God does actually respond to man's desire for a day in court with Him; although Job isn't perceiving it. We can render: "But God does testify, time and again, though no one may see it". Elihu says that communicates in two ways; through a dream, and then through a mediator who can help man whilst he is in affliction. Elihu may have himself in view; he had received his revelation from God in a dream, and now he was that mediator figure who could restore Job to his previous state (:19-30). That revelation included a challenge for Job to repent, and Elihu gives him a pro forma statement he can make in :27: "I sinned and perverted what is right but I did not receive what I deserved". Job was offered another such pro forma in Job 34:32 "Teach me that which I don't see. If I have done iniquity, I will do it no more". This was tough for Job, who on one hand was suffering "without cause" as God had said. The call is for Job to recognize that he has sinned, even if he was not a big time sinner by secular standards. And so to accept that the wages of sin is death and all his suffering is therefore quite legitimate. This is so hard for religious man to accept. Many religious men may have the same crushing experience at the final day of judgment. This is why Elihu can rightly argue that God does render to a man according to his sins (Job 34:11)- even if those sins were not gross sins by secular, worldly judgment. Elihu urges Job to accept his advice and make this confession (:31-33); Job is silent. Given his feisty responses to the friends, we rather expect an indignant response from him. One reason he doesn't do so is perhaps because he recognizes Elihu is speaking from God. Elihu argues at times that suffering leads man to repentance. Yet we recall that Job was seen by God as perfect before the sufferings started. So maybe Elihu's idea is that now Job has sinned by what he has said, the purpose of the sufferings is now to lead him to repentance. That to me is the only way I currently see to understand Elihu's argument that Job's sufferings are to lead him to repentance, bearing in mind that at the end, Job indeed does repent. He repents of what he had said wrong *during* the sufferings, not before. Therefore it was the later period of the sufferings which were intended to bring Job to the repentance he finally makes. It is in this sense that Elihu at times sees a connection between Job's sin and his sufferings; but the sin in view is not anything before the sufferings [as the friends wrongly supposed], but his sins now committed during the sufferings.

Job 33:15 In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, in slumbering on the bed- This and the following verses allude to Job's situation. God had given him nightmare visions and bad dreams (Job 7:14). Whether these were the Divine revelations which Elihu imagines or merely part of the overall illness of Job... again remains unclear to us. Exactly because Elihu is purposefully enigmatic as to whether he is really in line with God; see on Job 32:5.

Job 33:16 then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction- This rather sounds like the claim of Eliphaz to have had revelation from God in a night vision, which claim I suggested was false (see on Job 4:15). See on :15.

Job 33:17 that He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man-

This suggests Job had an evil purpose which God had sought to deflect him from by giving him night visions.

Job 33:18 He keeps back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword- The impression is that Job was headed for death "by the sword" of his attackers, but God was trying to save him from this by giving him visions at night. But that is at variance with the parameters set in the prologue. God was not going to allow Job's abusers to slay him. His life was to be preserved.

Or we can read :18-20 as Elihu saying that in Job's case, his life indeed was protected by God but his sufferings were prolonged in order to teach him something. Initially, they were "without cause". But he started cursing God, and so the sufferings became intended to teach him humility. Job's only hope was through the mediator (:23), whom Elihu may well have seen as himself. His call for Job to repent of his words was crucial for Job to be saved from his sufferings, and ultimately saved. Job doesn't respond to Elihu's pleas- and so God Himself appears, as it were giving Job another chance. Initially Job fails to respond adequately to that too, and it takes God's final speech to bring Job to true repentance.

Job 33:19 He is chastened also with pain on his bed, with continual strife in his bones- This clearly alludes to Job's writhing with pain on his couch with continual pain on his bones. But was this for his 'chastening'? As discussed on :18, the parameters defined in the prologue suggest that the sufferings were for the education of others, and not for Job's personal chastening. Elihu therefore refers to the sufferings acquiring meaning as time went on after they began, in order to bring Job to repentance for his blasphemies against God.

Job 33:20 so that his life hates bread, and his soul dainty food- Clearly Elihu has Job in view.

Job 33:21 His flesh is so consumed away, that it can't be seen. His bones that were not seen stick out- The reference to consumed flesh seems somewhat exaggerated. The same phrase is used in Prov. 5:11 for judgment for sin. But the prologue has made it clear that Job's sufferings were *not* a punishment for his sin. The righteous was to suffer in order to demonstrate something to others. So again we see that Elihu is talking about the sufferings becoming judgments for the sins of blasphemy which Job was committing after the sufferings began.

Job 33:22 Yes, his soul draws near to the pit, and his life to the destroyers- Elihu appears to hold some pagan ideas that there were "those who bring death" (ESV) who meet and greet those who die. Or at least he is speaking to Job and the friends in terms they could relate to.

Job 33:23 If there is beside him an angel, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show to man what is right for him- Elihu seems to be suggesting that unless Job makes use of Elihu's offer of being a mediator / "interpreter" (Job 33:6), then he is going to die the death of the condemned (:24). But this again misses the point of the parameters set in the prologue. Job is not going to die as a result of his sufferings. Elihu is not going to prove Job's saviour.

LXX "Though there should be a thousand messengers of death". We can read this as a reference to Angels of death. But it makes more sense to read Elihu as suggesting that he is the one among a thousand who can show Job what is right. And in the end Job does accept what Elihu says and repents, and God says that Job has thereby spoken what was "right". Elihu suggests that he can pay the 'redemption', in that he can be the 'redeemer' that Job fantasized about having in Job 19.

Job 33:24 then God is gracious to him, and says, 'Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom'-

We can follow the argument through from :18 as meaning that God brings man to the brink of death, as He had done Job, telling the Satan to "preserve his life", all *in order that* God might show His grace to man, and enable man to see His face with the joy of salvation and gratitude (:26). Job's illness was "without cause" in the sense that it was not punishment, but the intention of it was that it would lead Job to 'pray to God' (:26) and then be restored. At this point, Job doesn't respond to Elihu. But he does when God repeats Elihu's message. Elihu was the kinsman-redeemer whom Job had fantasized of having in Job 19.

Job 33:25 His flesh shall be fresher than a child's. He returns to the days of his youth-

Job indeed longed to return "to the days of my youth" (Job 29:4); and Elihu is offering Job the power to return, thanks to his mediation (see on :23).

Job 33:26 He prays to God, and He is gracious to him, so that he sees His face with joy. He restores to man his righteousness- LXX "And he shall pray to the Lord, and his prayer shall be accepted of him". This is just what happened to Job after his repentance. Job earlier had wanted to "see" God in court (Job 13:24). But through repentance, he will later say that "Now my eye sees You". Elihu's offer to Job does come gloriously true when Job repents. All this is indeed what happened to Job. He was 'restored', he prayed to God for the friends (Job 42:10), and felt as if he had seen God's face (Job 42:5). The point is that this revival of Job happened exactly as Elihu said. It was predicated purely upon God's direct grace.

Job 33:27 He sings before men, and says, 'I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it didn't profit me- The return of the prodigal son foreshadowed the final repentance of the Jews (note how that parable is based on Gen. 43:16;45:14,15). But Job's decision to say "I have sinned... and it didn't profit me" also connects with the prodigal son (Lk. 15:21), thus again associating him with the Jews in their suffering and repentance. LXX "Even then a man shall blame himself, saying, What kind of things have I done? and he has not punished me according to the full amount of my sins". This has special reference to the exiles, who admitted that they had not been punished according to their sins (Ezra 9:13).

Job 33:28 He has redeemed my soul from going into the pit. My life shall see the light'- The 'redemption' of the exiles was to be predicated likewise upon their repentance (Jer. 31:11 s.w.). But this was to be possible without any mediator figure; Elihu failed to be that figure, just as the various possible Messiah figures didn't come to anything. But salvation was still possible through repentance eliciting God's direct restorative grace.

Job 33:29 Behold, God works all these things, twice, yes three times, with a man- Elihu offers Job two or three times the call to repentance, offering him at least three pro forma statements of repentance. And he refuses. But God Himself then appears and does bring Job to repentance. Perhaps the idea is that God has offered Job a way out two or three times, and he has rejected it. Indeed Job had sinned after his sufferings began, and God was giving him a path to repentance and restoration which he was refusing.

Job 33:30 to bring back his soul from the pit, that he may be enlightened with the light of the living- It seems that Elihu had been through Job's very experiences, of 'death' and rising again: "He has delivered *my* soul from death, that my life may praise him in the light. Hearken, Job, and hear *me*" (33:30,31 LXX). And this is exactly what Job did. As Job was to be the representative saviour of the friends, so perhaps Elihu was to be for Job.

Job 33:31 Mark well, Job, and listen to me. Hold your peace, and I will speak- See on :30. These are Job's words of Job 13:13. I noted on :1,2 that Elihu often repeats Job's words and style. He is absolutely Job's representative.

Job 33:32 If you have anything to say, answer me. Speak, for I desire to justify you- Given his responses to the friends, we can be sure that Job would soon have spoken up and answered Elihu at this point, as Elihu invites Job to speak at this point. But he doesn't. He is convicted in his conscience, but can't bring himself to state his repentance. He mutters a few words at the end of God's first speech but they aren't enough; only at the end of God's second speech does Job repent as required.

Job 33:33 If not, listen to me. Hold your peace, and I will teach you wisdom- The impression is that in the drama, there is now a period of silence. Job says nothing (see on :32). Although he could have taken issue with much of what Elihu says, he doesn't. He is learning that verbal response is of no value and will not help toward resolution of matters with God. Elihu could be accused of arrogance by continually and dogmatically claiming to have wisdom and Divine inspiration. The friends have appealed to the elders as their source of wisdom; Job once appeals to travellers, those who have picked up wisdom by their wide experience of life. Elihu claims wisdom comes from God, and he has been given it. If indeed this is so, then his apparent dogmatism and eagerness to come out with God's Truth is not surprising; it is to be expected. And if Elihu isn't telling the truth about his Divine inspiration, then he is a colossal fraud- and we would expect God to point that out rather than repeat Elihu's arguments. The fact God doesn't do this leads me to conclude that Elihu is who he says he is- Divinely inspired.

JOB CHAPTER 34

Job 34:1 Moreover Elihu answered- This part of the speech is largely addressed to "you wise men" (:2) and "men of understanding" (:10). The friends are in view, but this serves to confirm Job's claim that sages and those reputed for wisdom are often wrong. Or we can see Elihu's first speech as ending at the end of Job 33. Job 34 is

Elihu's second speech, Job 35 is his third speech, and Job 36,37 Elihu's final speech. Elihu summarizes Job's words in :5-9, and then criticizes them in :10-31.

Job 34:2 Hear my words, you wise men. Give ear to me, you who have knowledge-

We do well to imagine in what tone of voice Elihu spoke. I suggest he was here genuinely imploring the friends to repent.

Job 34:3 For the ear tries words, as the palate tastes food- He is quoting Job (Job 12:11). Elihu thereby is attempting to repeat what is good in Job's arguments whilst condemning him where he is wrong. But as I have argued on Job 32:5 and often, Elihu may simply be a literary device to summarize the arguments so far.

Job 34:4 Let us choose for us that which is right. Let us know among ourselves what is good- "Right" is *mishpat*, 'judgment'; he is urging the friends to come to a just judgment on the case. This slightly misses the point which God is to make- that He alone is the judge. The only judgment the friends are entitled to come to is that Job has maintained his faith despite adversity, contrary to their original suspicion. But this seems to be behind Paul's words in 1 Thess. 5:21 "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good", which is in the context of using "prophesyings" (1 Thess. 5:20)- i.e. the true word of God- to analyze and reject false Judaist teaching that was claimed to be inspired. We are left wondering whether Paul is merely using the outline principle, or is interpreting Elihu as the true prophet of God and Job as a false reasoner, doing so under the guise of speaking the Truth, seeing he was a prophet.

Job 34:5 For Job has said, 'I am righteous- The word for "righteous" is that rendered "innocent" when Job twice says "I am innocent" (Job 9:15; 10:15). Here in :5,6 Elihu carefully quotes Job's actual words.

God has taken away my right- Job has said this (Job 27:2),

Elihu is certainly not the sympathetic mediator we have been led by the story line to expect. And yet we find it hard to avoid the conclusion that Elihu is quoting Job fairly. At judgment day, bad words will be cited back to men and they will be left with the same impression we have as Elihu does this to Job: 'Was that really what came out of my mouth? Yes, indeed it was'. This will be especially telling for otherwise righteous men whose 'only' sin was thinking or speaking wrongly when under duress... And 'all this fuss' is made, quite rightly, over 'just' doing that.

Job 34:6 notwithstanding my right I am considered a liar. My wound is incurable, though I am without disobedience'-

"I am considered a liar" is a reference to how Job says "Would I lie to your face?" (Job 6:28). "Wound" is the word for "arrow", referring to Job's words in that same speech that he has been wrongly hit by "the arrows [s.w. "wound"] of the Almighty" (Job 6:4). All Job's words, possibly muttered under his breath, and justified by him as just mere words said under intense trial, were being quoted back to him. And he was being justified or condemned by his words, as the Lord says must happen. Or we can read with Rashi that Job is calling God a liar for not judging him fairly. Paul picks up the spirit of this in Romans, when he demonstrates that anyone who justifies themselves by works is calling God a liar, placing Him in the dock. But He will overcome them, and declares every such man a liar.

Job 34:7 What man is like Job, who drinks scorn like water-

Elihu here quotes the words of Eliphaz in Job 15:16. Quite often Elihu quotes the ideas of the friends with approval. His position is that Job's continued sufferings are because of his bad words about God after the sufferings started. The friends however believe that Job suffers because of having lived a sinful life before the sufferings started; the prologue shows how wrong they were. But not all their observations about Job are wrong and Elihu seems to accept this. God's condemnation of the friends is not because of anything they said about Job. He twice gives His reason: "you have not spoken of Me the thing that is right" (Job 42:7,8). Elihu quotes the friends and approves some of the things they say; that can be read as Elihu being painstakingly just in assessing the situation and words of all concerned.

Job 34:8 who goes in company with the workers of iniquity, and walks with wicked men?- As it stands, this is an untruth. But Elihu isn't rebuked by God for this. Rather is he perhaps just summarizing the arguments of the friends. LXX "saying, I have not sinned, nor committed ungodliness, nor had fellowship with workers of iniquity, to go with the ungodly". But we can see the "wicked men" as the friends, and Elihu is rebuking Job for having absorbed their positions (:7). Job himself tells them that he knows the same things that they do. They all share the same belief that God rewards righteousness and brings retribution upon sinners. Their only difference is that the friends say that this must mean that Job has sinned because he is suffering. Job disagrees, and instead opines that God is unjust, unfair and needs to be called to account somehow in some imaginary court. Job admits that he would have the same attitude to himself, if he were in the friends' place: "I, too, like you, would speak the same, were you in my place. I would also din words against you and would wag my head over you" (Job 16:3,4). Elihu rightly rebukes him here for this.

Job 34:9 For he has said, 'It profits a man nothing that he should delight himself with God'- This is a fair summary of what Job has said in Job 9:22–24 and 21:5–13. The prologue has shown that Job had greatly profited through serving God. Now those blessings have been temporarily suspended, he gets cranky with God and shows no appreciation for the blessings he had earlier received. He clearly considers those blessings to have been his just desert, for he never mentions any gratitude for them. He fails totally to see any grace in God. He has made his declaration of total innocence in Job 31 and has said he will hold fast to his profession of personal sinlessness until he dies.

Job 34:10 Therefore listen to me, you men of understanding- This could be sarcastically calling them men who understand, when Elihu is arguing that in fact they have no Divine wisdom at all. But we can also read it as a heartfelt appeal for them to repent; we are left to imagine in what tone of voice Elihu spoke.

Far be it from God, that He should do wickedness, from the Almighty, that He should commit iniquity-

This is exactly the nub of what God has to say to Job, and it is precisely what God also calls Job to account over.

Job 34:11 For the work of a man He will render to him, and cause every man to find according to his ways- This was the argument of Eliphaz (Job 4:8); Job's sufferings were to be understood as judgment for sin, which therefore Job has committed. The idea of future and ultimate judgment at a last day of judgment has been overlooked.

But if Elihu speaks for God here, what he says isn't untrue. One explanation would be that Elihu therefore has a future day of judgment in view, because Job's sufferings were "without cause". Or, we could argue, in line with the discussion on Job 33:14, that Job is suffering because of his sins- even if those sins were not gross sins by secular, worldly judgment.

Job 34:12 Yes surely, God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert justice-

This is exactly the nub of what God has to say to Job, and it is precisely what God also calls Job to account over.

Job 34:13 Who put Him in charge of the earth? Or who has appointed Him over the whole world?- The following statement of God's greatness is true as far as it goes, but Job would have agreed with it. Elihu is implying that Job disagrees with it. Job knows the theory but not the felt reality of these things, and thanks to Elihu's speeches, and God's... Job will come to "see" what his ear had only 'heard' in theory.

Elihu is saying that God has nobody above Him, nobody gave God charge of the earth. Job had asked for an umpire greater than God, who could place his hand upon both God and Job. Elihu is saying that there is nobody above God; this was a blasphemous fantasy by Job. And even if was "just" fantasy, for Job goes on to mock himself for even thinking like that, all the same it was seen as a major thing. And so we must soberly engage with the fact that "The thought of foolishness is sin". What we may daydream is still taken seriously by God and is culpable for judgment.

Job 34:14 If He set His heart on Himself, if He gathered to Himself His spirit and His breath- The whole of creation keeps on going as a result of God having a heart that bleeds for people. "If he causes his heart to return unto himself", the whole of creation would simply cease (Job 34:14 RVmg.). His spirit is His heart and mind, as well as physical power. Creation is kept going not by clockwork, but by the conscious outpouring of His Spirit, by the fact that our creator has a constantly and passionately outgoing spirit toward us. In times of depression we need to remember this; that they very fact the world is still going, the planet still moves, atoms stay in their place and all matter still exists... is proof that the God who has a heart that bleeds for us is still there, with His heart going out to us His creation. And the spirit of the Father must be in us His children.

Job 34:15 all flesh would perish together, and man would turn again to dust-

We can reflect that man's returning to dust is indeed his lot, the result of his sin (Gen. 3:19); but until that point, God's Spirit keeps us from returning to dust (:14). His Spirit is therefore keeping us alive by grace every moment.

Job 34:16 If now you have understanding, hear this. Listen to the voice of my words-

Rashi: "And if you wish, understand". Elihu repeatedly begs Job to repent, with a fervour not seen in the friends. Basically Job refuses and by grace, God Himself appears in order to bring Job to repentance.

Job 34:17 Shall even one who hates justice govern? Will you condemn him who is righteous and mighty?-

We can read the argument as Elihu saying that Job can not be a ruler himself, because he mocks others who are in authority (:18,19). He can never be returned to

his position of ruler over men whilst he condemns God and despises His rulership over himself.

Job 34:18 Who says to a king, 'Vile!' or to nobles, 'Wicked!'?- "Is it fit to say to a King (God), Thou art wicked? and to princes (Angels), ye are ungodly?". Here Elihu is rebuking Job for wrongly accusing the Angels, who had brought the trials.

LXX "He is ungodly that says to a king, Thou art a transgressor". Job is here accused of calling God a sinner. He truly did curse God, as his wife had advised and as the Satan suspected he would. Elihu is right- these are the true implications of what Job said. But still Job will be saved. Just one prayer of repentance elicited a forgiveness that covered months of such blasphemy.

Job 34:19 Who doesn't respect the persons of princes, nor respects the rich more than the poor; for they all are the work of His hands- The argument seems to be that the God who has created all men therefore doesn't show favour to the rich ones more than the poor ones. The fact we are all created beings makes us equal before our creator. He doesn't therefore respect persons; but Job, according to Elihu, mocks God as vile and wicked (:18).

Job 34:20 In a moment they die, even at midnight. The people are shaken and pass away. The mighty are taken away without a hand- The later application of Job to Hezekiah and the exiles would be in the midnight destruction of the Assyrians (2 Kings 19:35) and in the promise that the kingdoms of the world which dominated the exiles would be destroyed without human hand (Dan. 2:34).

Job 34:21 For His eyes are on the ways of a man. He sees all his goings- Elihu is implying that Job considers that God's eyes don't see him. Job says that God watches him far too closely, and yet also argues that God is so far above us that human ways are of no interest to Him. Elihu rightly corrects this.

Job 34:22 There is no darkness, nor thick gloom, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves- Job hardly appears to be hiding himself from God. He indeed complains that God appears to be hidden from him, and he earnestly seeks God's face and a meeting with Him in judgment. Elihu is criticizing Job's desire for death, assuming that the darkness of death will make him free from account to God, whom Job has described as a cruel slave owner.

Job 34:23 For He doesn't need to consider a man further, that he should go before God in judgment- ESV "God has no need to consider a man further, that he should go before God in judgment". God gives judgment "without [legal] enquiry". Job's complaint that God is so critically watching him with His all seeing eyes is therefore inappropriate. Judgment is only a metaphor; it falls down in that unlike a human judge, God is not gathering evidence and then weighing it up and giving His verdict. Hence :34 ESV "He shatters the mighty without investigation". Job's fantasy about having his day in court with God and having his case properly considered at some future point was all inappropriate. The idea seems to be that man is automatically in God's judgment presence. This is what God is going to later imply by His appearance and demonstration of His presence in creation. I suggested on Job 32:5 that the function of Elihu in the narrative is to summarize the position of the friends, and to give a foretaste of God's position.

Job 34:24 He breaks in pieces mighty men in ways past finding out, and sets others in their place- The present tenses imply Elihu thinks that God's judgments are revealed in this life (:23), involving breaking the mighty in pieces and replacing them with others. He clearly has Job in view. Elihu is correcting Job's view that the wicked don't receive punishment in this life. They very often do, but the way God does it is "past finding out" as the retribution is not as immediate and simplistic as the friends assume.

Job 34:25 Therefore He takes knowledge of their works. He overturns them in the night, so that they are destroyed-

Elihu is saying that indeed there is evidence that God notices sin and judges it; disproving Job's claim that God "smiles upon the wicked" and anyway, is so great that sin or righteousness make no difference to Him.

Job 34:26 He strikes them as wicked men in the open sight of others- This appears to be justifying the friends; they had openly seen Job's being stricken. The difference is that Elihu is explaining that Job's continued sufferings were because of his wickedness.

Job 34:27 because they turned aside from following Him, and wouldn't pay attention to any of His ways-

If we understand Elihu as speaking from God, and all the evidence is that this is the case, then this does state that in his response to the sufferings, Job has turned aside from God and is not paying attention to God's ways. God's own speeches to Job challenge Job to pay attention to His ways.

Job 34:28 so that they caused the cry of the poor to come to Him. He heard the cry of the afflicted- This is simply repeating the assumption of the friends; Job is suffering, therefore he sinned, and they have speculated that he abused the poor, and God had heard their cry and was punishing Job. Elihu is saying that there is now a connection between sin and suffering in Job's life- but because of the sins he has committed after the sufferings started.

Job 34:29 When He gives quietness, who then can condemn?- We can render: "When He is silent, who can condemn?" (NJPS). Job was condemning God because of God's silence, just as many struggle with the apparent silence of God. His silence is no reason to think that God doesn't love us; for we know from the prologue how much this silent God did in fact love Job.

When He hides His face, who then can see Him? Alike whether to a nation, or to a man- God hid His face from the exiles (s.w. Dt. 31:17,18; 32:20; Is. 8:17; 54:8; 59:2; 64:7; Jer. 33:5; Ez. 39:23), and again, His apparent hiding of His face from Job was not because Job had sinned but because he was suffering as representative of his people. Hence "whether to a nation, or to a man".

Job 34:30 that the Godless man may not reign, that there be no one to ensnare the people- LXX "causing a hypocrite to be king, because of the waywardness of the people". Elihu clearly expresses the friends' perspective, that although Job has been a ruler, he has been deposed by God because he is a hypocrite and is ensnaring people.

Job 34:31 For has any said to God, 'I am guilty, but I will not offend any more-

Rashi: "For to God should be said...". This is another pro forma template for Job's repentance, that he refuses. Only after God's appearance does he repent like this.

Job 34:32 Teach me that which I don't see. If I have done iniquity, I will do it no

more'?- Here again, Elihu gives Job a pro forma with which to repent. His argument seems to be that Job's 'smaller' sins, which he admits, along with "sins of youth", deserve death and remove from Job the right to complain about any treatment he gets from God. Elihu urges Job to pray to God to reveal his sinfulness to him, to teach him the sins he didn't see. At this point, Job makes no response- despite his feisty responses to the friends. When God appears and repeats Elihu's arguments, finally Job does repent, but he doesn't need to ask God to reveal his sin to him. This realization of sin is elicited by the revelation of God Himself.

Job 34:33 Shall His recompense be as you desire, that you refuse it? For you must

choose, and not I- The idea of the Hebrew appears to be that Job cannot decide God's judgment as he desires; and Job was refusing to accept God's judgment because it was not as he wished. But God's judgment has not yet been revealed, and his sufferings were not a part of any judgment upon him for personal sins. The prologue has made this clear.

Therefore speak what you know- Job remains silent before Elihu, as the Lord before His false accusers. He is learning the lesson that human words uttered before humans are inappropriate in these situations. He has learned that the dialogue is broken and it is not only pointless but counter productive to continue it. We can imagine a pause for silence in the drama at this point. Or we can take this as meaning that Job is refusing Elihu's appeals to repent, despite even giving Job a pro forma to use in :32 and Job 33:27; 34:31. Job has been quick enough to answer the friends; but he is silent before Elihu, because he realizes Elihu indeed speaks from God.

Job 34:34 Men of understanding will tell me, yes, every wise man who hears me-

LXX "Because the wise in heart shall say this, and a wise man listens to my word".

As in :2,10, Elihu considers that any who is wise will agree with him, that he is wise and is speaking wisdom. Earlier, the friends have appealed to "the wise" as supporting their views. Elihu is saying that the truly wise will agree with him.

Job 34:35 'Job speaks without knowledge. His words are without wisdom' - Job does

finally repent in similar words. This is a sign of his humility. Although falsely accused and urged to repent in a certain form of words, he uses those words to repent- even though he is innocent of the charges. He realizes he has not responded perfectly to the trials brought upon him, and recognizes that although counted perfect by God, that was by grace, and he himself had sinned. Elihu's appeal here is that of God in Job 38:2; 42:3.

Job 34:36 I wish that Job were tried to the end, because of his answering like wicked men-

Elihu condemns Job because he responded "like wicked men", i.e. the friends. For this is what Elihu calls the friends in :8. Job had adopted their wrong view of himself, and of God- that [contrary to what we know from the prologue], God was punishing Job because He was angry with him. It's so easy to absorb the views of

others about ourselves and about God. And Elihu, on God's behalf, condemns Job for this.

Job 34:37 For he adds rebellion to his sin. He claps his hands among us, and multiplies his words against God- But God says that Job spoke what was right about Him; this therefore refers to the words of Job's repentance. "Among us" reflects Elihu's identity with the friends. LXX "for iniquity will be reckoned against us, if we speak many words before the Lord".

JOB CHAPTER 35

Job 35:1 Moreover Elihu answered- Here Elihu claims he is adding something new to the dialogue so far. For he condemns both Job and the friends.

Job 35:2 Do you think this to be your right, or do you say, 'My righteousness is more than God's' -

This was the logical implication of Job's positions; and God draws the same inference about Job's words in his speeches.

Job 35:3 that you ask, 'What advantage will it be to you? What profit shall I have, if I had not sinned?' - This was indeed Job's position (Job 7:19,20; 9:22-31; 21:7-13). Elihu is right to call Job to account for saying this. It was exactly because of his righteousness that God had blessed him. He ought to have perceived that, and seen all his blessings as God's reward. But he should have retained his initial position that notwithstanding the connection between righteousness and Divine blessing, God is sovereign and is right to give or take as He wishes. Verses 5 and 6 argue that God is so vastly above man that in one sense, indeed, He doesn't much notice human behaviour. Possibly Elihu is continuing to summarize Job's position. Or he may be asking rhetorically... the God who is so far above us and so vast, can He really be touched by human behaviour on this planet? And the answer to that, inferring from Elihu's other arguments, is: "Yes! And that's the amazing thing. That the vastly 'other' God above does in fact very sensitively notice human thought and behaviour here on this tiny planet". Elihu goes on to give two reasons why God may at times be silent. They may pray just on a surface level and not from the heart: "They cry for help by reason of the arm of the mighty. But none says, 'Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night'" (:9,10). In fact Job is never recorded as begging for deliverance; most of his words are of bitter accusation against God. And the second reason is pride (:12,13). And that is indeed relevant to Job. Because God does not "regard arrogance- therefore Job opens his mouth with empty talk, and he multiplies words without knowledge" (:15,16). We can pray on a surface level, but not be like Elijah who prayed within his prayer. We can pray as the prophets often criticize Judah for praying, just on a surface level. And this, Elihu says, is related to human pride. Hence in Job 36:8,9 he appeals for Job to repent of his pride: "If they are bound in fetters, and are taken in the cords of afflictions, then He shows them their work, and their transgressions, that they have behaved themselves proudly". And he condemns Job for being like this. Truly, our interpretation of Elihu is our interpretation of Job, at least in the period after his sufferings began.

The phrase "to you" refers to Job himself. He had said this to himself. Elihu helps Job realize what his own self talk had been. This is what judgment and meeting God actually looks like, rather than Job approaching God "as a prince" with all his legal case arranged, justifying himself.

Further, the reference seems to be also to Eliphaz's words in Job 22:2 "Can a man be profitable to God? Surely he who is wise is profitable to himself". These words are applied here by Elihu to *Job*.

The idols and the Gentile nations amongst whom the exiles lived would not "profit" them (s.w. Is. 30:5,6; 44:9,10); but as the book of Esther makes clear, they were profiting well, apparently, from remaining amongst them. But the only real "profit" would be if they quit all that and returned to Zion (Is. 48:17 s.w.). But they saw no "profit" in being forgiven and restored as God's people (s.w. Job 35:3). Rather they considered the temporal "profit" of life in Babylon as far greater profit.

Job 35:4 I will answer you, and your companions with you- Elihu claims he is adding something new to the dialogue so far. For he condemns both Job and the friends.

Job 35:5 Look to the heavens, and see. See the skies, which are higher than you- The huge height of God above man doesn't mean that God is insensitive to human sin and righteousness (:6,7). God's response is to display His power and demonstrate the omnipresence of His Spirit- not just in the cosmos, but in very intimate and concealed processes upon the earth. He Himself as it were 'comes down' to demonstrate that this argument and feeling is so untrue; and He was to yet more powerfully rend the heavens and come down to earth in His manifestation in His Son.

Job 35:6 If you have sinned, what effect do you have against Him? If your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to Him?-

Elihu is quoting Job's words; for here and in :7 we pretty much have Job's words as summarized by Elihu.

Job 35:7 If you are righteous, what do you give Him? Or what does He receive from your hand?- The prologue has stressed God's positive view of Job's righteousness. Clearly enough, He is sensitive to human morality. This appears to be Elihu still summarizing Job's words.

Job 35:8 Your wickedness may hurt a man as you are, and your righteousness may profit a son of man-

We can take this as Elihu arguing against Job's argument that God isn't interested in human sin or righteousness; see on :6. Elihu is then arguing that sin is indeed significant, because sin hurts people, and then they cry out to God (:9).

Job 35:9 By reason of the multitude of oppressions they cry out. They cry for help by reason of the arm of the mighty- This sounds like Israel in captivity in Egypt and Babylon crying out. Elihu's accusation is that Job has cried out because of his affliction, but not to God his maker (:10).

Job 35:10 But none says, 'Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night- We wonder if Paul and Silas had meditated about this as they sung songs in the night. The Passover festival was the time when songs were sung at night. The exiles were bidden

believe that they too would be released from captivity. But none was found amongst them who truly sought for God.

Job 35:11 who teaches us more than the animals of the earth, and makes us wiser than the birds of the sky?' - GNB "They don't turn to God, who makes us wise, wiser than any animal or bird". Job has argued in Job 28 that wisdom is simply unattainable and God refuses to reveal it to man. Here Elihu says that this attitude is the result of refusing to repent and thus become wise.

Job 35:12 There they cry, but none gives answer, because of the pride of evil men- Elihu's argument is that Job has cried out because of his affliction, just as all sufferers do (:9). But he is not heard because his cry is "empty" (:13) and he is a proud, evil man. Yet the prologue has stressed Job is not evil. The reference of Elihu is therefore to Job's crying out and not being heard because of his pride *after* the sufferings started. Elihu is saying that Job didn't pray to God for deliverance, nor make confession of something, because he was proud. A man who suffers as Job did can still be proud, and many die proud, and thus condemned.

Job 35:13 Surely God will not hear an empty cry, neither will the Almighty regard it- "Empty" is the word for 'vanities', often used of idols.

Job feels he has 'cried out' to God for justice and not been heard (Job 19:7; 30:20); and that there is nothing wrong with crying out to God in distress, it is a perfectly natural reaction (Job 24:12). One comment upon this is that the young ravens cry out to God for food and yet are not always heard (Job 38:41 s.w.). But God in the wider picture sustains all of creation by grace. Job feels hurt that God has not responded to his 'crying out' because he says that when the needy cried out to him, he had heard (Job 29:12 s.w.). But here we see his works based approach; he thought that his response to those who cried out to him meant that therefore God must respond to *his* crying out. And God is not so primitive. His apparent silence is because His response is not predicated upon human works and charity. It is by grace alone, as is taught in His final appearance to Job. The exiles likewise were to finally see the response to their crying out to God in the restoration (Is. 58:9), just as their representative Jonah cried out to God from the belly of *sheol* amidst the sea of nations, and was heard (s.w. Jonah 2:2).

Job 35:14 How much less when you say you don't see Him. The cause is before Him, and you wait for Him! - This seems a cruel twist of Job's great statement of faith in Job 19:25-27; he believed that although he didn't now see God, yet he would do so in a bodily form in the resurrection and judgment of the last day. But GNB makes better sense of :14,15: "Job, you say you can't see God; but wait patiently—your case is before him. You think that God does not punish, that he pays little attention to sin".

Job 35:15 But now, because He has not visited in His anger, neither does He greatly regard arrogance- As discussed on :14, GNB has it right in having Elihu presenting Job's position. Elihu has earlier argued that Job is guilty of arrogance and is calling Job to repentance for it. Rashi: "And has He not full knowledge of arrogance?". Job's apparently small sins, along with his pride, are cited by Elihu as reason enough for his condemnation and continued suffering until he repents.

Or we can read this as "now it is comparatively nothing that He has visited you in His anger", meaning that the punishment inflicted on Job is almost nothing compared

with what it could or should or might have been. Only a very humble man could accept that.

Job 35:16 therefore Job opens his mouth with empty talk, and he multiplies words without knowledge- See on :15. "Words without knowledge" is exactly what God accuses Job of (Job 38:2 s.w.). Elihu functions in the story as a means of summarizing the arguments so far, and giving us a foretaste of the Divine judgment which is to come. The way God verbatim repeats so much of what Elihu says, as well as Elihu's arguments, makes it so hard to write off Elihu as irrelevant or totally wrong in what he says about Job. After all, six of Job's 42 chapters are the words of Elihu. How we interpret Elihu is really how we interpret Job, at least, Job during his trials. God rebukes Job and the friends, but not Elihu; and Elihu makes specific claim to speak for God and to be the intercessor Job had demanded. If that were all fake, we really would expect God to say so. Elihu's major issue with Job is that he accuses God of injustice, and his words were "without knowledge". God's speeches have the same focus; and God uses the same arguments as Elihu, talking of the cosmos, and speaking specifically of snow, ice, clouds, water and rain [using the same Hebrew terms]. God begins in Job 38:2 with the accusation that Job spoke words without knowledge, using Elihu's phrase he twice uses; and He ends His first speech with the same accusation in Job 40:2, "Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who accuses God answer Him!". So God's first speech begins and ends with this same complaint. God begins His second speech by asking Job similar questions (Job 40:8): "Would you impugn My justice? Would you condemn Me to justify yourself?". The similarities are such that it is hard to say that God considered Elihu as totally wrong and just an upstart. God repeats the same arguments and complaints as Elihu does. And Job accepts the truth of Elihu's accusations [and God's] that he has spoken words without knowledge. For he specifically repents of how he has spoken words "without knowledge" (Job 42:3); a far cry from the Job who said he would approach God in the court room "like a prince", certain of his innocence and God's wrongness.

JOB CHAPTER 36

Job 36:1 Elihu also continued and said- This begins Elihu's fourth and final speech. Here he doesn't summarize Job's positions, as he has done previously. He presents God's justice and righteousness at great depth, because Job has criticized God as being unjust.

Job 36:2 Bear with me a little, and I will show you; for I still have something to say on God's behalf-

Elihu so many times claims he is speaking "on God's behalf", and indeed has complete understanding (:4). This heightens the stakes. If he is not in fact speaking on God's behalf, then surely the book needs to tell us that, and God needs to be recorded as rebuking him. If in fact Elihu is speaking on God's behalf, when 'authority' is such a key issue in the dialogues, that it is totally credible that he would continue to make the claims he does.

Job 36:3 I will get my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker- Elihu often speaks of his "opinion". "Opinion" really means "knowledge", and the Hebrew word is used only by Elihu (Job 32:6,10,17). He claims his knowledge comes from "afar", from God (Job 36:3), but he also recognizes that God alone has

totality of "knowledge" (Job 37:16). So we are again left with Elihu as an enigma, not totally reflecting God's knowledge, although considering that his view is in line with God's. This enigma of Elihu is purposeful; as explained on Job 32:5, his function is to elicit *our* opinions; we too who like to think our view is in line with God's, and yet admitting we lack His total knowledge.

Job 36:4 For truly my words are not false. One who is perfect in knowledge is with you-

That is after all a huge claim for any mortal man to make. Elihu uses the same phrase about God in Job 37:16. Elihu seems here to be claiming to speak directly on God's behalf.

Job 36:5 Behold, God is mighty, and doesn't despise anyone. He is mighty in strength of understanding- Job felt despised or cast away by God (Job 10:14) just as the exiles did, but this wasn't the case; God will not despise or cast away His servant people (Job 36:5; Is. 41:9; Jer. 31:37; 33:26). The grace of it all was that although he wanted to cast away his life (Job 7:16; 9:21), just as God's people cast away His covenant (Is. 8:6; 30:12; Jer. 6:19), God would not cast away His people in their exile and depression (s.w. Lev. 26:44), even if they cast him away. See on Job 26:2.

Job 36:6 He doesn't preserve the life of the wicked, but gives to the afflicted their right-

God doesn't preserve any human life- because all have sinned, whether majorly or not, in human eyes. Elihu may be using this argument to get Job to accept he has indeed sinned, even if it was 'not much' by human standards.

Job 36:7 He doesn't withdraw His eyes from the righteous, but with kings on the throne, He sets them forever, and they are exalted- This was exemplified in the Divine influence upon Persian kings like Cyrus in allowing the restoration. Hence the mention of kings on the throne is particularly relevant to the exiles. We recall how Ezra and Nehemiah experienced God's eyes and "good hand" upon them, so that kings sitting on thrones made decrees of restoration. The contrast is with how Job was righteous in his *own* eyes (s.w. Job 32:1). What matters is that *God's* eyes are upon us, imputing righteousness to us in *His* view.

Job 36:8 If they are bound in fetters, and are taken in the cords of afflictions- The force of "then" in :9 is that if people suffer, then God uses it to help them toward knowing themselves and repentance. This may be true on one level; and the reference to the fetters and cords of imprisonment continue the similarity with the captives in Babylon, who were intended to be reformed by their experiences so that God could bring about their restoration. But this isn't really the case with Job. His sufferings weren't in order to reform him nor to elicit his repentance, as the prologue states clearly. But the sufferings continued because of his blasphemy, and became intended to bring him to repentance.

Job 36:9 then He shows them their work, and their transgressions, that they have behaved themselves proudly-

The same words for "to show... transgression" are used of how the prophets sought to show Israel their sin (Is. 58:1; Mic. 3:8).

Job 36:10 He also opens their ears to instruction, and commands that they return from iniquity- Job had been 'chastened' (s.w. "instruction"; Job 5:17). The positive effect of "chastening" is only experienced upon repentance, returning from iniquity. Judah in exile didn't repent, and so they were left with the problem of having been 'chastened' apparently in vain, and not experiencing a 'return' to the land because they didn't 'return' to God. The friends fail to realize that "chastening" may not necessarily be for our own personal sins; the suffering servant was 'chastened' not for his own sins, but to achieve our peace with God (Is. 53:5 s.w.). As discussed on Job 35:3, this is Elihu's appeal for Job to realize that he has committed iniquity [in his words about God since the sufferings began], and he needs to repent / return from that iniquity. Job does eventually do this, saying that he repents in dust and ashes. Elihu is saying that Job is intended to repent of his sins, even though he considered them insignificant. And then he would be restored. That is finally just what happened. This is why Job 36:13 will go on to warn that only the wicked "do not beg mercy with supplication". Job needed to do this...

Job 36:11 If they listen and serve Him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures-

Job has earlier argued that the wicked did indeed "spend their days in prosperity" (s.w. Job 21:13). Elihu is saying that this is far from the true picture; true years of pleasure are only for those who serve God. Again we note how carefully Elihu listened to Job's words and quotes them verbatim. And that is the essence of our own future judgment...

Job 36:12 But if they don't listen, they shall perish by the sword; they shall die without knowledge-

The idea that Job is "without knowledge" is repeated by God (Job 38:2) and accepted by Job (Job 42:3). Again, we see Elihu functioning as an introduction to God's ideas. We at this point wonder whether Job is indeed "without knowledge". Elihu's language provokes that question; and then we have it answered in God's usage of the phrase. Elihu's function is to provoke the question.

Job 36:13 But those who are Godless in heart lay up anger. They don't cry for help when He binds them- Job did indeed cry to God for help (see on Job 35:13) but not from his heart.

Job 36:14 They die in youth. Their life perishes among the unclean- Elihu is reasoning from the position that Job is about to die in relative youth; and he is lying there amongst the unclean, apparently terminally ill.

Job 36:15 He delivers the afflicted by their affliction, and opens their ear in oppression- As is mentioned in the next verses, the afflictions continued in order that Job's ear might be opened, and that he would repent.

Job 36:16 Yes, He would have allured you out of distress, into a broad place, where there is no restriction. That which is set on your table would be full of fatness-

This is so hard to believe- that Job's terrible situation was actually a blessing because it was going to eternally save him and bring him to a place of ultimate freedom, every man's dream, "with no restriction". And so Job should praise and

magnify God for how He was working with him (Job 36:24). And "stand still and consider the wondrous works of God" with him (Job 37:14).

Elihu implies that if Job repents, then he will be brought out from a narrow place into a broad place (Job 36:16). God perhaps comments on this by saying that the "broad place" is in fact the whole earth (Job 38:18). Man is already in freedom; it is a case of accepting it. Whilst I have argued that the idea that suffering leads to spiritual development and repentance was irrelevant in Job's case, it was relevant to Israel in outline terms, especially to the exiles in Babylon for whom the book was rewritten (see on Job 1:1). Elihu's speeches especially have many Chaldee influences in them, suggesting that an ancient Hebrew story was rewritten in Babylon, under inspiration. God's intention was likewise to allure His sinful people to the freedom of repentance (Hos. 2:14), far from the restriction of captivity and judgment (s.w. Is. 9:1), to a feast of fat things in the restored kingdom (Is. 25:6).

Job 36:17 But you are full of the judgment of the wicked. Judgment and justice take hold of you- Elihu implies that Job has refused God's offers of repentance (:16) because Job continues to suffer. GNB "But now you are being punished as you deserve"- in that although the sufferings were initially "without cause", they continued because Job was blaspheming and impenitent.

Job 36:18 Don't let riches entice you to wrath, neither let the great size of a bribe turn you aside- The prologue began with the satan / sons of God / friends wondering whether Job's Divinely given wealth was the basis for his faith. But their initial doubts developed into various other theories- not least that Job's wealth was because he had accepted bribes. Now Elihu warns Job not to let his wealth allure him to Divine condemnation ["wrath"]; but rather to be allured by God's encouragement to repentance (:16).

Job 36:19 Would your wealth sustain you in distress, or all the might of your strength?- The idea is as in :18, that Job is foolish to think that his wealth can buy off Divine condemnation.

Job 36:20 Don't desire the night, when people are cut off in their place- This alludes to Job's strong desire to die (Job 7:2), to obey what his wife told him to do, cursing the day of his birth and wishing it be turned into a night of eternal darkness (Job 3:8). Again we see Elihu's careful attention to Job's words; final Divine judgment for us all will factor in all our words and most hidden thoughts, which God counts as our spoken words even if they never came out of our mouths.

Job's clear desire was to meet God in the light, and he himself has noted that it is the wicked who desire the night as they think they can sin in secret, hidden from God and man.

Job 36:21 Take heed, don't regard iniquity; for you have chosen this rather than affliction- Elihu several times states that Job has made a choice; and he has chosen to continue in sin, which means the sufferings will continue, and shall lead him to death. GNB "Be careful not to turn to evil; your suffering was sent to keep you from it". This may possibly be an explanation of why Job suffered, and a critically important key to understanding why Job suffered. Had he not, then God foresaw that he would have fallen into evil in some way. And it took all the grief in order to stop Job from that. He suffered "without cause" only in the sense that it was not punishment. It was to

bring him closer to God to save him from some future fall which God foresaw. Because the most important thing is that we come to eternity, not that we get through this life nicely. Truly "he is the greatest teacher of all" (:22 GNB). And God does foresee our possible future sins, hence the Lord perhaps alluded to the book of Job when He told Peter that "Satan has desired to have you, but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not" (Lk. 22:31,32).

Job 36:22 Behold, God is exalted in His power. Who is a teacher like Him?-

Indeed this is so true. Who could ever think that all that happened to Job was to teach him. Although it seems to me that Elihu's understanding of God 'teaching' Job refers to the continuation of the sufferings, in order to teach Job that his blasphemous reactions were wrong.

Job 36:23 Who has prescribed His way for Him? Or who can say, 'You have committed unrighteousness?'-

God has been accused by Job of being unrighteous, and Job is being accused here of telling God what His way ought to be. The same root word for "unrighteous" here is translated throughout the book as sin, deceit, wrong, wickedness (Job 5:16; 6:29,30; 11:14; 13:7; 15:16; 22:23; 27:4; 34:32; 36:23). Elihu is right to condemn Job for this, calling God a sinner, and to exhort Job to accept God as his teacher (:22) rather than someone he can take to court and wish dead.

Job 36:24 Remember that you magnify His work, whereof men have sung-

Elihu could be saying that Job had sung hymns of praise, magnifying God for His work- and not really meant them.

Job 36:25 All men have looked thereon. Man sees it afar off-

GNB: "Everyone has seen what he has done; but we can only watch from a distance". Job wasn't satisfied with the necessary distance between God and man; his demands for explanation were inappropriate.

Job 36:26 Behold, God is great, and we don't know Him. The number of His years is unsearchable- Literally "the number of years". This is the same phrase as in Job 15:20: "The wicked man writhes in pain all his days, even the number of years that are laid up for the oppressor". Clearly he has Job in view, who was oppressed by raiders, and was apparently writhing in pain constantly. Eliphaz suggests that Job must suffer this for a Divinely decreed "number of years". This is the phrase used of the number of years Judah and Israel were to suffer for their sins in exile at the hands of their oppressors (Ez. 4:5; Dan. 9:2). "Laid up" is AV "hidden". Perhaps Elihu alludes to this when he uses the same phrase to say that "the number of years" cannot be "searched out" because God is great (Job 36:26 AV). This may refer to how Daniel tried to search out the number of years Judah ought to be in captivity, and had to conclude that the 70 years time period was flexible, depending upon Judah's repentance and other preconditions. We note Ez. 4:5 gives a different period.

Job 36:27 For He draws up the drops of water, which distil in rain from His vapour-

It is possible that from about this point in the narrative, we are intended to imagine a thunderstorm developing. This begins with rain at this point. It comes to full term in the theophany where God Himself as it were comes down and speaks to men. See on

Job 36:33; 37:1,2; 38:34. LXX "the drops of rain are numbered by him, and shall be poured out in rain to form a cloud". Elihu is still answering Job's objections that God is so far away that He pays no attention to human sin or righteousness. God in fact is aware of the minutest behaviour, and that awareness will result in the thunder of His judgment. Just as each drop of rain, every one of which He is aware of, results in a thunderstorm.

Job 36:28 which the skies pour down and which drop on man abundantly-

God's goodness to man is not merely like God sending rain abundantly on all men, as part of the water cycle which runs on clockwork. God Himself will appear in the gathering clouds, to demonstrate that He is not absent in His greatness, but very present.

Job 36:29 Yes, can any understand the spreading of the clouds, and the thunderings of His pavilion?-

Elihu makes the valid point that if Job cannot understand how God is working all around him, how can he reasonably demand to understand how God is working in his life.

Job 36:30 Behold, He spreads His light around Him. He covers the bottom of the sea-

This again has relevance to the exiles. They felt they were at the bottom of the sea of nations, just as Jonah felt he had gone down to the depths of the sea. And yet from there he was restored, just as the exiles could have been if they followed the path of Job.

Job 36:31 For by these He judges the people. He gives food in abundance- The "these" appear to refer to the clouds, a symbol of judgment and yet also providing rain which "gives food". Out of judgment comes blessing. But Elihu wrongly predicated this upon the personal repentance of Job. However the principle was true for the exiles; the judgment of Babylon could have led to their release and return to the land, enjoying the blessings of a restored Kingdom, "food in abundance". Hence LXX "For by them he will judge the nations". But this potential scenario didn't work out; Babylon and her confederate nations didn't fall in the dramatic, supernatural way envisaged, the Jews didn't repent, and most refused to participate in the possible restoration.

Job 36:32 He covers His hands with the lightning, and commands it to strike the

mark- AV "With clouds he covereth the light; and commandeth it not to shine by the cloud that cometh betwixt". This is Elihu's commentary upon Job's words in Job 26:9: "He encloses the face of His throne, and spreads His cloud upon it". As so often in the drama of Job, truths are presented but without context. This is indeed true; but Job and the exiles had to learn that the cloud that came between God and themselves was that of human sin (Is. 44:22), even though God responded by bringing that cloud (Job 36:32). The years of exile were the day of cloud (Ez. 34:12; Lam. 3:44). But through that cloud, the light of God's saving glory was still visible (Job 37:15).

God's amazing control of events in the natural world is surely through Angelic influence. God gives the lightning- often associated with Angels- a specific charge [as He does to His Angels] that it "strike the mark". Job has earlier complained that God

is using him as target practice. Elihu goes along with this, and sees it reflected in the natural creation.

Job 36:33 Its noise tells about Him, and the livestock also concerning the storm that comes up- The idea is that the animals sensed the thunderstorm that was about to burst, and so should man. This again lends weight to the suggestion that a literal thunderstorm was gathering, which came to final term in God's theophany.

JOB CHAPTER 37

Job 37:1 Yes, at this my heart trembles, and is moved out of its place- Elihu has in view the approaching thunderstorm (see on Job 36:27,33). He says that just as the animals are trembling and moved because of it, so is he (Job 36:33).

Job 37:2 Hear, oh, hear the noise of His voice, the sound that goes out of His mouth- Elihu asks Job to hear the voice of the thunderstorm (see on :1). Of course Job could hear it physically, but Elihu has the idea that there is a Divine voice within it. And this is indeed true, Elihu functions to introduce the appearance and speaking of God which begins in the next chapter. But we must not fail to note that this is Elihu's appeal for Job's repentance. And Job doesn't respond. "Hear, oh, hear..." again invites us to imagine in what earnest tone of voice Elihu spoke.

Job 37:3 He sends it forth under the whole sky, and His lightning to the ends of the earth- God was appealing not just to Job but to the ends of the *eretz*, the land promised to Abraham. This was the potential scenario possible at the restoration. The restoration prophets envisage the supernatural destruction of Babylon coinciding with the repentance of the exiles and leading to the repentance of a minority of the Gentiles at "the ends of the earth"; the borders of the *eretz* promised to Abraham where they were located, in Babylon and Assyria. The idea was that they would together form a new multi-ethnic people of God in the land, under a new covenant. But this potential didn't happen. For they didn't hear the voice of God.

Job 37:4 After it a voice roars. He thunders with the voice of His majesty. He doesn't hold back anything when His voice is heard- Elihu perceives there is a voice, a Divine voice, far beyond the literal roar of noise associated with the thunderstorm (see on :2). If that voice was "heard", as Elihu exhorts Job to hear it (:2), then nothing will be 'held back'. God is willing to do marvellous things (:5). This was of great relevance to the exiles. Had they heard / obeyed that prophetic voice, then the great potentials prophesied as possible in the restored Kingdom would have come true. God would have held nothing back. The Kingdom of God would again have been established in Israel.

Job 37:5 God thunders marvellously with His voice. He does great things, which we can't comprehend- The great things God does are all conditional; when or if His voice is heard / obeyed (:4). What we read in the following verses is therefore pregnant with wider meaning than simply describing God's control of the natural creation, thoughts elicited by the bursting of the thunderstorm. This is why the language is used in the restoration prophets concerning what could have happened if the exiles had been obedient to the prophetic word. That God indeed "does great things" was recognized

by Job as well as the friends (Job 5:9; 9:10 s.w.). But they were to be taught now by the thunderstorm leading up to the actual revelation of God Himself that indeed God can do all things. "I know You can do all things" was Job's final response. The restoration likewise would have been a case of the Lord doing great things (Joel 2:21).

Job 37:6 For He says to the snow, 'Fall on the earth'; likewise to the shower of rain, and to the showers of His mighty rain- God's command to the water is understood as meaning that God's prophetic word of restoration could bring about the restoration of the Kingdom for the exiles (Is. 55:10,11). See on :5.

Job 37:7 He seals up the hand of every man, that all men whom He has made may know it- GNB "He brings our work to a stop; he shows us what *He* can do". Job clearly thought that his works were the basis for his blessings, but this was not the complete picture. For the potentials planned by God to be realized, man must first realize he has no power of himself. His hand or power must be sealed up, so that God's prophetic word for His exiled, suffering people could be sealed up (s.w. Dan. 9:24). This is what Job was taught, and it was what God wished the exiles to understand (see on :5).

Job 37:8 Then the animals take cover, and remain in their dens- As those responsive to the wind go into their "dens" (AV), so in turn out of its den or room comes the storm of Divine theophany (:9). As the animals were running in response to the storm (Job 36:33), so should all men. God's people were likewise bidden obediently enter their chambers in order to be saved from the wrath to come (Is. 26:20).

Job 37:9 Out of its room comes the storm, and cold out of the north- See on :8. Just as destruction had been called forth upon Judah from the north, so God calls forth His prepared natural phenomena from the north.

Job 37:10 By the breath of God, ice is given- The breath of God is His Spirit. And this was the point so relevant to the exiles. God's Spirit was potentially able to transform their entire existence, just as it operates throughout the cosmos and upon the earth.

And the breadth of the waters is frozen- LXX "He guides the water in whatever way he pleases". This is similar to the idea of the heart of kings being as water in His hands (Prov. 21:1); Cyrus and the rulers at the time of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther were all under God's control, but His activity was dependent upon His people hearing His voice (see on :5).

Job 37:11 Yes, He loads the thick cloud with moisture. He spreads abroad the cloud of His lightning- AV "By watering He wearie the thick cloud". God created these thick clouds and could dissolve them at will, and maintains them within a perfect balance; whereas the exiles in their depression were under the impression that the thickness of the clouds meant that God could not therefore see nor judge (s.w. Job 22:13,14, see notes there). See on :15,16. But LXX "And if a cloud obscures what is precious to him, his light will disperse the cloud". This connects with the exiles being precious to Him (Is. 43:4). Even the cloud of His own anger with them could be dispersed by Him, such is His saving love and grace.

Job 37:12 It is turned around by His guidance, that they may do whatever He

commands them on the surface of the habitable world- "Turned" is literally 'returned', and is pregnant with allusion to how God's prophetic word could make the exiles return. But that turning around was by "His guidance", AV "counsels". It was by response to God's word that this turn about could happen; see on :5.

Job 37:13 whether it is for correction, or for His land, or for grace, that He causes it to come- The reference to God's land again begs for reference to the situation with the exiles. The whole suffering of Job / Israel was for multiple possible reasons. It was to correct, it was so that His Kingdom or land would be restored, and through it all the whole exercise was to parade His grace.

Job 37:14 Listen to this, Job. Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God- We perhaps imagine Job agitated and distracted. He is asked to calm himself and consider the thunderstorm and its implications. This is clearly preparing him for the final appearance of God's word to him through that storm which will begin in the next chapter. Clearly the function of Elihu is to prepare us for God's words and revelation which is to come. "Listen to this... consider..." is clearly another appeal for Job's repentance. Job has spoken earlier of God's greatness; but Elihu appeals to Job to consider not only God's power in creation, but the way that everything reflects a Divine mind, so "clever" and complex, so far beyond any human understanding. And so Job is not to be so surprised that this same God has worked in his life in a way quite beyond human understanding. Truly, we cannot attach ultimate meaning to event in our lives, just as we cannot in His works in creation.

Job 37:15 Do you know how God controls them, and causes the lightning of His cloud to shine?- See on :11,16. Note the emphasis upon God's control of the clouds, and that clouds aren't random occurrences but all intricately balanced with His light shining within them. This is in response to the impression held by the exiles, and wrongly imputed to Job in Job 22:13, that the thickness of the Divine clouds meant He could not see nor judge them (Is. 29:15; 40:27; Jer. 23:24; Lam. 3:44; Ez. 8:12).

This is perhaps commentary upon Job's words of Job 26:9: "He encloses the face of His throne, and spreads His cloud upon it". As so often in the drama of Job, truths are presented but without context. This is indeed true; but Job and the exiles had to learn that the cloud that came between God and themselves was that of human sin (Is. 44:22), even though God responded by bringing that cloud (Job 36:32). The years of exile were the day of cloud (Ez. 34:12; Lam. 3:44). But through that cloud, the light of God's saving glory was still visible (Job 37:15).

Job 37:16 Do you know the workings of the clouds, the wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge?-

Elihu's description of the natural creation and the approaching thunderstorm leads him to ask Job a series of rhetorical questions- and God uses just the same argument to Job. Job of course cannot answer the questions about God's greatness and how He operates in the cosmos nor upon earth. This is to highlight how Job's demand for answers to questions about his sufferings is quite inappropriate. Job doesn't understand God's ways in nature, so he cannot expect to understand God's ways in his life- let alone bring God to court over these issues. If man cannot even behold the sun which had now appeared after the thunderstorm had cleared the skies, "the clear shining after rain" ["Now men don't see the light which is bright in the skies", Job 37:22], how foolish is Job to think he can face off against God in court and have Him

condemned. He indeed is the discontented, over privileged toddler stamping their foot...

Job 37:17 You whose clothing is warm, when the earth is still by reason of the south wind?- GNB "No, you can only suffer in the heat when the south wind oppresses the land". The land of Israel had indeed been oppressed and the people had suffered. But this was all because of their abusers who had as it were been blown in by God's wind / Spirit.

Job 37:18 Can you, with Him, spread out the sky, which is strong as a cast metal mirror?- Elihu seems to hold the ancient view that the sky was in fact made of spread out material. This view, rather like the language of demons in the New Testament, is used without correction. Because the science is not the essential point; rather the idea is that the heavens are as a mirror, and by looking at the natural creation, one sees a reflection of God's work with us. And this is preparing us for God's words which are to soon come, which bid man do just this.

Job 37:19 Teach us what we shall tell Him, for we can't make our case by reason of darkness- Job had made his case against God and for himself in Job 31. Elihu is urging Job to understand how wrong this had been.

Earlier, Job had judged himself, setting in order his legal case, but declaring himself righteous (Job 13:8). By Job 23:4, Job is realizing that he needs to set his case in order before God; but he can't find God, or get God to engage in this game of judgment. He needed the final appearance of God at the end of the book to review his case, and declare that he is in fact wrong and condemned. But by grace, God will count him as right. He was prepared for this by Elihu's speech in Job 37:19: "Teach us what we shall tell Him, for we can't make our case by reason of darkness". "Make our case" is s.w. "set my cause in order".

Job 37:20 Shall it be told Him that I would speak? Or should a man wish that he were swallowed up?-

Possibly we have here another formula offered to Job by Elihu, as to what he should say to God. Perhaps :19 is what Elihu thinks Job should say at this point: "Teach us what to say to God; our minds are blank; we have nothing to say" (GNB). And :20,21 continue that: "I won't ask to speak with God [as Job had previously, repeatedly demanded]; why should I give him a chance to destroy me? And now the light in the sky is dazzling, too bright for us to look at it..." (GNB). But there is still silence from Job. It needs God to give him two further chances before he repents.

Elihu's speech becomes more helpful and appropriate the closer he gets to his conclusion, which is followed by God's words, which Elihu is preparing us for. For that is his function. He is here making the legitimate point that the God who can do such wonders doesn't need to be informed that Job wants to talk to Him. And in the light of all the great potentials which He has prepared, Job's earnest wish for death was inappropriate.

Job 37:21 Now men don't see the light which is bright in the skies, but the wind passes, and clears them- The essential light of God was obscured by clouds. But the wind of God's Spirit, which had blown in the great heat of suffering (:17), would likewise clear the clouds and reveal His light. In the immediate context, this could be simply talking of the sun, which was now shining after the wind has cleared the

thunder clouds. But there is no talk here of rain. We read of clouds and wind. I suggest the light bright in the skies was she shekinah glory, and then in Job 38 God's voice will speak out of this theophany. Wind, clouds, bright light and God's voice are all the classic components of a theophany, and not simply a thunderstorm coming and going. Job cannot look at the sun, nor at the shekinah glory; so how foolish and misplaced was his desire to see God Himself in a court.

Job 37:22 Out of the north comes golden splendour. With God is awesome majesty- LXX "From the north come the clouds shining like gold: in these great are the glory and honour of the Almighty". Job several times mentions "the north", connecting with the invaders of Israel "from the north" who would all the same finally be used to glorify God.

Job 37:23 We can't reach the Almighty. He is exalted in power- "Reach" is the word used of how Job sought to "probe" (AV "find out") the Almighty (Job 23:3; 28:12), whereas Elihu appears to agree with Zophar that "the Almighty" cannot be 'found out' or 'reached' (Job 11:7; 37:23). God's own appearance at the end is perhaps an answer to this. He cannot be 'found out' by intellectual argument or personal righteousness. Instead, He 'finds out' people and saves them by grace. Paul expresses the same idea when he writes that it is not so much a case of man 'knowing God', but rather of being "known of God" by grace (Gal. 4:9).

In justice and great righteousness, He will not oppress- Elihu's speech becomes more helpful and appropriate the closer he gets to his conclusion, which is followed by God's words, which Elihu is preparing us for. For that is his function. Elihu's conclusion is that God doesn't willingly afflict or oppress, and the same conclusion was reached in the context of the exiles by Jeremiah (Lam. 3:33 s.w.).

GNB "God's power is so great that we cannot come near him; he is righteous and just in his dealings with us". Job had wanted to come near to God in a legal sense, in judgment. Elihu is rightly saying that isn't possible, as Job himself had grudgingly realized in his speeches. But instead we are asked to trust that He is ultimately just in all His ways. We don't need to get God in court to prove that. All this of course was a big ask for Job, the righteous man who had lost his ten children, his health, wealth and everything, "without cause". Elihu is saying that God cannot be probed nor fully understood, but His justice cannot be questioned. That is therefore a matter of pure, total trust. And that is what it is to believe in God.

Job 37:24 Therefore men revere Him. He doesn't regard any who are wise of heart-

The punch line of all Elihu has said over six chapters is that God is to be feared rather than men who claim to be wise hearted; GNB "He ignores those who claim to be wise". This may appear a strange final point, bringing six chapters of speeches to a final conclusion. But in fact, the essence of Job's problem was that he had absorbed the positions and guilt of the friends, who were known as the wise; and who in turn claimed to be perpetuating the wisdom of previous wise men. They had falsely accused Job of being an adulterer, thief and abuser... and so in Job 31 Job has bitterly complained that God is accusing him of those things and therefore making him suffer. And therefore, Job says, God is unjust and a bad God. All this came about through Job paying too much regard to those who claimed to be wise of heart. So Elihu rightly concludes by making this point. God ignores human wisdom and judgment of men / ourselves, and so can we.

JOB CHAPTER 38

Job 38:1 Then Yahweh answered Job-

LXX: "After Elihu had ceased speaking, the Lord spake to Job from a tempest and clouds". The implication is that God takes over speaking from Elihu, confirming our suggestion that Elihu is indeed as he claims, speaking God's word.

Elihu has multiple times appealed for Job to repent, giving him word formulas of how to express it. But he has been silent. Despite that lack of repentance, God so wants Job that he himself now appeals to him. Job's response was inadequate and so God gives a second speech / appeal. Only after this does Job properly repent. Job has asked so many explicit questions, around 122 are recorded [and God answers by asking Job half this number, 61 questions]; and Job's sufferings beg very many implicit questions. Just some of Job's questions are to be found in Job 3:23; 7:12,17-21; 10:2-14,18; 13:3,18-27; 16:19-22; 19:7,25-27; 23:3-7; 30:20; 31:6,35-37. God's "answer" doesn't much address the questions, but rather seeks to convict Job of his sin, of his smallness and irrelevance, and of the greatness and basic goodness of God. Humble repentance is what God seeks, and when finally Job utters a few sentences expressing that- God says that he has spoken right about Him, and dramatically blesses and restores him.

The purpose of the day of judgment is for our benefit, not God's. He is not like a human judge, who must collect and review the evidence, weigh it up, and give a judgment. He knows the end from the beginning. The day of judgment is to prepare us to go from how we now are, into eternity. It wouldn't be much fun being as we are now, for ever. "We shall be changed", Paul says, at the resurrection. That change is not only physical but also mental and spiritual. The lion shall eat straw like the ox; lion shall still be lion, but his mental and physical nature will have to be changed. Job longed for a day with God in court, and he got it. God Himself appeared and judged Job, convicting him of his sin; and he repented, and was then restored and his circumstances changed, looking forward to our "change" after the day of judgment. His whole view of God, the world and himself was changed by that judgment encounter. James speaks of the patience / endurance of Job resulting in the "end of the Lord", being pitiful towards man and saving us. But he speaks of this in the context of appealing for us to be "patient unto the coming of the Lord". God's final appearance to judge, convict and save Job is set up as representing the Lord's second coming in judgment. He has kept asking to "see" God and after his judgment, he will sarcastically, perhaps, say that "Now my eye sees Him". Not literally of course, but he means that in his conviction of sin, he had had his meeting with God. We are to endure [not 'be patient' as Job was far from patient], so that in the long run of our lives our faith remains, despite periods of darkness and short term loss of faith as Job experienced: "Be patient until the coming of the Lord... Be you also patient... For the coming of the Lord is at hand! You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the result that the Lord intended, how the Lord is full of pity and is merciful" (James 5:7,8,11).

Bible teaching about judgment has this feature of it being a purgation; not a second chance, a second crack at all the issues we failed on, but all the same, a changing of our imperfect nature, physically and mentally. The Catholic idea of purgatory is seriously wrong, but like all false teachings, it has elements of truth to it that we must

not also throw away. Consider the Biblical connection between judgment and purging / improving / changing of character:

Mal. 3:2,3: "But who can endure the day of His coming? ... He will be like a refiner's fire, like a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver". This doesn't just mean that God's people will be sorted out, the good from the bad. It is saying that the good will be washed, refined and purified by the judgment experience. It is this which removes the dross.

Is. 4:4: "When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning".

1 Cor. 3:13–15: "Each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done... If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire". Whilst the immediate context speaks of the quality of our converts, the wider principle is that we are all building now. And the day of judgment will examine what we built. Possibly our apparent love, generosity, kindness, grace etc. was just all surface level; it will be revealed for that, and burnt up. But we ourselves shall pass through that fire to salvation.

1 Cor. 5:5 speaks of the flesh being destroyed but the spirit being saved in the day of judgment. But *sozo* , "saved", can as well be rendered "healed". The flesh will then be destroyed but the spirit healed.

1 Pet. 1:7 seems to be saying that the process of judgment day will also strengthen what spirituality we do have, and make it far brighter and eternal: "Even gold, which can be destroyed, is tested by fire; and so your faith, which is much more precious than gold, must also be tested, so that it may endure. Then you will receive praise and glory and honour on the Day when Jesus Christ is revealed".

God's replies to Job would be considered an *ad hominem* attack- had it come from a man. Instead of engaging with facts, evidence, or logical reasoning, the speaker tries to win the debate by making the opponent look untrustworthy or foolish. By shifting the focus to the other's personal inadequacies in other areas, attention is diverted from the actual issues. And those actual issues were very big- to man. A tornado from God had slain Job's ten kids. He was suffering all manner of things "without cause" (Job 2:3). Job's many questions and complaints about God are left unanswered and not even engaged with. That stands out clearly. Job is told that he is merely trying to "catch Leviathan with a fishhook" (Job 40:25). But this is the whole point- God is right. Job, like any man, is a fool. As thick skinned and stupid as the beasts. All he has said is not in fact logical reasoning, he has no evidence. Because the whole point is that God's ways are beyond man to understand. But God's reply provokes all that is within us to object to this style of dealing with an opponent. But that is the whole point. We have no leg to stand on. And yet we see so clearly that the friends ignore Job's situation and arguments, and just launch into *ad hominem* attacks on him (see on Job 5:2). We as readers are led to dislike the friends' *ad hominem* attacks on Job. But then God does just that to Job. Again we see how God demonstrates that He is so far above all our reasoning and demands for what we consider 'reasonable' engagement. And yet the end of the Lord in all this is that He is so pitiful and of such tender mercy (James 5:11).

The answer is to Job, not Elihu who has just spoken, nor to the friends. The whole focus of the book is upon Job's restoration, and out of that comes the restoration of the friends.

Out of the whirlwind- The restoration prophets speak of the whirlwind coming to judge both Israel and her abusers (Is. 40:24; 41:16; Jer. 23:19; 30:32), and it is through the whirlwind that God's cherubic glory is revealed in exile in Ezekiel. But out of that whirlwind, Yahweh speaks. We read here of Yahweh for the first time; His Name was to be declared through those judgments.

The whirlwind is time and again a symbol of Divine condemnation (s.w. Ps. 55:8; 83:15 "pursue them with Your tempest, and terrify them with Your storm"; Prov. 1:27 "when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when your disaster comes on like a whirlwind"; Prov. 10:25: "When the whirlwind passes, the wicked is no more"; Is. 29:6 "She will be visited by Yahweh of Armies with thunder, with earthquake, with great noise, with whirlwind"; Is. 40:24 "He merely blows on them, and they wither, and the whirlwind takes them away as stubble"; Is. 41:16 "You will winnow them, and the wind will carry them away, and the whirlwind will scatter them"; Is. 66:15 "Yahweh will come with fire, and His chariots shall be like the whirlwind; to render His anger with fierceness"; Jer. 23:19 "Behold, the storm of Yahweh, His wrath, has gone forth. Yes, a whirling storm. It shall burst on the head of the wicked"; 25:32 "a great storm shall be raised up from the uttermost parts of the earth. The slain of Yahweh shall be at that day from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth"; 30:23 "the storm of Yahweh, His wrath, has gone forth, a sweeping storm: it shall burst on the head of the wicked"; Ez. 13:11,13 "there shall be an overflowing storm; and on you great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall tear it... I will even tear it with a stormy wind in My wrath; and there shall be an overflowing storm in My anger"; Hos. 8:17 "they sow the wind, and they will reap the whirlwind"; Hos. 13:3 "they will be like the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the threshing floor"; Am. 1:14 "with a storm in the day of the whirlwind"; Zech. 7:14 "I will scatter them with a whirlwind among all the nations"). But from this symbol of Job's condemnation there came the appeal for repentance and the comfort of God's final salvation. We understand why, as Elihu hears and sees the whirlwind approaching from a distance, he absolutely begs Job to repent (Job 37:1) before it arrives. But Job remains silent. And so it comes.

In Job 9:17, Job had complained that God crushes him with a whirlwind. By appearing in the whirlwind, God as it were goes along with that, as if to say "Yes, and no apologies". Not a hint of pity nor tender mercy; but through that we come to "the end of the Lord", full of pity and tender mercy (James 5:11). Many connections with Job 9 will now follow. Job is initially persuaded that the Divine whirlwind is God's unreasonable anger with Him, the same kind of whirlwind that had slain his children. In Job 9:34 Job had said that he would agree to a meeting with God if God first removed His rod from Job, i.e. restored him. God's appearance to Job is therefore met cynically by him; he doesn't want to engage with Him.

Job 38:2 Who is this who makes counsel dark by words without knowledge?-

Elihu had told Job that he could make no legal case against God "by reason of darkness". On one hand, we know so little. By demanding answers from God, and dogmatically suggesting his own, Job was darkening the light of God's plans for him. But he could not understand those plans. He had to trust that they were light, they were good, God is a good God, and all his complaints were darkness, somehow obscuring that good. Even though this "good" involved slaying his 10 kids, and

insisting Job has nonrecourse to any explanation as to why. In this we see the danger of all groups who claim absolute truth, for whom there is a rational explanation for everything, the answers to everything being, so they say, either in the Bible or in the writings of their founding fathers. This is not to say that there is not truth, but that truth is simply God's ultimate salvation of His people in His Son. The paradox is that by Job striving to have all the answers, he was darkening the pure light of what God was trying to do with him.

Just as digital communication through typed words can lead to misunderstanding because we fail to hear the tone of voice in which the communication is being made, so we can misunderstand God's closing words to Job because we don't hear the tone in which He said them. James 5:11 says that we see the end of the Lord, very pitiful and of tender mercy. I suggest we read His words here spoken in a pitiful and tender, merciful way. "Who is this...?" need not be read as God mocking Job. It is a question that begs the answer "I, mere man". We think of the question is rhetorically used in Ps. 24:8, "Who is this king of glory?", answered by "Yahweh strong and mighty". Likewise Is. 63:1 "Who is this that comes from Edom...? It is I... mighty to save". More examples in Ps. 25:12; Jer. 46:7; 49:19; 50:44; Lam. 3:37. In none of them does "Who is this...?" imply any mockery of the object of the question. For more examples of God speaking tenderly and pitifully to Job, although at the same time in anger and hurt, see on :3. What may be read as bitter irony from God may better be read as rhetorical questioning, spoken with pity and tenderness, intended to produce the required repentance. God could have gone through Job's words and specifically pointed out all the blasphemy. He doesn't callously humiliate Job, but leads him to humility in a totally gentle and non-abusive way. He gently demonstrates His superiority, without in any way crushing Job or demeaning him. In fact, it is done beautifully; and this is some explanation for the extensive sections about Behemoth and Leviathan. Whether or not that argument works well on us in our age, who don't believe in the existence of evil monsters, it was just what *Job* needed to gently get him to see perspective.

The answer to this "Who...?" is 'I Job a mere man'. And so God goes on in :3 to ask Job to answer as a man. "Like a man..." doesn't have to mean 'show yourself to be a strong man, parade your masculinity'. That would be to retroject into the interpretation our current usage of that phrase. God is simply asking Job to remember his humanity, and to answer as a man. God's "counsel" is His plan, His intention, His rationale (as in Ps. 33:11 "The counsel of Yahweh... the thoughts of His heart"). The essence of God's plan is human salvation. Job was darkening this by claiming to understand it. He will now be shown that he cannot understand it in creation, let alone in his own life. Perhaps God's opening comment that Job suffered "without cause" effectively means "without a cause that man can understand".

The "counsel" of God refers to God's plan, and possibly to the meaning of Job's sufferings. But Job had obscured God's intentions by his bad responses to them. This is why God says that Job has frustrated His saving plan by his words- the significance of words in Job is huge. The words in view are those Job uttered during the dialogues. Faith is trust that God is working according to a design and plan. But God will demonstrate that His designs in creation cannot be understood by man. They can only be trusted in and finally observed. We cannot possibly perceive the mechanics of the atonement, of grace, of salvation. Otherwise faith would not be faith. And this is why so many who overly emphasize doctrinal or theological purity actually don't have a strong personal faith in salvation.

The LXX suggests Job had another agenda which he was trying to hide from God, despite Job's protestations of absolute openness and saying precisely what he thought: "Who is this that hides counsel from me, and confines words in his heart, and thinks to conceal them from me?". This would seem to be the sense, because Job pleads guilty to this charge in Job 42:3. There, he has "hidden counsel without knowledge". And he has done that by 'darkening' that counsel by all his words, which would have been better left unsaid.

Or we can read it as in the Masoretic Text, as an accusation that Job was darkening God's word ["counsel"] by his own words. He was not simply accepting the truth of God's word because he was so full of his own words. And this is what we see in ourselves and humanity generally so often; the Bible's words are crowded out by the words of our own presuppositions.

The Lord and His word is the light of the world. But we can darken that light, if we do not properly reflect it. God complained that Job had darkened His word (Job 38:2 NIV); the truths which Job should have taught to his friends he relayed very imperfectly, through the prism and distortion of clinging on to his own traditions and preconceptions of God, and his deep desire for self justification.

'Taking counsel in our own soul' is typical depressive human response (Ps. 13:2). We think our best and only counsellor is ourselves, in our self talk, we ask ourselves the questions and get often wrong answers. The spiritual mind takes counsel in God; David speaks in Ps. 119:24 of God's words being his counsellor, and describes God's words as His "counsel". If those words are in our hearts, then that will be the response we get. Otherwise we are mired within ourselves, bogged down with endless self talk and introspection which leads to no good answer, and often to very contorted and wrong self advice. "There are many advices [Heb.] in a man's heart; but the counsel of Yahweh shall stand" (Prov. 19:21). Job 18:7 says that a man's "own counsel [s.w.] shall cast him down". God's comment on Job is that he had "darkened [God's] counsel by words without knowledge" (Job 38:2). Job did this by doing what David is here tempted to do, taking counsel in his own soul. Job had refused the "counsel" of the friends, which was wrong; but had turned into himself for counsel and thus had "darkened" or obscured the light of God's counsel. Job agrees with this when he confesses that indeed he has hidden, or hidden himself, from [God's] counsel, and he was without knowledge. That is my paraphrase of the difficult Hebrew of Job 42:3: "Who is / how is he that hides counsel without knowledge. Therefore have I uttered that I understood not".

Job 38:3 Brace yourself like a man, for I will question you, then you answer Me!- On one hand, "Like a man" is not said as it might be said today, as an appeal to masculinity. Rather is it asking Job to realize he is human, and to answer these questions as a human. The implication is that by exalting his own words above God's (see on :2), Job was forgetting his humanity and effectively attempting to rise above God. His questions of God had been inappropriate, just as the friends had been wrong to seek wisdom by asking the sages, mere men (Job 8:8; 21:29 s.w.); it is for God to question us. For we and not God are in the dock. But "man" is *geber*, we could also render "like a hero", in the spirit of 1 Cor. 16:13 "Quit yourselves like men, be strong". Job had boasted that he would come before God like a prince, sure of his rightness. God bids Job now act like the hero Job thought himself to be.

God's entreaty in Job 38:3 is repeated by God verbatim in His second speech in Job 40:7. The English translations, including the NEV, all miss the force of one word in the entreaty. KJV "Gird up *now* thy loins". The Hebrew behind the "now" is usually

used of an inferior begging a superior, and we could as well translate it "Please". Elsewhere it is translated "I pray / beg / beseech you". Most translations ignore it. But on :2 I argued that although God speaks with anger, as one may do to a beloved child, He also speaks with pity and tenderness. You can speak with those feelings to a beloved child who has spoken wrongly. To respectfully ask Job to "please, I beg you" act like a man is not, I suggest, to be read as sarcasm. But as reflecting genuine love, pity and respect.

God will go on to speak about the world and the natural creation. One reason for this is that He seeks to persuade Job that in fact the world is not centred about man. So much else is going on in the natural creation, which man is unaware of and sees only a fraction of. Suffering makes us think that the world is centred around me, and any wider thought is typically beneath the assumption that the world is centred around man. Job's sufferings remain as they are, but God is vastly expanding the horizon behind them. Man and his sufferings are of no real account. All this is a radical challenge to the significance of human freedom; man assumes that his freedom is paramount, a given right. When in God's cosmos, it is not. Likewise we have to reassess what we mean by human dignity, human rights and the meaning of the human person. The book of Job shows that for sure, man has no rights; and God's view of human dignity is profound but doesn't coincide with what we would like it to be.

Job 38:4 Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if you have understanding- The friends had argued that traditional wisdom from a few generations of elders declared that Job's sufferings would be because he had sinned exceptionally. God reframes the perspective by saying that wisdom was in the beginning... and Job and the friends weren't there. In the drama, we imagine a significant silence after each question. The laying of foundations is the word used for what the exiles were to do for the temple in Zion (Ezra 3:6,10 etc.). Just as God had laid those foundations without any human observation or strength, so He would lay the foundations of the restored Zion (Is. 44:28; 48:13). But the exiles like Job had forgotten that (Is. 51:13). Zechariah teaches this same parallel between God's laying the foundations of the earth, and His empowering the laying of the temple foundations (Zech. 4:9; 8:9; 12:1). But how that was to be done was beyond human understanding. Job was silent when asked as to how it was done. The 'how' of God's purpose is a challenge to our faith, and this is reflected in our theological efforts to explain the 'how' of God's Kingdom. There is an element of mystery to it; for it is by grace alone, beyond our effort and understanding.

Job 38:5 Who determined its measures, if you know? Or who stretched the line on it?- God had both stretched the line of destruction upon Zion (2 Kings 21:13; Lam. 2:8), and that of restoration (Zech. 1:16). He gave the "measures" for the reconstruction of Zion and the temple system (s.w. often in Ez. 40:5,6 etc.); and yet He had likewise measured out the earth (s.w. Is. 40:12). The restoration of Job and all God's people was to be predicated upon the fact that His work could not be measured and was known finally only to Him (s.w. Jer. 31:37; 33:22). Just as in Gen. 1:9 "Let the waters be marked out with a line", so in the new creations God works, He has the power to determine the dimensions of His work in a way we do not.

Job 38:6 Whereupon were its foundations fastened?- The answer is 'Apparently upon nothing'. And this is the way of faith; to believe that out of apparently nothing,

restoration can come. This was the challenge to Job, the exiles and to all of God's people. Or we can see this as God's comment upon Job's primitive belief in a flat earth that floats around in space: "He stretches out the north over empty space, and hangs the earth upon nothing" (Job 26:7). The word for "foundations" is better "sockets". God perhaps is probing Job's cosmology. Is the earth and life upon it really floating around with no foundation, founded upon nothing? Are the sockets of the earth really driven in... to precisely "nothing" as Job had so dogmatically stated? Is not something Divine, God, ultimately, actually somehow beneath it all... unperceived and misunderstood by Job?

Or who laid its cornerstone- This again was of special significance to the exiles who were bidden follow Job's path to restoration. The laying of the cornerstone of the new temple was no less an act of pure grace than that of creation in the first place. Hence Zech. 4:7 "Who are you, great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you are a plain; and he will bring out the capstone [cornerstone] with shouts of 'Grace, grace, to it!'". The exiles didn't make use of that grace, and so these plans were reworked, to the even greater provision of the cornerstone in the person of the Lord Jesus (Ps. 118:22).

These questions allude to Job's belief that the earth was flat and rested upon a foundation which had a cornerstone. When asked about these things, Job cannot answer. And we know that in fact the earth is a sphere and doesn't rest upon such a pedestal with a foundation and cornerstone. Job is portrayed as pitifully ignorant even of his own misconceptions.

Job 38:7 when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?-

It was usual that absolutely everyone involved in a building project shouted for joy when the corner stone was laid (Zech. 4:7; Ezra 3:10). All the Angels had been present, shouting for joy... but man, and Job specifically, had been absent. This continues the theme of the prologue, that stuff was going on in Heaven involving the Angels that man was totally not party to. Neither in presence nor in time. And as a result of this kind of thing, Job lost everything. LXX "When the stars were made, all my angels praised me with a loud voice". This may be correcting the idea expressed by Job and the friends that there are sinful Angels, and God is angry both with Angels and men.

There is an obvious connection with the "sons of God" of the prologue in Job 1:6. I explained there that they refer to Job's fellow worshippers, although they had their Angelic representatives in the court of heaven. But the friends are the fellow worshippers, and the satan figure morphs into the friends. The contrast is therefore with how the sons of God should be rejoicing at God's work in testing and restoring Job, just as their Angelic counterparts did at creation. But instead they were caught up in their petty jealousies and conspiracy theories, and failed to see the wonder of God's new creation.

Job 38:8 Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it broke forth from the womb-

Previously, Job has spoken of Yamm, the evil sea monster (Job 9:8), feeling that God was brutally fighting him as He does Yamm. But God here presents the sea as totally under His control, with limits set by Him (:11) and actually created by Him, birthed out of Him. And He speaks to the sea as to a toddler that is obedient to his control, even if it is unruly: "*Thus far you may come but no farther*, and here I stop your proud waves" (38:11).

There are several allusions in Job to Babylonian legends concerning Marduk – indicating that the book must have been re-written in Babylon with allusion to these legends. Thus the *Enuma Elish* 4.139,140 speaks of how Marduk limited the waters of Tiamat, and set up a bar and watchmen so that the waters wouldn't go further than he permitted. But this very language is applied to God in Job 7:12 and Job 38:8–11. One of the purposes of Job was to urge Judah that Yahweh was greater than Marduk, He and not Marduk was to be Israel's God.

The sea was understood to be the abode of evil monsters. Yet Job stresses how God is in control of the raging sea. Just look out for all the references to the sea in Job (J. Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1985)). The book of Daniel perhaps makes the same point – the beasts that arise out of the raging sea are all under God's control and part of His purpose with Israel (Dan. 7:2). God artlessly claims to have created the sea (Job 38:8–11). In the Canaanite pantheon, Baal was seen as well matched in conflict by Yam, the sea god. But it's emphasized by God that He created the sea, shuts it up within bounds, brought it out from the womb (Job 38:8). See on Job 39:2.

As God 'shut up' Job (Job 1:10 "Haven't You made a hedge around him" s.w.), so He could 'shut up' the sea, with all the evil associated with it (Job 38:8). For at creation, He had commanded the waters where to go and they obeyed just one word from Him. The point is, God is using poetry to reframe these pagan myths in the context of His omnipotence, to show that His awesome power means that there's no room left for these supposed beings to exist. It's noteworthy that many times the Bible speaks of the power of God over raging seas – for the sea was so deeply associated with evil in the minds of Semitic peoples (e.g. Ps. 77:19; 93:4 and the fact that three of the Gospels emphasize how Jesus walked over raging sea – Mt. 8:23–27; Mk. 4:36–41; Lk. 8:22–25; "Who is this? Even the winds and the waves obey Him!").

Job 38:9 when I made clouds its garment, and wrapped it in thick darkness- The "thick darkness" is created by God, it is He who can shroud Himself from human understanding; but this doesn't mean that He cannot "judge through the thick darkness" (Job 22:13 s.w.). The thick darkness was only from man's viewpoint; not from God's. The fact man feels God to be distant and shrouded doesn't mean He actually is. And this is a fundamental truth for all time, that our perceptions of God don't mean that this is what He actually is. For God was not created by man in his image and likeness, but the other way around.

The thick darkness was a "swaddling-band" for the sea (AV). The newborn sea, fresh as it were from the womb (:8), is completely subject to God as its Creator, and is absolutely not a form of radical evil outside of His control, as was imagined by the surrounding peoples.

Job understands that it is *God* who sends the good and evil, the light and the darkness, into his life (Job 30:26). Significantly, he states his faith that *God even marks out the boundary between light and darkness* (Job 26:10) – a similar idea in essence to the reassurance of Is. 45:5 that God creates both light and darkness. The 'darkness', however we experience and understand it, is framed and limited by God; it is not a power or being with independent existence outside the realm of God's power. God confirms Job's understanding later, when He says that it is He who can swaddle the sea [another figure for uncontrollable evil] in bands of darkness (Job 38:9) – as if to say that it is God who gives things like darkness and the sea their sinister appearance and perception by men; but He is in control of them, using them in His hand. See on Job 38:10.

Job 38:10 marked out for it My bound, set bars and doors- Job's idea that God fixes limits for the darkness is repeated by God saying that He sets limits for the raging sea. God controls evil, or our perception of it (e.g. of the sea as being evil), and He sets limits for it – which was exactly what He did to the power of 'Satan' in the prologue to Job. All these statements by God about His use of and power over things like darkness and sea, with the perceptions of them as being independent forces of evil, are quite different to Canaanite and Babylonian views of creation. In them, gods like Baal had to fight Yam, the evil sea god, with clubs provided by other deities; in the Babylonian version, Marduk has to arm himself with various weapons in order to try to get supremacy over Tiamat (S. Dalley, *Myths From Mesopotamia: Vol. 4, The Epic of Creation* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1989) pp. 251–255). But Yahweh as revealed in the book of Job has utter and absolute power over the sea [monster] and the [supposed god of] darkness – for He created the sea and the darkness and uses them creatively for His purpose. That's the whole purpose of the many 'nature passages' in the book of Job. And the language of Genesis 1:9 is evidence enough of His power. He speaks a word – and light, darkness and seas are created, the waters gathering obediently where He commands them. Likewise God isn't in any battle with Leviathan – rather is the monster actually His "plaything" (Ps. 104:26 says likewise). The way the doors and bars of even the sea are under God's control connects with how God was to open the great doors of Babylon, to cause the city to fall and release the exiles back to His land (Is. 45:1).

Job 38:11 and said, 'Here you may come, but no further. Here your proud waves shall be stayed?' - The waters were representative of the invading nations. There was a limit to Judah's sufferings, because the waters of the nations had their limits. Job likewise was to be tested so far but no further. Jer. 5:22 teaches that this feature of God should make men respect and love Him- which Job needed to now do: "I am the LORD; why don't you fear me? Why don't you tremble before me? I placed the sand as the boundary of the sea, a permanent boundary that it cannot cross". In Job's case, God had set a boundary around him- his life was not to be taken from him.

Job 38:12 Have you commanded the morning in your days- God consciously makes the sun rise each day (Mt. 6:26)- it isn't part of a kind of perpetual motion machine. Hence the force of His promises in the prophets that in the same way as He consciously maintains the solar system, so He will maintain Israel. But this is by grace, totally without human involvement nor understanding of the processes, the whys and wherefores with which the dialogues have been so pointlessly taken up.

And caused the dawn to know its place- This is God's comment on Job's words of Job 28:23 about wisdom / relationship with God: "God understands its way, and He knows its place". Just as there is a sense in the natural creation that things such as the dawn have a specific "place" known by God alone (Job 38:12 s.w.), so the way of true relationship with Him, "wisdom", is known by Him alone. We do not find that "place" by intellectual effort, searching hither and thither, but by being open to God's leading of us as Job was.

Job 38:13 that it might take hold of the ends of the earth, and shake the wicked out of it?- If the "earth" as in the sense of *eretz* Israel is in view, then the ends of the earth were where the exiles were located, in Persia / Babylon. The idea of a dawning which

chases away evil is used in Mal. 4:2,3 of what could have happened at the restoration of the exiles- had they followed Job's path.

Job 38:14 It is changed as clay under the seal- Although Job is written in ancient Hebrew, there are many signs of how it was rewritten in Babylon. The Babylonians used seals which were impressed upon clay rather than wax. Perhaps the idea is that as the seal changes clay (what man is made from) from a formless lump into something highly significant, so God can work with man. But the original is very unclear. LXX: "Or didst thou take clay of the ground, and form a living creature, and set it with the power of speech upon the earth?"

And stands forth as a garment- The idea is of an embroidered dress, where valuable stones make the pattern stand out in relief. Again the sense is that God can transform the very ordinary into something of beauty and significance.

Job 38:15 From the wicked, their light is withheld. The high arm is broken-

God says that He withholds light from the wicked. But Job has twice complained that God gives him light: "Why is light given to him who is in misery, life to the bitter in soul... Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in?" (Job 3:20,23). It seems God is trying to tell Job that although Job has sinned and He demands Job's repentance, the fact Job is alive and 'has light' from God by His special decree to the Satan, is proof enough that God also sees Job as some kind of righteous. He sees His sinful servant as righteous... because He loves him. And Job is intended to join the dots, in the midst of this 'out of the whirlwind' judgment of him by God... and see that through all that, God loves him.

LXX "And hast thou removed light from the ungodly, and crushed the arm of the proud?". Job has complained that light has been removed from him, and so he is being reminded that he has indeed sinned, and is "ungodly", although relatively very righteous, and counted as righteous by the God who so loved him. This is a lesson needed for all 'Godly' people, especially middle class Western Christians, and it was what the exiles had to learn in order that they might repent. Perhaps God is quoting with approval Job's lament that the light of the wicked is darkness (Job 24:13-17).

Job 38:16 Have you entered into the springs of the sea? Or have you walked in the recesses of the deep?- GNB "Have you been to the springs in the depths of the sea? Have you walked on the floor of the ocean?". Job is reminded that he is ignorant of many things in creation, which remain inaccessible and remote. And so it is with insisting to know everything about Divine process with us. These things are purposefully hidden, and it is part of recognizing our humanity to realize that. Earlier, Job argued that those who are well travelled would agree with him, that the wicked often prosper. He states this in counter to the friends' argument that very old, wise people have learnt that wicked people never prosper. Job saw travelling around as a source of wisdom. Here God asks Job whether he or anyone has travelled very far at all. GNB of :24 makes the same point: "Have you been to the place where the sun comes up, or the place from which the east wind blows?". God's point is that human wisdom is of no account. This was the final conclusion of Elihu's speeches, on God's behalf- that He ignores those who are claimed to be wise. Job had argued that travellers were wise because they had seen so much. But they had never been hardly anywhere on the earth, let alone the cosmos. Man is therefore utterly helpless when it comes to knowledge; he has to accept God and His ways.

Job 38:17 Have the gates of death been revealed to you? Or have you seen the gates of the shadow of death?- Job earlier complained that "On my eyelids is the shadow of death" (Job 16:16 AV). Job felt he was facing death right before his eyes, and the shadow of that death was cast over his eyes. Job thought he had been there, standing at the gates of death (Job 10:21,22; 17:16). But God disagrees, challenging Job that he has not in fact seen "the gates of the shadow of death" (s.w.). Job had only seen death from a personal, human perspective. God sees death for what it really is, and it is far more terrible than man perceives. For from God's perspective it carries with it the tragedy of the eternity which a man has missed, if he has rejected God. And God is saying that Job hasn't see death from that perspective.

Job 38:18 Have you comprehended the earth in its breadth? Declare, if you know it all- Elihu implies that if Job repents, then he will be brought out from a narrow place into a broad place (Job 36:16). God perhaps comments on this by saying that the "broad place" is in fact the whole earth (s.w. Job 38:18). Man (including Job) is already in freedom; it is a case of accepting it.

Job 38:19 What is the way to the dwelling of light? As for darkness, where is its place- The dialogues have much to say about light and darkness; but the question of their ultimate origin is with God. This was what the exiles had to be reminded of (Is. 45:5-7). Job had rather simplistically concluded that the place of darkness was death (Job 10:21,22). But there was more to it than that. All the various theories of the origin of evil in a cosmic being have been deconstructed in Job. And now God reveals the ultimate truth- that the origin is with Him. Light is distinct from the sun, moon and planets, as Genesis itself teaches (Gen. 1:3,16). The question of ultimate origins is with God.

GNB "Do you know where the light comes from or what the source of darkness is?". The source of evil / darkness is the issue. And it is in God. Any theories about monsters or entities of evil [we could say 'a personal devil'] were and are mere guesswork.

Job 38:20 that you should take it to its bound, that you should discern the paths to its house?- Job's experiences were of affliction set in his "path" (s.w. Job 19:8). And the Bedouins he curses in Job 30:1-12 were those who had abused him in that "path" (Job 30:13). So it seems he has in view the Sabeans who had abused him in the prologue, and yet this section also has clear reference to the friends. Yet that "path" of affliction which God had given Job was the path of wisdom and relationship with Him which was indiscernible to the human eye (Job 28:7 cp. 28); the fact that the ultimate path is invisible to the secular, naked eye is a truth stamped upon the natural creation (Job 38:20), and yet after the affliction or trouble, this path shines clearly (Job 41:32). And this was to be Job's experience at his restoration, as it could have been likewise for the exiles.

The path to darkness is developed by God in Job 41:32 when He comments that He has made Leviathan, the beast of the sea, the supposed creator of evil, and Leviathan's path "shines" as he supposedly moves through the waters of evil. The boundary between light and darkness is thus confused. God makes the path of darkness and shining path of white light, according to Job 41:32. As creator of both light and darkness, only He can do this.

GNB "Can you show them how far to go, or send them back again?". It was God who had set a limit on the darkness touching Job- his life was not to be taken. But God alone can do this.

Job 38:21 Surely you know, for you were born then, and the number of your days is great!- This is also an answer to the way the friends considered that there was wisdom accrued through the number of days lived. Within the context of eternity and God's creative power, such knowledge is as nothing. It is therefore only the truth revealed from God which is a source of truth, and not length of human days. God is engaging with the idea of the friends, that number of days is related to wisdom. But compared to the specter of infinity, that is a very weak argument.

Job 38:22 Have you entered the treasures of the snow, or have you seen the treasures of the hail?- This implies that God has gone exploring through His own creation- making Him even more marvellous than being just the creator. Hail is a common symbol of God's judgment (Ex. 9:18-29; Ps. 18:12, 13; 78:47,48; 105:32; Is. 30:30; 32:19 etc.). These things are stored up by God for use at the appropriate time. Both Job and the exiles needed to realize that they were not merely at the whim of God, but He had prepared their experiences in order to achieve specific ends.

Job 38:23 which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war?- Earlier Job has argued that judgment is "reserved" until the last day (Job 21:30 s.w.), and therefore the wicked appear to prosper. God is here confirming that view. Eliphaz claimed that God is preparing to judge Job like a king ready to ride into the battle (Job 15:24). But God's later revelation includes Him demonstrating that man cannot participate successfully in any battle with what God has willed (Job 41:8), and the horse runs foolishly into battle with no regard for consequence (Job 39:25). The connection with the words of Eliphaz may be in that it was effectively Eliphaz who was rushing into battle to do judgment against Job; and he was acting like the foolish horse, forgetting that God alone will fight in the battle, and win (Job 38:23).

Job 38:24 By what way is the lightning distributed, or the east wind scattered on the earth?- AV "By what way is the light parted?", referring to refraction. God has not simply made the good, but He has refracted it in various ways. Peter gets a glance at this when he writes of the refracted beauty of God's grace (AV "the manifold grace of God", 1 Pet. 4:10). Job is being taught that life is not as simple as light and darkness, good and evil; but these things are refracted by God in different ways, such is the beauty and complexity of His workings. And He was working in Job's life with such attention to detail. Job was so wrong to think that God was so great that He had forgotten him or was insensitive to him. God's answer is that He has a very deep awareness of every tiny activity in all creation. He knows how the fur of a horse ripples, how man's clothes feel warmed by the east wind, the effect of rain that lands on rocks where no man has ever been.

Job 38:25 Who has cut a channel for the flood water, or the path for the thunderstorm?- The flood waters were a symbol for evil such as the invaders who had taken Judah into exile. But God cuts channels so that His flood waters dissipate, just as His wind / Spirit drives away the clouds that come between God and man. And He had directed the path of that particular thunderstorm to come directly upon Job.

"A way for the lightning of thunder" is "A path for the bolt of thunder". What appears random high speed zigzag is in fact all running according to an exact path predetermined by God. There is no random path, the path has been determined ahead of time.

"A channel" is literally a trench (s.w. 1 Kings 18:32; Ez. 31:4), and :25-27 are presenting the water cycle as an irrigation system created by God. But it is to bring water to remote land where man has never been and no crops are sown. Why? That's the thing. Man has no idea why God would bother doing all this work "without cause"- apparently. Job's sufferings are likewise apparently "without cause" to human eyes. God gives no answer to Job's 122 questions. He just says that He is at work and man must trust that. Water was valuable in the land of Uz... and God's use of it may appear wasteful and pointless. But that is what man is left to grapple with. God satiates the wasteland (:27), using the same word Job has used to complain that God has satiated him with bitterness (Job 9:18). God is saying that there is indeed no rhyme nor reason to the suffering- to man's eyes. But He is God. And He makes life possible in unexpected places.

A related theme is that God sends rain and creates life far from where man has ever been. Job is asked where he was when creation occurred. He, indeed no man, was present. The impression is that God is doing many things which man has nothing to do with. Man is not in fact the centre of the cosmos. Just as the book opens with the scene in Heaven... intentionally shrouded in obscurity, impossible for man to totally expound. But as a result of those issues far above man, Job on earth suffers the loss of all things. But then we are left with the enigma of :26; God "causes it to rain on a land where no man is", but this clearly alludes to Gen. 2:5: "the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the land, and [because] there was no man to till the ground". The rain was caused to come because of man. But God causes it to rain where no man is. Clearly 'something's going on here' but we cannot perceive what, exactly. God sent rain for man, but it often falls where there is no man and never has been and never will be. There's a bigger picture going on that man cannot perceive. And that is about all God has to say to Job about the problem of human suffering. His Divine heart breaks for man, but He expresses no pity nor comfort for man at this point. Not a hint of it. But it's like Joseph acting one way before his brethren when his heart was breaking for them...

Job 38:26 to cause it to rain on a land where no man is; on the wilderness, in which there is no man- God's actions cannot be simply understood by men. To the ancients, it would have appeared pointless to send rain on the remote deserts. But His goodness, represented by the rain, operates on a level far beyond our comprehension. It is not utilitarian, intended to just produce some easily discernible good. His grace is far greater than that.

These questions demonstrate to Job that he has no idea of the rationale behind God's behaviour. He cannot see it in creation, and so neither can he in his own life. His 122 questions therefore go unanswered specifically by God. God's answers to Job are effectively saying: 'You in fact are not at all the centre of the universe. You and your pain and your complaints are nothing in the bigger picture of things'. But God says it in such a way that the spiritual man is not offended, doesn't stomp off muttering about 'cold comfort', but actually 'gets it'. God brings "rain on a land where no one lives, on the desert, which is empty of human life" (Job 38:26)- to make the point that man does not in fact hold the central place in the universe which he imagines he does.

And yet we can read God's argument as being that if and when He sends rain on previously unknown places, man then goes and lives there. Man follows God's blessings. This is precisely the thought of Ps. 107:35-38: "He turns desert into a pool of water, and parched land into sources of water, and he makes the hungry dwell there, and they establish an inhabited city. And they sow fields and plant vineyards, and these produce fruit of the harvest. And he blesses them and they grow very numerous, and he does not reduce their livestock".

Job 38:27 to satisfy the waste and desolate ground- Although the gift of His grace in rain falls sometimes where it apparently has no purpose (:26), it also falls on other areas where the tender grass is nourished by it. And His purpose is to revive even the apparently useless and waste land; both in the life of Job, and of His deserted land and people.

To cause the tender grass to spring forth?- "Waste and desolation" is the language of condemnation (s.w. Zeph. 1:15). But God makes the point that He sends rain "to satisfy the desolate and waste ground"- the very place where the condemned lived whom Job despised in his prosperity (Job 30:3 s.w.). But God doesn't despise even the most desperate of society. He sends rain to cheer them whom the righteous despise. And this was to help Job be convicted of his own desperation, of how wrong he had been to despise others and trust that he was righteous; and to further convict him that God still sought to revive him, as He did those deserted lands.

Job 38:28 Does the rain have a father? Or who fathers the drops of dew?- The question of origins remains to this day. No matter how persuasive are theories of evolutionary development, the question of ultimate origins has to always come back to God. And this question of origins, God is arguing, is really a signpost to the simple idea of grace. For creation is in a sense grace itself.

I have noted throughout Job that the surrounding myths and cosmology are constantly deconstructed. The common idea was that rain is the semen of the rain god. But here we are told that this is nonsense- God is the father of the rain. We note that He performs the function of both male and female for the water- father of rain and dew (:28), and mother of ice and frost (:29). Or we can read these questions as having the answer: Nobody. These elements had no father or mother; and so they came from God.

The idea may be that if a woman brings forth an ice cold baby, it is dead, a stillbirth. The first ancient people knew of a stillbirth was that the child was cold. Just as Job had earlier wished to have been born dead and cold. But from God's womb comes the ice, icy cold. And it is not labour in vain, just as Job's birth was not in fact in vain.

Job 38:29 Out of whose womb came the ice? The gray frost of the sky, who has given birth to it?- "Came" is the word for 'bring forth' in Job 28:11: "The thing that is hidden He brings forth to light". God can reveal everything physical, if He wishes. But man will still not find "wisdom" if he is searching for it as a 'physical' thing, obtained by a process of mining and subsequent refining. That reveals merely "stones of obscurity" (Job 28:3), nuggets of isolated truth. This message needs to be heeded by those who consider the Christian duty is to search out academic truth, mining it from the pages of the Bible and further processing it. This of itself is not to be despised, but this can be done as the Pharisees did it, and as the friends did- without coming to the awesome personal encounter with God and His grace with which the

book of Job concludes. God can dry up the streams so that those panning in them thigh deep for precious stones- find them. He can bring them to light, but this is not the same thing as the "wisdom" of personal relationship with Him and departing from evil in our hearts (Job 28:9,10,28). This is what was happening on Job's life; God was 'bringing forth' light from death, deep things from darkness (s.w. Job 12:22). And this was realized by *God* bringing it forth, and not man's search for 'truth'. Job as a person was to be 'brought forth' by *God* as gold from that fire of affliction (Job 23:10 s.w.). Just as plants are 'brought forth' from the earth without the need for mining under the earth (Job 28:5 s.w.). This is why God's reply to Job keeps on using this word for 'bring forth', labouering the point that *God* 'brings forth' by His processes and initiatives, and not man. And that is as a code stamped upon all of creation (Job 38:8,29,32; 39:4,21; 41:20,21).

Job 38:30 The waters become hard like stone, when the surface of the deep is frozen- Not only the creation of water and things is wonderful, but equally the transformations of created things. This is what God was to do to Job, and He was offering to do the same to the exiles. The waters are to be understood as the forces of evil. But God can freeze them over. They come out from Him, from His womb. He is the author of evil (Is. 45:5-7).

Job 38:31 Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades, or loosen the cords of Orion?- Job sees God as capable of binding and loosing him, untying the cords that restrain affliction and then binding them up again (Job 30:11 s.w.). God's response is that indeed this is the case, and such binding and loosing is seen throughout the natural creation (s.w. Job 38:31; 39:5; 41:14). The constellations are bound together in pattern by God. And therefore, Job and the exiles are to live in hope of being bound up in safety from affliction, just as God "untied His cord and afflicted me" in Job 30:11.

The constellations of the stars were thought to influence life upon earth, hence AV "the sweet influences of Pleiades". They don't, but God doesn't deconstruct that in so many words, just as He never denies in explicit terms the existence of demons. But demonstrates He is so far more powerful than them that they effectively don't exit. Likewise here, God says that He who created the stars can control their influence upon man; for it is He who moves them around into their positions. Man is never under the influence or power of radical evil that is outside God's control.

There is a play of ideas here. "Can you bind (tie up) the ties of Pleiades?". The stars of Pleiades were thought to have ties or influence upon human life on earth. But God can tie up those ties. Just as He moves the stars around to form patterns like the bear or the plough.

God's point is that His entire creation moves according to a carefully designed order. It is not random movement. And He is behind it all, although Job has no idea about the mechanisms. There is a coherence in the cosmos, in everything, and also, therefore, in Job's life. But he cannot see that. He sees only apparently random behaviour by God; just as the immature believer may see God active only in a few ways and a few times in a few aspects of their lives. He has no way of seeing the coherence, nor the patterns and principles: "Do you know the laws of heaven?" (:33). But the fact creation goes on as it does, is evidence that there is a logic and coherence. It's just above man to perceive it. And Job, as all men, is asked to trust in that higher logic and coherence, rather than bringing God down to the level of a man, and

demand that He explains His movements in human terms. Likewise any human assessment of God's movements and work is inappropriate; and Job's speeches have been full of such misguided and inappropriate assessments. Job's first attempt at 'repentance' accepts that indeed, he doesn't understand these things. But that is not enough; God's second speech is required before Job comes to being convicted of his sin and properly repenting. Many of God's questions probe whether Job has any creative power. He has never called a new day into being, nor has he commanded the hawk to fly. The cosmos is not just wound up on clockwork and ticking away. God is somehow consciously creating and causing all the time. Whereas Job has no creative power. He is not God. Man may change matter from one form to another, but he cannot create matter. God can. And likewise, there are parts of God's creation, in fact the vast majority of it, that man cannot enter: "Have you entered unto the springs of the sea and have you walked in the recesses of the deep?" (:16). Job likewise cannot enter into the vast majority of God's working with him. Neither can we. All we can do is trust in a loving God.

Job 38:32 Can you lead forth the constellations in their season? Or can you guide the Bear with her cubs?- AV "Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season?". The context would suggest that "Mazzaroth" [a plural word] is a constellation like Orion just mentioned in :31. This would mean that the signs of the Zodiac are not in view here, as has been falsely claimed. It could be that "Mazzaroth" was a group of stars the people of the times thought they had observed which we now know as something else. It could be a variant of Mazzaloth, the gods made to these stars (2 Kings 23:5). In this case God is saying that even if they believed the stars influenced life on earth and made idols to them, God was the ultimate controller and mover. It's rather like the usage of the language of demons in the New Testament. The scale of miracles implies God was far greater than any supposed demons, but the wrong understanding is not specifically targetted; rather by appealing to the greater principle of God's majestic power, it is shown to be bankrupt and void of real power.

Job 38:33 Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you establish its dominion over the earth?- GNB "Do you know the laws that govern the skies, and can you make them apply to the earth?". This is perhaps the clearest Biblical condemnation of any attempt to practice astrology. The movement of the stars was under God's control, but is *not* related to the outcomes of life upon earth. For God can work in parallel ways with the stars as well as with human life and situations upon earth.

Job 38:34 Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover you?- This is said in the context of the thunderstorm which began as noted on Job 36:27. That thunderstorm was brought about by God's sovereign action, and was not called up by men commanding God to bring it. The movement of God through His grace is likewise sovereign, otherwise grace would not be grace.

Job 38:35 Can you send forth lightnings, that they may go? Do they report to you, 'Here we are?' - The same challenge was made to Ezekiel and the exiles, in the visions of the lightnings of the cherubim. The simple point of all this is that this lightning quick and powerful activity is for our sakes, to the end of achieving saving restoration. Job and the exiles complained that God was apparently slow to act. But He is working with lightning speed.

The idea is that no, Job couldn't do any of these things. It's as if God is saying that only He could do things like He had done to Job. Job couldn't have done them himself.

Job 38:36 Who has put wisdom in the inward parts? Or who has given understanding to the mind?- GNB "Who tells the ibis when the Nile will flood, or who tells the rooster that rain will fall?"; LXX "And who has given to women skill in weaving, or knowledge of embroidery?". But the preceding and following context is of God's control of the planets and atmosphere. So the idea may be that the lightnings also have their own wisdom, given to them by God, as it were. Hence one suggested translation is "Who has put wisdom in the thunderbolts? or who has given understanding to the tempest?".

Job 38:37 Who can number the clouds by wisdom? Or who can pour out the bottles of the sky?- The number of clouds changes constantly, and depends on how you define a cloud. Only God can do this. The answer of course was that they could not be numbered by man, but only by God. This is the same word used in the restoration prophecy of Jer. 38:22: "As the host of the sky cannot be *numbered*, nor the sand of the sea measured", so God's grace would be poured out in restoring His people. And that challenge was at the very heart of the covenant with Abraham, whose seed couldn't be numbered. Job was being taught the same lesson. He believed it, but the exiles generally didn't, and so their restoration didn't happen after the pattern of Job's.

Job 38:38 when the dust runs into a mass, and the clods of earth stick together?- The idea is that God sends rain from the clouds at the time when it is most desperately needed. The dry bones of both Job and Israel were to be rained upon with the Spirit. And this kind of thing is seen in the natural creation.

Job 38:39 Can you hunt the prey for the lioness, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions?- The theme now changes to the animals, and perhaps Job 39 would better begin at this verse. The point is that although the lioness hunts, this is in league with God: "The lions, roaring after their prey, do seek their meat from God" (Ps. 104:21). The lions who hunted Job and Judah were likewise from God, and were not acting without Him. God provides food for the young lions- but that food is animals which their mother hunted and killed, blessed with success by God. And that is perhaps God's point- that His provision for one results in the suffering of another. And the ethics of that *quid pro quo* cannot be unravelled by man. Ps. 104:21,25-28 present the same paradox: "The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their food from God... there are innumerable living things, both small and large animals... and leviathan, whom You formed to play [with]. These all wait for You, that You may give them their food in due season. You give to them; they gather. You open Your hand; they are satisfied with good". The "good" God does to Leviathan and the hungry lions is hardly "good" for the animals He gives them to kill. It is "evil" for the victims; the fact this isn't a vegetarian planet means there has to be hunting, killing, death and eating of the carcasses. Yet God emphasizes His care for the animals and His provision for all of them. And no cute, smart, meme-like resolution of all this is given, it is for man to accept. He can in fact do nothing else. What he can do is to recognize his humanity, that he is man and God is God. Likewise there is no ultimate resolution to the question of whether God punishes sin by retribution in this life, and rewards righteousness with blessing. Whilst this certainly doesn't happen in the primitive way

the friends [and Job] imagined, it is still the case that Job and his generation were materially blessed for obedience. And Job's sufferings, according to Elihu, were somehow related to sin. And when Job repented, he was again materially rewarded. But for all the reasons Elihu makes clear, it is not just simply so. And no resolution of the paradox is offered. The paradox is indeed highlighted in the story, and interpreters attempt to resolve it. But the story and the text itself offers no resolution to it.

Job 38:40 when they crouch in their dens, and lie in wait in the thicket?- "Crouch" is the word for to humble, to crouch down. The theme of the book of Job is that man must be humbled before he can be used by God (s.w. Job 9:13; 22:29). And this is coded into the natural creation. The lioness must crouch down before she pounces.

Job 38:41 Who provides for the raven his prey?- The raven was considered a bad omen. But still God cares for them; and how much more for His people. This is the force of the Lord's argument in Lk. 12:24, "Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them". Hence Ps. 147:9 emphasizes that "He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry". Clearly God doesn't simplistically punish the evil and bless the righteous immediately in this life. His grace reaches out to all. Including the unclean and condemned; remember that God is talking out of the whirlwind, the symbol of His condemnation.

When his young ones cry to God, and wander for lack of food?- Job feels he has 'cried out' to God for justice and not been heard (Job 19:7; 30:20); and that there is nothing wrong with crying out to God in distress, it is a perfectly natural reaction (Job 24:12). One comment upon this is that the young ravens cry out to God for food and yet are not always heard (Job 38:41 s.w.). But God in the wider picture sustains all of creation by grace. Job did well to cry out to God even if there was no answer, because the hypocrites do not 'cry out' to God when they are facing judgment (Job 36:13 s.w.). Job feels hurt that God has not responded to his 'crying out' because he says that when the needy cried out to him, he had heard (Job 29:12 s.w.). But here we see his works based approach; he thought that his response to those who cried out to him meant that therefore God must respond to *his* crying out. And God is not so primitive. His apparent silence is because His response is not predicated upon human works and charity. It is by grace alone, as is taught in His final appearance to Job. The exiles likewise were to finally see the response to their crying out to God in the restoration (Is. 58:9), just as their representative Jonah cried out to God from the belly of *sheol* amidst the sea of nations, and was heard (s.w. Jonah 2:2).

JOB CHAPTER 39

Job 39:1 Do you know the time when the mountain goats give birth? Do you watch when the doe bears fawns?- The idea is that man may not know the exact time, but God does, and it is built into His plan; see on :2. "Watch [over]" is the same word used for how God had set the parameters for Job's trials in the prologue; his life was to be preserved (s.w., Job 2:6 "spare / watch over his life"). But Job like the friends became obsessed with immediate suffering and issues to the point that he overlooked these basic parameters set by God. We can do the same. He complains that God watches over him too closely (Job 13:6; 33:11 s.w.), and yet complains that God isn't

watching over him (Job 29:2). God's response is to direct him again to the natural creation, where God's constant 'watching over' His creation is evident. He even watches over the exact gestation time of mountain goats, who were invisible to human eyes (Job 39:1 s.w.). And likewise Job was to understand that the time of his sufferings, like the period of exile for the captives, was likewise intensely noted by God and had not been forgotten. The God who knows the gestation period of every obscure animal (:2) knows the exact time periods of human suffering. The implication of course was that the time period would result in a birth of new life, and this happened in Job's case. The Lord sees the labour of a pregnant woman as our present suffering, but the birth is paralleled with "I will see you again and you shall rejoice". And Job finally comes to a point where he can say "Now my eye sees You". But as Job didn't know the gestation period of many animals, so he did not know the length of the period of suffering God had given him. As God 'turned the captivity of Job' so He would of the exiles. We can look back and analyze our lives for the same feature of time periods, although perhaps most of them are unperceived by us, just as Job didn't know the gestation period of the animals.

Job 39:2 Can you number the months that they fulfil? Or do you know the time when they give birth?- This continues the theme of Job 38, that everything has its bounds and limits, and timings set by God. This was so relevant to the exiles who considered their suffering endless; it was a reminder that restoration had been promised after a period, even if they didn't know that exact time (see on :1) and that script is written into all God's work in creation.

The answer of course was that they could not be numbered by man, but only by God. This is the same word used in the restoration prophecy of Jer. 38:22: "As the host of the sky cannot be *numbered*, nor the sand of the sea measured", so God's grace would be poured out in restoring His people. Job was being taught the same lesson. He believed it, but the exiles generally didn't, and so their restoration didn't happen after the pattern of Job's.

In Canaanite myth, Aquhat [another 'Satan' figure in their theology] could alone "count the months" (Robert S. Fyall, *op cit* p. 75) – but the same phrase is used here in Job 39:2 about how God alone has this power. See on Job 38:8.

Job 39:3 They bow themselves, they bring forth their young, they end their labour pains- This is the language of later Isaiah; the travail of Zion would come to an end, in the rebirth of a restored Kingdom of God in Judah. That at least was the Divine intention, although the Jews largely precluded its realization by their own refusal to really want it.

Job 39:4 Their young ones become strong. They grow up in the open field. They go forth, and don't return again- LXX emphasizes this idea of 'going forth', which as noted on :1,2 looks ahead to the going forth of the Jews from captivity: "Their young will break forth; they will be multiplied with offspring: their young will go forth, and will not return to them".

"Grow up" is the word for 'bring forth' in Job 28:11: "The thing that is hidden He brings forth to light". God can reveal everything physical, if He wishes. But man will still not find "wisdom" if he is searching for it as a 'physical' thing, obtained by a process of mining and subsequent refining. That reveals merely "stones of obscurity" (Job 28:3), nuggets of isolated truth. This message needs to be heeded by those who consider the Christian duty is to search out academic truth, mining it from the pages

of the Bible and further processing it. This of itself is not to be despised, but this can be done as the Pharisees did it, and as the friends did- without coming to the awesome personal encounter with God and His grace with which the book of Job concludes. God can dry up the streams so that those panning in them thigh deep for precious stones- find them. He can bring them to light, but this is not the same thing as the "wisdom" of personal relationship with Him and departing from evil in our hearts (Job 28:9,10,28). This is what was happening in Job's life; God was 'bringing forth' light from death, deep things from darkness (s.w. Job 12:22). And this was realized by *God* bringing it forth, and not man's search for 'truth'. Job as a person was to be 'brought forth' *by God* as gold from that fire of affliction (Job 23:10 s.w.). Just as plants are 'brought forth' from the earth without the need for mining under the earth (Job 28:5 s.w.). This is why God's reply to Job keeps on using this word for 'bring forth', labouring the point that *God* 'brings forth' by His processes and initiatives, and not man. And that is as a code stamped upon all of creation (Job 38:8,29,32; 39:4,21; 41:20,21).

God's point is that these wild animals have a hard life; they have long gestation periods, struggle to find food, have painful deliveries, and never see their young again as they wander off into independence. But Job is complaining about the loss of his ten beloved kids whom he no longer sees? God made nature like this... so Job is not to complain about loss of children. Again we note how no explanation nor hint of tenderness, comfort nor pity is found in these arguments- from the God who at the end of Job will be revealed as "very pitiful and of tender mercy" (James 5:11).

Job 39:5 Who has set the wild donkey free? Or who has loosened the bonds of the swift donkey- This loosing of bands is the language of Judah's bands being freed and their freedom to return to Zion. Job sees God as capable of binding and loosing him, untying the cords that restrain affliction and then binding them up again (Job 30:11 s.w.). God's response is that indeed this is the case, and such binding and loosing is seen throughout the natural creation (s.w. Job 38:31; 39:5; 41:14). And therefore, Job and the exiles are to live in hope of being bound up in safety from affliction, just as God "untied His cord and afflicted me" in Job 30:11.

Job 39:6 whose home I have made the wilderness, and the salt land his dwelling place?- It was from the wilderness that Job's troubles came. The Bedouins attacked from there, and the destructive wind came from there. But God was somehow in all that.

Job 39:7 He scorns the tumult of the city, neither does he hear the shouting of the driver- Job in his depression feels as Israel suffering in Egypt (Ex. 3:7; 5:6,13), considering that death was the only way out of the misery of hearing the "voice of the taskmaster", "the shouting of the driver" (Job 3:18). But he fails to see that out of that misery they were redeemed and restored to their land. This is alluded to when attention is drawn to how God's creations "hear not the voice, the shouts and curses of the driver". God's people didn't have to "hear" the voice of the taskmaster; there was a way of redemption offered.

The LXX here has a strange appropriacy to the release of the exiles from captivity, and the edicts of the Persian kings allowing them to reestablish their kingdom without paying any taxes: "He laughs to scorn the multitude of the city, and hears not the chiding of the tax-gatherer".

Job 39:8 The range of the mountains is his pasture, he searches after every green thing- LXX "He will survey the mountains as his pasture, and he seeks after every green thing". The returned exiles would have free pasture in all their land, as Ez. 34 and other restoration prophecies had intimated. Life is hard for the wild donkey, having to traverse hard and dangerous territory just to get a small bit of greenery to eat. And God designed life on earth like that. There is no word of comfort to Job. But it's like Joseph appearing sternly indifferent to his brothers, whilst his heart broke for them. Truly in the story of Job we see the end of the Lord, God taken to the ultimate term, to the nth degree... and He is very pitiful and of tender mercy.

Job 39:9 Will the wild ox be content to serve you? Or will he stay by your feeding trough?- LXX "And will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or to lie down at thy manger?". The reference may be to Cyrus being the servant of Yahweh in allowing the exiles to return.

Job 39:10 Can you hold the wild ox in the furrow with his harness? Or will he till the valleys after you?- The wild animals may appear to the human eye to be aimlessly wandering hither and thither. But they are actually ploughing furrows for God. The apparently aimless wandering of Job and the exiles was likewise under God's control, and was actually intended to bring forth a great harvest from the apparently barren land.

Job 39:11 Will you trust him, because his strength is great? Or will you leave to him your labour?- No man could "trust" the randomly wandering oxen. But God has such a close relationship with those things which seem random and aimless that He doesn't actually need to hold those wild animals in harness (:10), He can trust them to do His work without Him harnessing them. And the same progression is to be seen in His work with apparently wild men; they begin needing a harness (:10), but then progress to working independently and yet within the overall furrow of God's direction.

Job 39:12 Will you confide in him, that he will bring home your seed, and gather the grain of your threshing floor?- Man struggles to have faith / trust (:11) or confidence in things and processes which appear random and out of his control. But God has such confidence, and He invites Job and all His people to do likewise. Job's sufferings, like Judah's, were not random and aimless. They can be trusted to achieve the work intended, and bring about a great harvest; incredible as that might seem to secular, onlooking man.

Job 39:13 The wings of the ostrich wave proudly; but are they the feathers and plumage of love?- I suggest that the following verses are arguing that the ostrich may appear to behave strangely, but is not in fact without love or care for its young. No animal totally lacks parental instinct. The people of Job's time thought that the ostrich did lack it; just as Job and the exiles were questioning whether God really loved and cared for them. Her wings wave as she dashes around the desert in the day time; but the question is, does she really have love for her own? God likewise was and is active through the wings of the cherubim. But does He care for His little ones? That is the sense in which the ostrich becomes a significant animal. Her feathers are in fact the "plumage of love" and not merely the cosmetic, useless decoration of a vain female.

Ostriches can't fly although they flap their wings, empowering them to run fast. Their wings may appear pointless, a Divine mistake. But there is a purpose and function to ostrich wings. Man can't see it, and so accuses God of time wasting and error. Just as Job was doing. The paradox is that the plume and feathers of ostrich wings represented truth and justice in the ancient Near East, and representations of them have been found over courts and judgment thrones. The lesson of the ostrich was in fact of ultimate truth for Job.

Job 39:14 For she leaves her eggs on the earth, warms them in the dust- "Ostriches, having scratched a hole in the sand, and deposited their eggs in it, cover the eggs over with a layer of sand, sometimes as much as a foot in thickness, and, leaving them during the daytime to be kept warm by the heat of the sun, only incubate at night". As noted on :13, the question is as to whether the ostrich really loves her young. She does; for no animal is without parental instinct. And likewise with God; He covers His little ones in the dust, and uses the darkness of night, the trials of life, to incubate them personally.

Job 39:15 and forgets that the foot may crush them, or that the wild animal may trample them- The idea may be that the ostrich can forget about her eggs, with no fear that they may be crushed, as she has buried them well (see on :14). The eggs of both God and the ostrich are preserved; neither man nor wild beasts of nations can destroy them. Job was not going to be crushed as he feared (Job 4:19; 5:4). God likewise hides and covers His people (Is. 26:20), although to the eye of secular, imperceptive man, He may appear not to care. But in the analogy, His people had to be prepared to accept that covering; for indeed many of them were trodden down / trampled by the wild beasts of the nations.

Job 39:16 She deals harshly with her young ones, as if they were not hers. Though her labour is in vain, she is without fear- "Young ones" is Heb. "sons". The ostrich is introduced as hard to understand- "loving, or unloving?" is the opening question about the ostrich (:13). And indeed she apparently deals harshly with her young ones. The Bedouin peoples amongst whom Job lived thought that the ostrich was unloving, that it didn't care for its young; and they had proverbs to this effect, alluded to in Lam. 4:3. But the ostrich is not without parental instinct. Why does she incubate at night and hide her eggs in the day time? Not so that she can flit around the desert at her own pleasure, but because she is out looking for food for her young, and at night she incubates her eggs- working around the clock for her little ones. God's labour for His exiled people was likewise, and was also at times in vain (Ps. 127:1; Is. 49:4). But He did not fear, He didn't give up because some were indeed crushed and trodden down by the wild beasts of the nations, but continued working for them. And God did at times appear to treat His people as if they were not His; for "you are not My people", because they had chosen not to be (Hos. 1:9; Jer. 23:39).

We could render "She makes chicks that are hardy without her. That worthless is her labour, she has no worry". The translators seem influenced by the common misconceptions of ostriches not caring for their young. For no animal is without parental instinct toward their young. Job by contrast was worried that his labour was in vain. God says that He makes rain land on desolate rocks, apparently "in vain", just as Job suffered apparently "without cause". But that is all just an appearance. Job worried about his children, his "chicks", praying for them and naturally desolated

when they were all slain. The ostrich doesn't have that grief. She is hard wired by God to act, apparently, quite differently. But it's all a question of appearances.

Job 39:17 because God has deprived her of wisdom, neither has He imparted to her understanding-

The reference to "God" in the third person, within a speech by God, shows that this is God quoting the views of men. Literally, God forgot to give her wisdom. That is how it appears to men, but God doesn't forget. Just as Zion thought her Lord had forgotten her, and Job likewise imputed folly to God.

The ostrich is presented as being an apparent contradiction; lacking understanding and yet able to run swiftly and be stronger than a horse and its rider (:18). As explained above, the ostrich is not without wisdom nor without parental instinct. But it can appear she is; and indeed some of her young are lost and crushed. See on :18.

Job felt he had been deprived of everything, including wisdom and understanding (Job 26:5). But this was not because he was unwise; he is presented as a perfect man (Job 1:1). God is able to give and take wisdom, as is seen in the natural creation (Job 39:17 s.w.).

Job 39:18 When she lifts up herself on high, she scorns the horse and his rider- This lifting herself up refers to how the ostrich does this in order to run at great speed. She has been given good qualities such as speed and power, and also apparent foolishness which leads to some of her young being lost (:17). It is this union of apparently differing qualities which is the impression men have as they look at the work of God towards His little ones. The ostrich runs in circles; which might appear foolish but actually exhausts some of her enemies. Again, what appears foolish is in fact purposeful and wise. There is rationale, order and harmony in God's creation, even though that creation can be cruel, with ostrich eggs crushed in the sand- even though man fails to perceive it. And so there was too in Job's life; although he failed to perceive it. This is about the closest God gets to making any comment on why Job had suffered. There are records of horsemen hunting and killing ostriches; the idea is that the ostrich is being presented as foolish enough to think she can outrun a horse and not be slain by the horse rider. But as discussed above, this is in fact an appearance of foolishness.

Job 39:19 Have you given the horse might? Have you clothed his neck with a quivering mane?- The apparently foolish ostrich is a match for the might of the horse (:18). But all these abilities are given by God, contradictory as they may seem to the secular man observing them. This is addressing the complaint of Job, that God appears to act toward man in contradictory ways (Job 10:16). God knows how the mane of a horse quivers; Job is quite wrong to think that God doesn't pay attention to man in his smallness. He is intensely aware of literally everything in the cosmos.

Job 39:20 Have you made him to leap as a locust? The glory of his snorting is awesome- "Awesome" is literally 'terrible' or 'as terrors', which the friends believed would come upon Job (Job 20:25 s.w.). "Terrors" are again the judgment of God upon an apostate Israel, whom Job was suffering for whilst innocent, after the pattern of the later Lord Jesus (Dt. 32:25 s.w.). Those "terrors" were likely understood by the friends as some kind of demonic beings. God deconstructs this by explaining that the

great beasts He has created likewise were 'terrible' (s.w. "terrors"). But the simple point was that He had created them and was totally in control (s.w. Job 39:20; 41:14).

Job 39:21 He paws in the valley, and rejoices in his strength. He goes out to meet the armed men- Just as the ostrich is on one hand apparently foolish and yet has qualities of speed and bravery (:18), so the horse has great strength and is eager to fight, not fearing the sword which can slay it (:22). It is this union of apparently differing qualities which is the impression men have as they look at the work of God towards His people.

Job 39:22 He mocks at fear, and is not dismayed, neither does he turn back from the sword- See on :21. "Dismay" is the word used of how the exiles were urged not to be dismayed but to believe that God would indeed bring them from exile to restoration in His restored Kingdom (Is. 51:7; Jer. 30:10; 46:27). Job begins by being dismayed / scared (Job 7:14), but develops to not be dismayed (Job 31:34 s.w.), following the example of the Lord's battle horse (Job 39:22).

Job 39:23 The quiver rattles against him, the flashing spear and the javelin- This is all the language of Divine judgment (Nah. 3:3; Lam. 3:13). The horse doesn't fear that, just as Leviathan doesn't (Job 41:29). He is as he is, not always wise, but free from the fear of judgment, not fearing the battle as men fear it. And this was perhaps how God wants His people to be, and this was in fact how Job was.

Job 39:24 He eats up the ground with fierceness and rage, neither does he stand still at the sound of the trumpet- "Stand still" is the word for 'belief'. The idea may be that 'he hardly trusts his ears for joy' that the battle is beginning. The sound of the trumpet can be understood as the call to judgment. The horse doesn't fear the battle nor the call to judgment, but is eager for it- just as Job was, and as David and Paul also were. And yet the horse fails to understand the real implications of it all. In this sense God may be justifying Job's attitude to judgment.

Job 39:25 As often as the trumpet sounds he snorts, 'Aha!'. He smells the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting- Eliphaz claims that God is preparing to judge Job like a king ready to ride into the battle (Job 15:24). But God's later revelation includes Him demonstrating that man cannot participate successfully in any battle with what God has willed (Job 41:8), and the horse runs foolishly into battle with no regard for consequence (Job 39:25). The connection with the words of Eliphaz may be in that it was effectively Eliphaz who was rushing into battle to do judgment against Job; and he was acting like the foolish horse, forgetting that God alone will fight in the battle, and win (Job 38:23).

Job 39:26 Is it by your wisdom that the hawk soars, and stretches her wings toward the south?- The invasions of Judah from the north were as birds of prey flying south as they migrate- all under God's control. Hawks migrate south, so the reference may be to the amazing sense the birds have regarding migration. That reveals far more about God than that He is merely a physical creator; He has wisdom and intricate knowledge, contrary to Job's impression that God had forgotten him. As discussed on :1, there are time periods in a person's life that he may well not be aware of. There is a time for migration, when the bird first stretches its wings and departs southwards. That time is set by God.

Job 39:27 Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up, and makes his nest on high?- The eagle was a symbol of the enemies of God's people (Dt. 28:49). But their movements were completely under God's control.

Job 39:28 On the cliff he dwells, and makes his home, on the point of the cliff, and the stronghold- The eagle dwells on a point which is inaccessible to man. That seems to be the point. But the eagle is completely under Divine control (:27), although man is unable to engage with it. It was this which Job needed to learn.

Job 39:29 From there he spies out the prey. His eyes see it afar off- The extraordinary eyesight of the eagle was legendary. The context is of God teaching Job that all his concerns with process and 'why' this or that are inappropriate; for even the animal creation has better eyesight than he does. Job earlier compared the passing of his life to the swiftness of an eagle (Job 9:26); perhaps now he is being taught that such comparison is inappropriate. The relevance to the exiles may be that they were "afar off" from the promised land, but in a moment could be brought there, just as the eagle can in an apparent moment close that distance which was "afar off" (Is. 43:6; 49:12; 60:4,9).

Job 39:30 His young ones also suck up blood. Where the slain are, there he is-

On one hand, God is demonstrating that He does provide food for the animals He created. But sometimes the young ravens "wander about for lack of food" (Job 38:41). He doesn't always provide, at least, not what they immediately want. And the young eagles likewise are fed at the expense of the prey that has been slain for them. What is good for the predatory animal is bad for the prey. This is not, therefore, a moral universe. God speaks, in a sense, without pity nor sympathy for Job; just as nature appears pitiless. But as James 5:11 observes, at the end of the Lord we find Him very pitiful and of tender mercy. Job wanted God to act as he thought a just human judge should act, punishing the wicked and blessing the righteous. But that is too simplistic a picture; the issues in the cosmos are greater than that and require God, not a human judge. Delicate care and purpose must still be found in a God who gives the lion its prey. A human judge would defend the defenceless prey and condemn the lion. We simply cannot project our sense of right and wrong onto the universe, let alone onto God. Trust in God means trusting His moral purpose, that He is finally "good" and not evil. Even though we cannot perceive how that is working out. Something, somebody, far greater than man is needed to judge this whole situation. And that is God.

There is indeed a Divine hand in all this, but it is hardly an Alice in Wonderland experience. And Job is asked to see God's same basic love and provision for him, even in the midst of a broken world and fallen creation. Job's sufferings, therefore, are not for any immediately discernible purpose. But the hand of God is in them. And Job is wrong to think that God has singled him out for some special suffering; and the friends likewise were seriously wrong about this. It is part of how creation currently is. No reason is given by God, although we are shown by creation that God is actively present and intricately working through it all, making rain land on remote dry rocks, creating the ostrich who appears uncaring for her young... God is asking Job to simply trust Him. And to realize that anything less than total trust is sin, that needs to be repented of.

The Lord appears to allude to this in Mt. 24:28. He is answering the disciples' concerns as to where and how the judgment will take place. Perhaps He sees their

undue concerns with process to be similar to those of Job. He directs them back to this passage, which teaches that we are not to overly concern ourselves with these questions, contrary as that attitude is to the 'scientific' mindset of the age of reason. It is the reality of it which is to be focused upon.

JOB CHAPTER 40

Job 40:1 Moreover Yahweh answered Job- We perhaps are to imagine a pause of silence in the drama at the end of Job 39. We enquire what is the function of "Moreover Yahweh answered Job and said", when it preface just one verse. I suggest we are to infer that Yahweh paused in the hope of Job's response. But he is stubbornly silent. God orders Job to answer in :2. He does but then puts his hand on his mouth to show that he will not further answer. This is arrogant rebellion against God, just as Elihu accused him of.

Job 40:2 Shall he who argues contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it-

"Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer for it". This is God's response to a righteous, good living man whose ten kids were killed. 'Can't I even ask about it?'. 'No, you may not. How dare you. How dare you complain or challenge Me'. We all struggle with this. But that is the point. We see just the outskirts of God's ways. It is for us to trust in the words of James 5, that we see in Job the end of the Lord, God taken to the final term of the equation. And He is very pitiful, and of tender, saving mercy. What we are asked for is total, white flag, abject surrender, total capitulation, intellectually and morally. And who ever is man to be offended at God, the God of all love, grace and salvation. Your stamping of your foot and stomping off from the God you don't like takes nothing away from His existence. These indeed are deep things out of darkness. In the end, faith / trust and humility go together, and they are what God wants.

"Argues" is the word used for "umpire" in Job 9:30. The word for "umpire" suggests 'one who is right', a reasoner, an advocate, one who pleads (s.w. Job 16:21), a reprover (Job 40:2 AV, s.w.). Job's request was not simply for a mediator; he would have used a different word if so. He seems to have wanted to put God in the dock, but knew this was not appropriate; he wants someone else to do this who can legitimately do it. And he is rebuked for this here in Job 40:2. This is all legal language. Job appeals for 'witnesses' (Job 9:33–35; 16:18–22; 19:20–27), an advocate in Heaven (Job 9:33), denies his guilt and demands a legal list of his sins (Job 13:19), he wishes for God to come to trial (Job 9:3), and thus Job is described as a man who has taken out a 'case' with God (Job 23:4; 40:2). Job 29–31 is effectively Job's declaration of legal innocence and an appeal to God to hear his case more sympathetically (Job 31:35). And of course God pronounces a final legal verdict at the very end (Job 42:7), in response to Job's earlier plea: "Sleeplessly I wait for His reply" (Job 16:22). It's as if the whole experience of Job was [at least partly] in order to test out the Canaanite theories of 'Satan', suffering and evil in the court of Heaven; and also the various theories which arose to explain Judah's captivity in Babylon. The friends represent the traditional views of evil, and often make reference to the myths of their day about 'Satan' figures. They speak as if *they* are the final court – Eliphaz speaks of how the judges and elders of their day, the "holy ones", had concluded Job was guilty, and that they, the friends, were right: "To which of the holy ones will you appeal [legal

language]?... we have [legally] examined this, and it [Job's guilt] is true" (Job 5:1,27). This is of great comfort to those who feel misjudged by man – above them in Heaven the ultimate Heavenly court is considering our case, and that is all that matters.

Job 40:3 Then Job answered Yahweh- The paradox is that he answered Yahweh by saying that he cannot answer Him (:3). And that indeed is man's only possible answer to God. Although I will suggest on :4 that Job is effectively refusing to further engage in the court case, and chooses to remain legally silent.

Job 40:4 Behold, I am of small account- "Behold" can be rendered "if". As if Job is saying that if indeed he is so small, or cursed, then he will not bother saying anything further. "Of small account" translates the word for "cursed" (Job 3:1; 24:18). The one who felt cursed was to be blessed, just as the Israel whom he unknowingly represented. The Hebrew word translated "vile" is the usual word for "cursed". It is the word Job earlier used to curse his birthday. Job considers God is cursing him and therefore vows silence and non engagement with Him. We could render: "What? Shall I answer You?". He feels he has been wrongly cursed and therefore refuses to answer God. Just as God called to Adam from out of the wind / *ruach*, so God is calling to Job from the whirlwind with similar rhetorical questions- seeking to convict him of his sin. Job had earlier objected to God treating him as Adam: "If I have covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom" (Job 31:33). He felt he had no sin to hide and didn't deserve to be cursed. Now he realizes that God has cursed him. But he makes no admission of sin and decides to take his legal case no further, and to remain silent when under accusation. God's "Where are you?" to Adam is perhaps matched by His question to Job: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" (Job 38:4). Whilst Adam and Eve shift their guilt onto others, Job finally in Job 42 will repent without conditions. We may note that Job rephrases God's question: "Who is this that darkens counsel with words without knowledge"; Job repeats it as "who is this that hides counsel without knowledge...". He sees himself as indeed hiding from God. He accepts he is Adam.

But God achieves this repentance not by specifically probing Job's wrong doing, as He did with Adam. He seeks instead to expand Job's perspective. Instead of the 'Have you disobeyed Me?' to Adam, which failed to elicit repentance and led to cursing, God takes a more complex approach with Job. He will show him that man is indeed very small and God very gracious, and any attempt to play God [as Job had tried to] was blasphemous and foolish. The beasts of evil whom Job blamed for his sin [Behemoth and Leviathan] were deconstructed as being of God and of no ultimate power. Leaving Job alone responsible for his sin. And this approach works. Job is led to repentance and is then hugely blessed.

But at this point in Job 40, Job appears unconvicted of his sin. He accepts the display of God's awesome power in the whirlwind and in Job 38 and Job 39. But he has previously said he will not answer God until God removes His "rod" from Job, and stops scaring him with His power. And he stubbornly sticks, for now, to that position. His statement that he is "cursed" is a complaint against God, not a confession of sin. Rather like we are unpersuaded of a man's moral character by being shown wonderful inventions and things he has made. Given that, how, then, were God's displays of His power and greatness supposed to elicit trust in His moral character, and to elicit repentance in Job? I repeat, that we are unpersuaded of a man's moral character by being shown his huge power and status. I suggest that God was

working specifically at getting Job to repent of his blasphemous accusations against God, and his desire to have his day in court with God. Given God's power and might, this was totally wrong. And God has further demonstrated that man has no 'rights' nor ability to understand what He is doing with men. He asks us to trust Him. That is God's point, and by Job 42 it leads Job to repent for the words he had wrongly spoken throughout the previous dialogues.

What shall I answer you?- Earlier, Job in Job 31:14 had confidently boasted that only if he had committed adultery would he feel before God that he was unable to speak; "What shall I answer Him?". Job's point was that as he had not despised the cause of his servants (:13), therefore he did not have anything to fear before God's judgment. God's final appearance was proof enough that he of himself had no right to answer back to God. "What shall I answer You?" (Job 40:4) was his final word. But here, Job insists he could only be speechless before God if he had committed sins like adultery- which he was insistent he hadn't. Job is led to realize that he has sinned and fallen short of God's glory, although he had avoided the sins like adultery which counted as major sins in the view of his society.

The epilogue and prologue to Job are evidently related. Job begins sitting in dust and ashes and ends repenting in dust and ashes (Job 2:8; 42:6). The silence of the friends at the opening of the book is matched by the silence after God has finally spoken (Job 40:4). Job intercedes for his children (Job 1:5) and ends up interceding for his friends. Job begins with the description of being the Lord's servant; and the book concludes on the same note (Job 42:7,8). The question of course is: 'So what's the equivalent of the 'Satan' figure in the epilogue?'. The omission is intended and obvious. Ultimately the answer is the essence of the whole book: the 'Satan', the adversary, is none other than God Himself, in His love, however and through whomsoever He was manifested.

I lay my hand on my mouth- When Job finally lays his hand upon his mouth, he is only doing what he had earlier told the friends to do in recognition of their folly (Job 13:5; 21:5). Through the pain and irritation of their speeches, Job came to value and appreciate the need for silence before God. But it was only when personally confronted by God at the end that he realizes that he too had spoken too much and he repents of that in silence. In Job 24:25 he has boasted of the strength of his own speeches: "If it isn't so now, who will prove me a liar, and make my speech worth nothing?". Job has argued himself into an invincible position, in his own eyes. Indeed, all he says is true; but like the friends, truths are expressed but within a wrong context. Finally Job is to lay his hand upon his mouth in repentance (Prov. 30:32; Mic. 7:16) and recognize he has not spoken rightly, although he earlier demanded the friends lay their hands upon their mouths before the power of his arguments (Job 21:5). God confirms this by remarking that whoever has hope of overcoming Leviathan, His great beast (perhaps representing death and human mortality) is a liar to think he has such hope (Job 41:9 s.w. "liar"). Job has forgotten his humanity, despite being 'right' in his arguments. This is the problem with possessing truth; it can lead us to wrongly forget our humanity and consider ourselves invincible.

Earlier, Job had confidently challenged: "Who is he who will contend with me? For then would I hold my peace and give up the spirit" (Job 13:19). Job is challenging anyone to come forward and contend with him in court by proving him wrong. If they did, then he would be silent ["hold my peace"] and willingly die. This of course is exactly what happens at the end. God does contend with Job, and he is proven guilty. He lays his hand upon mouth, and we can deduce from his challenge here that he

wanted to die. He was then saved from that position by grace alone. The connection with the exiles is in Is. 50:8, where a similarly convicted Israel would be justified by Divine grace to the point they could again challenge any to convict them of sin, seeing that "He is near that justifies me".

Job fell into the trap of thinking that his terrible situation somehow allowed him to speak whatever words came into his head. Job felt he hadn't been 'fed' and so he was entitled to "bray" and "low" over his misfortune (Job 6:5). Because of the weight of his sufferings, he thereby justified the fact that "Therefore have my words been rash (Job 6:3). Likewise "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit" (Job 7:11). "I will give free course to my complaint. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 10:1 RV). Zophar criticizes Job being "full of talk" and speaking "the multitude of words", "for thou sayest, my doctrine is pure" (Job 11:1-4)- as if Job felt that because he held true doctrine he was justified in pouring out words as he did. "Why should I not be impatient?" (Job 21:4 RV). "Today is my complaint bitter. My stroke is heavier than my groaning" (Job 23:2)- i.e. his complaining was due to his sufferings. "If I hold my peace, I shall give up the spirit" (Job 13:19 RVmg.). Job felt that the situation he was in *forced* him to use the words he did, and certainly justified it [we may well have used this reasoning ourselves when justifying the use of bad language]. But in the end, Elihu on God's behalf rebuked him for his wrong words. And Job himself recognized: "I am vile. I will lay mine hand upon my mouth" in regret of his words (Job 40:4). "Wherefore I loathe my words and repent" (Job 42:6 RVmg.). He realized his mistake: he had thought that the situation justified his words. Now he hung his head and admitted that there was no justification for speaking in the way he had. Especially in the matter of the tongue, we can so easily justify ourselves; 'I only said / did it [or didn't do it] because...'. And it is all so child-like. Once we leave off *all* attempts at self-justification, we will face up to our sins.

LXX "Why do I yet plead? being rebuked even while reproving the Lord" sounds as if Job says there is no point making his legal plea against God, because God is now interrupting him and criticizing him instead of answering the case. If this indeed was considered adequate repentance, why doesn't God rejoice in it as He does in Job 42 when Job repents? Why make a second speech? Why disagree immediately with Job's statement that He will not answer God? Why force Job to answer when Job has said he will not answer?

Job 40:5 I have spoken once, and I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further- We can understand Job's silence either as conviction of guilt, or as a stubborn refusal to further engage with God's legal case. I suggest it was indeed a refusal to answer- for God goes on to insist "You will answer...". But his silence was exactly what he had earlier said he would do only if he were guilty. So he is [unintentionally] showing his guilt in his own terms. Perhaps he means 'I have spoken once in that I have just said that I have no answer. And now, I am speaking twice, I am saying this. But now I promise absolute silence'. He really appreciates that his many words have been inappropriate.

Because God sees and knows absolutely all, we must recognize that He realizes the unspoken implications of our words. It's possible that Job's words about silence here are seen by God as Job effectively condemning God, because presumably they were said merely as a mask over Job's inner feelings that God had been unjust with him (Job 40:8). But when Job uses effectively the same words in Job 42:6, God

accepts them. God's ability to see to the core should therefore not only affect our words but elicit in us an honesty of heart behind the words which we use.

However, it is possible to understand Job's laying of his hand upon his mouth as a refusal to speak; his words are but the muttered resignation of the helpless. He himself uses the term to mean 'cease to speak' (Job 13:5; 21:5). "I will not answer" could mean that he refuses to give an answer to the legal case God has raised against him. He spoke "once", to just admit that he is very small and therefore will not be answering God. But he has been asked by God to answer Him. Hence God's anger, and demand in :7 "*You will answer Me*". His repentance is altogether inadequate. He has simply said that he is very small compared to God, which is no real concession as he has said this before. What Job here says is little more than he says in Job 9, where he says he'd be unable to answer God in a court case because God would scare him by throwing about His powerful manifestations: "how can man be just with God? If man wishes to contend with Him, he can't answer Him... If I had called, and He had answered me, yet I wouldn't believe that He listened to my voice. For He would bruise me with a storm... He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer Him" (Job 9:2,3,16,17,32). And the storm has indeed come. He has predicted that even if God were to 'pass by' him, to reveal Himself as He did when He 'passed by' Moses in a theophany- Job wouldn't pay attention: "If ever He should go by me, I shall not see him: if He should pass by me, neither would I know [recognize] it" (Job 9:11 LXX). Now God has appeared in the whirlwind, and the wind makes God pass by him, and so he stubbornly sticks to his promise that he will pay no attention. Not only in Job 9 but in Job 13 too, Job twice laid down conditions for his answering God. He insisted that he would only do so if God removed the sufferings from him and stopped terrifying him by His power (Job 9:35; 13:22). God does neither of these things; for the whirlwind terrified Elihu and surely it did Job too (Job 37:1). God's recounting of His awesome power was surely to similar effect. But God makes Job answer Him, after Job's stubborn silence.

And Job brazenly continues his position, that he will not answer God. "Answer" is being used in a legal, forensic sense. Job is declining to answer to the case laid against him. He is saying that he will now "answer" no more. This silence, although not to his credit, is a far cry from his claim that before God he would "fill my mouth with arguments", come before God "like a prince", and present a case that God can't answer (Job 31; 9:34; 13:20). By saying at this point that he is so small that he refuses to answer further... is typical of how guilty people will make a small concession. But making a concession, and a small, general and obvious one at that, is not repentance nor remorse. Any parent, judge or schoolteacher will have been through all this many times. Job has been silent before Elihu, now before God he is effectively the same, claiming some "right to silence" in court, standing mute, refusing to engage in the legal process. When he had earlier been so eager to do so, so full of words and in Job 31 he had as it were written out his case and statements and signed them. But this silence was really a contempt of court; for Job refuses to enter a plea before Elihu nor before God after God's first speech. He will not say guilty or not guilty. God rightly comments that this is an attempt to frustrate God's justice (40:8). Nor does Job withdraw his case against God, despite having mused about it and developed it in his thinking in about every one of his speeches in the dialogues. In fact, Job retracts nothing specific, despite being so full of words previously. That God should try yet again with him says so much for God's patient love. And we could argue that Job's final statement of repentance in Job 42 was not that great. Just as the repentance of

Adam and Eve wasn't of high quality [and repentance does have quality and range to it]. But God is so eager to accept repentance; as soon as Job makes his brief statement of repentance, God dangles it before the friends, exalting that Job has spoken rightly about Him. His forgiveness and acceptance of Job's repentance is implicit, it isn't specifically stated; but Job suddenly has such high status before God that He says He is willing to accept Job as an intermediary to save the impenitent friends. We get the impression that God is relieved, that Job has finally repented and come through. He accepts a few words of repentance and then doubles Job's wealth and parades him as the saviour of the friends. We marvel that God Almighty should be so concerned about one man's faith in the land of Uz that He gets so anxious and then relieved when he comes through. This huge sense of Divine relief suggests to me that the words of the Satan at the start were really the niggling thoughts and doubt within God Himself. All the drama, suffering, hurt that has gone on... has tested the critical bond between God and man, the divine and the human, to the ultimate term.

Job 40:6 Then Yahweh answered Job out of the whirlwind- This is God's answer to Job's silence (:5). Perhaps the implication is that Job has not yet come to recognize his humanity and repent in the way he needs to. Hence God speaks again. "Out of the whirlwind" means the whirlwind is continuing; and as explained above, the whirlwind meant Divine condemnation. It has not been lifted because Job has not properly repented.

Job 40:7 Now brace yourself like a man- The idea is that Job is to answer as a human, to recognize his humanity and answer the questions as a man. Job is perhaps not so much asked to repent as to realize his humanity.

I will question you, and you will answer Me- His questions of God had been inappropriate, just as the friends had been wrong to seek wisdom by asking the sages, mere men (Job 8:8; 21:29 s.w.); it is for God to question us. For we and not God are in the dock. And Job's vow of silence in :5 was not in fact answering God's previous questions. "You will answer Me" is direct response to Job's stubborn refusal to answer.

Job 40:8 Will you even annul My judgment?- As noted on :5,6, this could be seen as a criticism that Job hadn't said more. He had simply accepted he was condemned and vowed silence. The phrase is used of how Israel had broken covenant with God through breaking His judgments in the sense of His commands (Lev. 26:15). Job at this point absolutely represents the exiles, who had broken covenant and needed to repent and accept the new covenant offered to them (s.w. Jer. 11:10; 31:32).

Will you condemn Me, that you may be justified?- The final speeches of God and Elihu brought home the point that the righteousness achieved by man was not comparable with God's righteousness (e.g. 40:7-10). Any attempt at self justification is to condemn God as a false accuser. We are left to draw the conclusion: that the only way for man to be just with God is through total repentance of sin [even if it's "just" the sins of youth or what other men would call "minor" or surface level sin] and the imputation of God's righteousness to man, by absolute grace. We must give due weight to the words of the prologue, that God saw Job anyway as "perfect", as justified. The sense may be that God is saying 'You are justified, by My grace; you don't have to condemn Me by self-justification in order to be justified. You are justified by My grace without your effort'. God's justification of Job and Job's innocence are thereby reconciled.

LXX "Do not set aside my judgment: and dost thou think that I have dealt with thee in any other way, than that thou mightest appear to be righteous?". God convicted Job of sin so that he would repent and thus be counted righteous. This was God's intention, and therefore God has rightly accused Job of clouding His intention ["counsel"] by words without knowledge. By assuming that he was being wrongly condemned or judged, Job was in his own mind setting aside God's judgment / condemnation of him.

God seems to be saying that Job was condemning Him there and then. Job did so by his refusal to answer God in the previous verses. We can read :2,8 as God using legal terms to ask Job whether he really wants to continue his foolhardy demand to have a day in court with God: "Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let the one who argues with God answer!... Will you frustrate My justice, will you condemn Me so that you have right?". Job's silence is surely the worst defiance. He should have explicitly retracted all those times he had longed for and demanded a court case with God. Job is just a petty fault finder... wasting court time with frivolous complaints. Yet for man, God slaying all your ten kids, destroying your health, wealth and standing amongst men... is everything. God dismisses it as petty fault finding. This is not what we want to hear. We expect to be taken seriously. But such is the distance between God and man that such issues are treated as petty fault finding.

Job 40:9 Or do you have an arm like God? Can you thunder with a voice like Him?-

The reference is to the thunderstorm which was perhaps still ongoing. God's arm is often associated with His salvation. Man cannot save himself, as he has no saving arm like God's; and to attempt to do so is to justify ourselves, thereby condemning God (:8).

Verses 9-12 are effectively God asking Job whether Job can really dress up as a judge and judge Him. The whole claim is bizarre: "Do you have an arm like God and can you thunder with a voice like his? Deck yourself with pride and dignity, cloth yourself with majesty and splendour. Pour out the outbursts of your anger, and look on all the proud and abase them. Look on all the proud and humble them, tread down the wicked where they stand". It is God alone who is clothed with pride and dignity, majesty and splendour (Ps. 93:1; 104:1; Is. 5:16). We are disappointed that Job says very little in response to all this. He finally makes a brief statement agreeing that he doesn't understand and has spoken wrongly, but God responds with His second speech in order to elicit proper repentance. And even that is but a few words. Whilst God saw the sincerity behind those few words, we still wonder at the depth of Job's repentance. For he makes no specific withdrawal of all his blasphemous demands to judge God. But God accepts repentance even when it isn't as specific as it might have been, and we should do likewise.

The words of Job are perhaps easier to understand than those of God. Possibly because God's words and arguments to Job were tailored uniquely to him. He had a belief in Leviathan and Behemoth as the monsters of chaos and evil. And so God talks so much about them. He draws a powerful picture of them, just as they were in Job's mind, and says that if Job is to act as God, then he can tame them, play with them, lay his hand upon them etc. He cannot, he is trying to catch the sea monster with a flimsy fishing rod. One big issue God has with Job is that he is playing God. And if he is God, he can deal with the monsters as God alone can. God alone can touch them because He alone created them. Job is being made to see the logical implications of his position in judging God and condemning Him. Job is saying he is greater than

God. If you aren't going to condemn God, it is for you to accept His accusation and judgment of you as a sinner.

Job 40:10 Now deck yourself with excellency and dignity. Array yourself with honour and majesty-

It is God who is often described in these terms, e.g. Ps. 104:1, "O Lord my God, You are very great; You are clothed with honour and majesty". God is inviting Job to play God for a day. Job has effectively played God in his attitudes, and now God invites him to imagine being God. He is not God, and the whole argument leads to his acceptable repentance. Sin is, in essence, playing God, and repentance is realizing this and recognizing who we are. Repentance is to declare God right and ourselves wrong; to perceive what and who man is, and who God is. Job had acted as if he were dressed like God: "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice was like a robe and a turban" (Job 29:14). But this had been a playing God. We can play God by judging others, by judging our own sins as of no real account, by doing things in our own strength, becoming control freaks on no matter how micro a level... by assuming that the world is to be judged by our own idiosyncratic ideas of right and wrong.

This alludes to the garments of the priests, for glory and beauty. Job had already been stripped of his glorious priestly robes, as we learn from Job 19:9: "He has stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head". The stripping of Job recalls the stripping of the priest Aaron of his clothes and "crown" [mitre] when his priesthood ended (Num. 20:26,28). The same word is used of the stripping of God's people of their glory (Ez. 16:39; 23:26; Mic. 3:3), which only happened because they themselves did not strip themselves of their clothing in repentance (s.w. Is. 32:11; Ez. 26:16). Job's stripping and inability to reclothe himself was therefore to elicit repentance in him. And this is what is now finally achieved at the end of the book. God is of Himself "clothed with majesty and strength" (Ps. 93:1), "with glory and beauty" (Ps. 104:1). Job need not seek to play God by using legal rituals and religious clothing. This was not going to help Job.

Job 40:11 Pour out the fury of your anger- Heb. "the floods of wrath", preparing the way for Job to be taught that he need not fear such floods himself (:23).

Look at each one who is proud, and bring him low- This judgment of pride is God's work, and not Job's. If God alone is the judge and the One who can condemn, all Job's struggles over issues of justice ['judging'] were thereby inappropriate. And that is true today, in a world where judging issues of justice appears to be the passion of every man.

Job 40:12 Look at each one who is proud, and humble him. Crush the wicked in their place- Job has observed that the wicked prosper, whilst the righteous is suffering. God reminds Job that He has the power to condemn, and He will do so- looking at literally each one who is proud, throughout time and space. Job cannot do this. His unspoken desires that the wicked be judged by himself are addressed here. He obviously felt the injustice so deeply- that he suffered, whilst the wicked prospered. God's answer is that Job is incapable of judging them. But He will. Recognizing our inability to condemn and judge will help us in coping with the painful issues of injustice which surround us.

Job 40:13 Hide them in the dust together. Bind their faces in the hidden place- The faces of the condemned were covered, as Haman's was. The judgment of the wicked

was to be death in the dust (and not eternal conscious torment). The question is, can Job condemn men and turn them to dust? No he can't. So his struggles over issues of justice were misplaced, and were actually an implication that he thought that his arm could bring salvation.

Job 40:14 Then I will also admit to you that your own right hand can save you- The question is, can Job condemn men and turn them to dust (:13)? No he can't. So his struggles over issues of justice were misplaced, and were actually an implication that he thought that his arm could bring salvation.

Job 40:15 See now, Behemoth, which I made as well as you. He eats grass like an ox- Behemoth is literally "beasts", plural, although Behemoth is subsequently referred to in the singular. I suggest therefore that this is a plural of majesty, the one great beast. The connections with the hippo and crocodile are not exact; the connections are because people of the time believed that such animals had been spawned by the evil monsters of land [Behemoth] and sea [Leviathan]. Surely people of Job's time would have understood them as the equivalent of what people today would call "satan". It was by the deconstruction of "satan" that Job came to repentance. "Behemoth" can be read as the intensive plural of *behema*, a beast. Whatever actual beast is in view, perhaps the hippopotamus, it is simply presented as a beast. The argument will develop, that Job is part of the same creation as Behemoth, the most awesome and terrifying things created by God. And if he is at peace with his place within that creation, he need not fear. See on :20,23. The Egyptians considered the hippopotamus [Behemoth] and crocodile [Leviathan] to be symbols of evil and chaos. Possibly that is also the case here. Evil in its wildest imaginable mythological form... is God's pet, created by Him, played with by Him, commanded by Him. And the chaos of Job's life... was likewise totally under God's control. The surrounding legends featured some Divine warrior in battle against the evil beasts. God subverts this by saying that He created them and plays with them as His pets.

Job 38:8-11 has presented God as creator of the sea, thought to be the epitome of chaos and evil. But God was its creator. And now God presents as the creator of both Behemoth and Leviathan, the evil beasts of the land and sea respectively. *He is their creator*, just as He is creator of both good and evil in Is. 45:5-7. This is what brings Job to repentance. He cannot blame sin on anyone nor any monster apart from himself. And he cannot see the ultimate source of "evil" in the sense of calamity as being anyone nor anything apart from God. Job 39 has described God's total control over the animate and inanimate in the creation that Job observed. Now God will move on to Behemoth and Leviathan- legendary, unseen evil monsters. God likewise created them and they are totally under His control. And it is the argument about them which apparently leads Job to the required repentance. Evil, however man imagines it, is under God's control- although how He uses it, and to what ends, are beyond human understanding.

"Which I made as well as you" could refer to the way that living creatures were made on the same sixth day as man: "living creatures after their kind, livestock, creeping things, and animals of the earth after their kind" were all created on the sixth day too (Gen. 1:24). And those scary monsters of the sea were all declared "very good"- not evil. In Gen. 1:21 we read of great sea serpents / monsters [AV "whales"] being created and blessed: "God created the great sea monsters, all kinds of creatures that live in the water, and all kinds of birds. And God was pleased with what he saw. He blessed them all" (GNB). Those monsters thought to be the epitome of

radical evil were all created and blessed by God, and pleased Him. It's not that God has a 'dark side' and these monsters came from that; He creates good and evil, light and darkness (Is. 45:5-7). He did not create the earth "in chaos" (Is. 45:18, NEV "in vain"). The chaos monsters believed in by Job and his friends did not, in fact, exist. Creation is not in chaos, as God argues so extensively throughout Job 40 and Job 41. It is not understandable by man, it may appear chaotic as the ostrich appears a chaotic creature, but that is mere appearance to man. Rain lands on desolate rocks far from man, but that is not in fact random. Latter Isaiah is full of reference to the book of Job, and we can fairly take the statements in Is. 45 as commentary upon the implications of God's speeches to Job.

Giving extensive description of the physiology of two monsters appears an irrelevant answer to the problem of suffering. God isn't giving any specific answers to Job's 122 questions. And perhaps that is the point. Job's sufferings, on one hand, are utterly irrelevant considering the size of the cosmos and the vast scale of God's creation. But once Job utters words of repentance, God will as it were go crazy in blessing him and enthusing about him, making the richest man of the east twice as rich. The behemoth and leviathan are clearly presented in terms of apocalyptic, with a kaleidoscope of images and meanings associated with them. Job has earlier accused God of treating him with the same hatred He [as Job imagined] had towards the beasts of evil: "Am I the Sea, or the Dragon, that you set a guard over me" (Job 7:12). Job understood Leviathan as a beast that was cursed by all good people: "Let those curse [that night of Job's birth] who curse the Sea, those who are skilled to rouse up Leviathan" (Job 3:8). God engages with this in showing that in fact He created these beasts, they are under His complete control; and fondly plays with them, even though He finds them incredibly dumb, blockheaded and stupid, just as a man may fondly play with his pet dog and call it "You silly thing!" as he does. It is the leviathan / behemoth speeches that lead Job from mere surface level regret to true repentance.

It is the speeches about Behemoth and Leviathan that lead Job to finally repent acceptably. But God introduces no new arguments. He simply repeats the arguments of Job 39 from the animal creation, just to a greater extent. So it was perhaps the passage of some more time, rather than new arguments, that lead Job to true repentance.

Behemoth and Leviathan don't and didn't actually exist. God draws a detailed and accurate picture of these beasts as Job believed in them, and then comforts Job that He created them and easily controls them. The final reality of Job is that God and not scary monsters brought the trials upon Job. The evil beasts were in Job's mind and had no real existence, although God knew in great detail how Job imagined them.

The talk about behemoth and leviathan is prefaced by God asking Job to dress up as God, as judge of all, and then deal with these beasts as God does. They were the symbols of evil and chaos- but God created them, just as He creates both good and evil, darkness and light (Is. 45:5-7). Job however is as it were just trying to catch leviathan with a fishing rod. No human weapon can be used to catch nor kill leviathan (Job 41:19-21), only the One who created these beats can capture, control or kill them. That is God, not Job. There is no hope for any man that he can do this- "the hope of him [such a man] is vain" that he can ever overcome, tame or destroy the beasts (Job 41:9).

Perhaps we are to see in this a reference to Nebuchadnezzar being made to eat grass like an ox. The wild beasts of Judah's aggressors were all under God's control,

even the most apparently mighty of them. Leviathan and Behemoth are monster figures appearing at the end of the book of Job, to form a kind of inclusio with the opening reference to Satan; and they are clearly part of God's final answer to Job's "case". Behe-mot can be understood as a reference to Mot, the Canaanite god of death. There are copious connections between these beasts and the language of Isaiah about the Assyrians and Babylonians. They too had been created by God, and were used by him to bring His people to repentance so that like Job, their captivity might be turned.

I repeat again- that Job in Job 40:4 is not penitent. He is simply silent in refusal to participate or give evidence in the court case against him. And his silence condemns him, according to how he had earlier spoken of only being silent if guilty. But God makes another effort to elicit his repentance, and He does so through the speeches about Behemoth and Leviathan. We naturally enquire *why* and *how* those speeches elicited Job's eventual repentance. One possibility is that he held the view of supernatural evil which many do today. He thought there were indeed beasts of chaos and evil, who were responsible for disaster in human life and also for human sin. He is being shown that these beasts, even if they are real, were created by God and are powerless in their own right. Man alone has total responsibility for his own sin and cannot blame the supposed beasts of evil.

Job 40:16 Look now, his strength is in his thighs. His force is in the muscles of his belly- These descriptions would be appropriate to a hippopotamus. "Look now" could suggest they were standing by a river, and the animal arose out of it at God's command. The theophany in a whirlwind by a river, with lightnings, is what Ezekiel experienced. The hope was that the exiles would likewise be moved to follow Job's path through repentance to restoration.

Behemoth is strong, "his strength is in his thighs". He has bones like "tubes of bronze" (:18). This connects with Job's complaint that he is not strong enough to endure what has come upon him: "What is my strength that I should wait?" (Job 6:11 NRSV). He likewise complains that his bones and flesh are not made of bronze (Job 10:11; 6:12). Behemoth is far stronger than Job; he is the land beast that represents the power of evil and chaos, to Job's mind. Yet God has created him and uses him at His will and bidding. Yet Job has sought to bring God to court and accuses Him of injustice. Job has often referenced the weakness of his own mouth, teeth and tongue (Job 3:1; 7:11; 13:17; 16:4, 5; 19:23; 23:4; 24:25; 27:4; 29:22; 40:4). But these are the very features of the beasts, especially Leviathan, which are brought to Job's attention. He is nothing to be compared with what God has created; so how can he seek to fight God as an equal in court.

Job 40:17 He moves his tail like a cedar. The sinews of his thighs are knit together- The tail of a hippo is only about one foot long. So we conclude that this beast is portrayed as only based upon a hippo, but all the same a mythical creature which Job believed in. Or we could say that hippos were seen as the spawn of these mythical beasts.

Job would have feared the beast as it moved its tail, for they arise out of rivers to feed on crops. But he need not fear, for the hippopotamus eats plants not men (:15). Again Job was being taught that in the face of apparently overwhelming opposition, his life would be preserved. And this was the lesson for the exiles too. See on :20.

Behemoth and Leviathan are based upon the hippo and crocodile, but are clearly the composite beasts of land and sea respectively whom Job believed were the sources of chaos and evil. And yet he also believed God was the source of the evil in his life. He is being challenged to trust that whatever the reality of these beasts, God was behind them, had created them and controlled them. And if he were God, he could do the same too. The presentations of these beasts leave Job with no choice but to either humble himself before God, or admit his powerlessness before them and be destroyed by them.

God created the monster of evil. The monster of evil is in fact the leading creature in the cosmos, chief of God's ways. There is no dualism in the cosmos. The God who is so loving and providing to all is also the God who has created evil as His play thing. Job has to either be crushed by this, or believe it and repent.

It could be argued that God is pointing out the intrinsic weakness of this beast. "His strength is in his loins." (:16) may be a way of saying that he puts all his strength into reproduction, as if to say "His brains are in his balls". We can read :17 as a reference to his testicles: "the sinews of his stones [the word for 'testicle'] are wrapped together" (AV), implying he is in fact impotent. It has a tail that doesn't move, solid as a cedar; but tails need to move and be flexible to be effective. His sinews are "knit together" or intertwined / twisted; sinews mustn't be twisted. Sinews or tendons bind the bones to the muscles; twisted tendons are painful and inhibit movement. A beast

of twisted tendons won't have much function; he may appear scary but he isn't functional. His bones and muscles may be huge and strong, but if they aren't well connected to each other, he has no function. This is why these beasts are never presented by God as any threat to man. We could argue that "The lotus trees screen him as his defence" (:22) suggests that he is scared and hides behind trees. His bones which seem so strong are in fact hollow like tubes (:18). LXX of :18 has "his backbone is cast iron". An inflexible backbone means he was not very flexible, and we could translate :19 as meaning that he is "a thing made to be laughed at by His angels". If he represents evil, then he is not in fact very powerful. These descriptions would present behemoth as lacking function, not able to do much, looking powerful and strong but not functional; almost just a model, a dead image, even though he appears to move about. Behemoth is described as eating grass like an ox (:15), the language of Isaiah about a lion who has been rendered powerless. His bones are only tubes, not as solid as they appear (:18). We surely expect such a fearsome looking creature to be a carnivore and to prey on men. He is described as having huge teeth- which makes him a carnivore, surely. But he eats like an ox; the other animals aren't frightened of him and play around him (:20). He is not at all predatory. He looks more aggressive than he is, and only looks like a beast of prey. He is presented in :21 as inactive and lazy, he lies down in the shade of trees to keep out of the sun, and retreats behind "the wild lotus". Hardly the picture of a dangerous, ravening predator. Leviathan likewise is never described as doing anything hostile or predatory. And yet his appearance [especially his teeth, which are fit for a carnivore] begs the inference that he is predatory and dangerous; but that is never once mentioned. The silence about that is highly significant. "And sorrow is turned into joy before him" subverts the common idea that a beast of evil turns joy to sorrow (Job 41:22). He may appear terrible, but he doesn't function as feared. God is powerfully showing Job that these forces of sin and evil don't exist. He is deconstructing them. Leaving Job standing alone before God, with nobody and nothing to blame for his sins, and nobody other than God as the source of his sufferings. Just as there clearly is coherence and purpose in the physical universe, so there is order and meaning in God's working with man- but again, unperceived by man.

What perhaps brings Job to his knees in repentance is that he is now persuaded that the beasts of evil have no real existence. All disaster is from God; and all sin is solely his own fault. There is no buffer factor between God and himself. Nothing to blame. This helps answer the difficult but critical question: How does the depiction of behemoth and leviathan lead Job to such repentance? It explains why Job says that because he now knows that God can do *all* things, that he therefore repents. The connection between God's utter sovereignty and Job's repentance is because he rejects the idea that there can be anything somehow to blame for his sins and his sufferings. It's God and Job, with no other factor or entity present. It's why despite all the similarities between the epilogue and the prologue, the satan figure of the prologue is distinctly absent in the epilogue.

Job 40:18 His bones are like tubes of brass. His limbs are like bars of iron- Babylon's defences of brass and iron would likewise be no barrier to the restoration of God's people, for all was under His control (Is. 45:2), and Israel could be made as strong (Mic. 4:13) seeing they were part of the same creation that had made this animal (:15).

Job 40:19 He is the chief of the ways of God. He who made him gives him His sword-

Or, "the first of God's ways". God speaks of Behemoth and Leviathan with a fondness: Leviathan was created as a plaything for the Angels, and God plays with Leviathan like a bird in a cage (Job 41:5). God speaks as if He is rather affectionately protective of them: "Look at Behemoth, whom I made as I made you" (Job 40:15) ; "He is the first of God's ways"; "Under the entire heaven he is mine" (Job 41:3). These beasts were thought to be the gods of evil, chaos and suffering; and Job likely blamed them for any personal sin God was choosing to punish. By such language, God is totally deconstructing Job's ideas about the origins of sin and evil. The beasts are presented as frightening and apparently strong, but not very functional and not actually aggressive to man. It's the same lesson we see in the way that the 'satan' figure of the prologue isn't found in the epilogue. God is all and in all, and man stands before Him alone and with no other moral entities between them.

The primary reference may be to the very sharp teeth of the hippopotamus. This would be a connection to how the sword of Babylon had been Yahweh's sword. Even the most awful wild beast in Israel's experience, Babylon, was under God's control and manipulated by Him. Hence LXX "This is the chief of the creation of the Lord; made to be played with by his angels". It is God who not only created Behemoth, but can effortlessly control him in accord with His purpose. That's the comfort of the message. Indeed the descriptions of the natural world which lead up to the Leviathan / Behemoth passages are there to underline this point; and it's interesting that those passages zoom in upon the cruelties and even brutalities within nature. Yet these are all of God's ultimate design and creation, and under His providential control. Job had earlier perceived this; for he responds to the friends' allusions to an evil 'Satan' figure as the source of his suffering by observing: "Ask the animals... The birds of the air... [they show that] the hand of the Lord [and not any supernatural 'Satan'] has done this" (Job 12:7-9).

Job 40:20 Surely the mountains produce food for him, where all the animals of the field play- The animals of the field don't fear the hippopotamus, although Job did (:17). But he need not fear, for the hippopotamus eats plants not men (:15). Again Job was being taught that in the face of apparently overwhelming opposition, his life would be preserved. And this was the lesson for the exiles too. Job was to recognize that he too was part of the same creation that had brought forth the hippopotamus (:15), and if he did so, then he too could live at peace in the presence of such an awesome beast.

Job 40:21 He lies under the lotus trees, in the cover of the reed, and the marsh- LXX "by the papyrus", perhaps a reference to Babylon's mastery over Egypt. But the connection is to some words of Bildad in Job 8:11 "Can the papyrus grow up without mire? Can the rushes grow without water?". Bildad's idea is that Job's prosperity was like a quick growing papyrus which would soon wither (Job 8:12) because it had not enough water or mud. Bildad's reasoning is wrong, but clearly the Lord quarried His parable of the sower from parts of these ideas. For He speaks of the man who has no "depth of earth" as the one who responds eagerly to the word sown, but falls away "when affliction of persecution arises for the word's sake" because he has 'no root in himself' (Mk. 4:5,17). Bildad was therefore not simply saying that Job's persecution was because he had sinned; but rather he implies that Job had lost his faith after the persecution arose, because he had no real root in faith. In this Bildad was also wrong, for Job continually seeks to God in his tribulations. Behemoth was quite at home in the "mire" or "marsh" (s.w. Job 40:21); and the connection is in order to demonstrate

that even the "mire" was created by God and just as He saved Jeremiah out of the mire of the dungeon, so He could save Job and the exiles. And the only other usage of the word is in the description of the healing of the "miry places" (Ez. 47:11) if the exiles were responsive to the prophetic call to restore the temple and city made in Ez. 40-48.

Job 40:22 The lotuses cover him with their shade. The willows of the brook surround him- Trees often represent nations, and here we have a picture of the nations being subservient to Babylon. LXX "And the great trees make a shadow over him with their branches, and so do the bushes of the field".

Job 40:23 Behold, if a river overflows, he doesn't tremble. He is confident, though the Jordan swells even to his mouth- As noted on :20, Job was to recognize that he too was part of the same creation that had brought forth the hippopotamus (:15), and if he did so, then he too could live at peace in the presence of overflowing, flooded rivers; which represent the invaders of God's people and His judgment of men (see on :11). Even if those rivers came up to his mouth, they would go no further. Just as Job had been promised in the prologue that his life would be preserved. And the swelling of the rivers of Israel's enemies would likewise not destroy Israel. They need not tremble as the faithless did in the times of Isaiah.

And yet God almost seems to be mocking these beasts, the hippopotamus, crocodile or whatever they were. One reading of :23 is that this animal is so stupid he faces a flooding river and thinks by opening his mouth he can just swallow it all up. He is proudly big and strong, in his own eyes, "king over all the children of pride" (Job 41:34), but totally dependent upon God. And also incredibly pigheaded, stubborn and foolish, played with by the Angels. And in a way, that was Job.

Job 40:24 Shall any take him when he is on the watch, or pierce through his nose with a snare?- The idea is as GNB "The most amazing of all my creatures! Only his Creator can defeat him". And indeed God would overthrow Babylon and allow the exiles to return.

JOB CHAPTER 41

Job 41:1 Can you draw out Leviathan-

We now have a 33 line poem about Leviathan. It surely matches the 33 line poem of Job about his own utter innocence in Job 31. It is a response from God but not an answer. Just as Job's 122 questions are met by God's 61 questions in response, exactly half. A nod to the fact God had heard Job, and was aware of his 122 questions. But had God answered them one by one... Job would have been destroyed by God, intellectually and morally. And God wants to save him... from his self righteousness as displayed in Job 31.

Leviathan and Behemoth are monster figures appearing at the end of the book of Job, to form a kind of *inclusio* with the opening reference to Satan; and they are clearly part of God's final answer to Job's "case". Leviathan appears to be the Canaanite version of the orthodox 'Satan' figure, perhaps a reference to the 'Lotan' of the Ugaritic myths. In great detail, these figures are deconstructed. They are shown to

be *created* beings – created by the one almighty God of the Old Testament, to be completely under His control to the point that He can even tease them, so enormously greater is His power than theirs. These Canaanite ‘Satan’ figures are thereby shown to have no significant existence; and they certainly don’t exist as opposed to God. They are totally under His control. And yet these monster figures clearly have characteristics shared by known animals, such as the hippopotamus, crocodile etc. Those similarities are intended. It’s been well observed: “To say that Leviathan has characteristics of the crocodile and the whale is not to say that it *is* such a creature, but rather to suggest that evil is rooted in the natural world” (Robert S. Fyall, *Now My Eyes Have Seen You: Images of Creation and Evil in the Book of Job* (Leicester: I.V.P. / Apollos, 2002) p. 27) – and the point is so laboured in Job that the natural world is of God’s complete creation. ‘Evil’ in a form independent of Him, in radical opposition to Him, simply isn’t there.

It’s significant that dragons in the form of serpents were common in Babylonian theology. Figures on vases show serpent griffins, there was one on Marduk’s temple in Nippur, and also on the Ishtar Gate in Babylon. These would have been familiar to Judah in Babylonian captivity; and we have suggested that the book of Job was edited there, under inspiration, for their benefit. They may well have seen a similarity between the Babylonian monsters and the Leviathan / Behemoth beasts. That God is greater than Leviathan and can do what He wills with him would therefore have had a special meaning to the faithful Jew in exile. In a restoration context, Isaiah comforted Judah that God would destroy “Leviathan the gliding serpent; He will slay the monster of the sea” (Is. 27:1). The real ‘monster’ faced by Judah in exile wasn’t a supernatural being; it was a concrete kingdom of men on earth, namely Babylon. God taught Job, and through him showcased to the watching world, that all such imaginations of Leviathan, monsters in the raging sea, crooked serpents etc. were vain – in any case, God had created them and used them to do His will with His people, symbolized as they were by Job. His sitting in dust and ashes is very much the picture of Judah sitting by the rivers of Babylon, bemoaning their losses. The language of Job’s captivity being ‘turned’ (Job 42:10) is the very term used about the restoration of Judah from Babylon (Jer. 29:14; Ps. 126:4).

With a fishhook, or press down his tongue with a cord? – God almost jokes with Job, that he had been trying to draw out Leviathan with a fish hook (Job 41:1), and I see that as a commentary upon so many human attempts to get a handle on the way God is the adversary / Satan figure in our lives. Shrugging it off as chance and bad luck, believing in a personal Satan in the sea or in Heaven, thinking God is punishing us... all this is trying to capture Leviathan with a mere fishing rod. The book of Job isn’t an explanation for specific human suffering – and many who turn to the book looking for that come away disappointed. Rather is it an account of God’s sovereign power, putting meaning into the word “All-mighty” when applied to God. On a ‘doctrinal’ level it is indeed a deconstruction of the ideas of supernatural ‘Satan’ figures. But on a more personal level, it challenges us to follow in Job’s faithful footsteps, as it challenged Judah in captivity. See on Job 42:2.

I suggested on Job 40:16 that Behemoth was a hippopotamus which arose from a river. "Look now" could suggest they were standing by a river, and the animal arose out of it at God's command. The theophany in a whirlwind by a river, with lightnings, is what Ezekiel experienced. The hope was that the exiles would likewise be moved to follow Job's path through repentance to restoration. Here now God seems to bring a crocodile out of the same river, "Leviathan". Unlike the hippopotamus which is a herbivore, the crocodile was likely to attack and eat Job. He was thrown back to the

promise of the prologue that God would preserve his life, just as He would the national life of Judah from every wild beast. Job's experience with Behemoth was to prepare him for the encounter now with Leviathan the crocodile.

Job 41:2 Can you put a rope into his nose, or pierce his jaw through with a hook?-

The mythology which Job likely believed held that the hero would conquer beasts like leviathan through close combat. God can do that. But can Job? God is really labouring the point that Job is not at all God, and that his positions had effectively made himself as God. And he so needed to repent of that. Heb. "Or bore his jaw through with a thorn". To bore Leviathan's nose would have been a major job, and would require a major iron nose ring and chains. Using a thorn would be as pathetically ineffective as trying to catch Leviathan with a fishing rod.

This and the following verses use the language of captivity. Prisoners were treated in this way in victory processions. The language is so relevant to the exiles who had been led away into captivity; and God could lead their captors captive, in a way only He could, just as He as it were led Job's captivity captive.

Job 41:3 Will he make many petitions to you, or will he speak soft words to you?-

This is exactly how captives spoke to their captors; see on :2 (cp. 1 Kings 20:32). The "soft words" may refer to pleading for his life with intense entreaty and begging. Leviathan was utterly subject to God. He had made a covenant of submission to God, and was His obedient servant (:4).

Job 41:4 Will he make a covenant with you- Captive kings were forced to make covenants with their captors; see on :2.

That you should take him for a servant forever?- Just as Job is described as God's "servant" (Job 1:8), so is Leviathan (Job 40:28; 41:4). Job and Behemoth / Leviathan [the LXX presents them as one and the same beast] were in fact part of the same creation as Job, and likewise God's servants. No evil power uncontrolled by God is at work in Job's life. We also need to give due weight to the fact that God speaks the Leviathan / Behemoth passages "out of the storm", which had been gathering since Job 37:2. This is significant because storms were seen as manifestations of evil powers. Yet here (and elsewhere in Scripture), the one true God speaks out of such storms, to demonstrate how far greater He is than any storm god; and showing by implication that such storm gods don't exist, and the 'evil' which supposedly came from them was in fact under His control.

In pagan myth, Baal was temporarily conquered by Mot, and the Ugaritic poem about their conflict which was found in the Ras Shamra texts speaks of how Baal was made a "slave forever" (Umberto Cassuto, *Biblical and Oriental Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975) Vol. 2 p. 6). This very language is picked up in Job 41:4, where God mocks that in no way would He become a "slave forever". The allusion shows that the one true God is in no way Baal. He is greater than Baal. Unlike Baal, He is in no conflict with Mot nor anyone. Baal's sister, Anath, muzzled a dragon with great difficulty – but Yahweh muzzled Leviathan and then sported with him (Job 41:1–5). The poem challenges Baal to "Pierce through Lotan the serpent, destroy the serpent the seven headed tyrant" (Cassuto, *ibid* p. 7). Yet this is exactly the language picked up in Is. 27:1: "Yahweh will punish with His powerful, great and mighty sword Leviathan the serpent, Leviathan the serpent, and He will slay the dragon". Yahweh's utter supremacy over any other god is so great that it makes all ideas of cosmic conflict simply laughable. Ps. 92:10 likewise: "Lo, thine enemies, I YHWH, lo, thine

enemies shall perish, all evil doers shall be scattered” alludes to Part 3 lines 8 and 9 of the poem about the Mot–Baal conflict: “Lo, thine enemies, O Baal, lo thine enemies wilt thou pierce through, lo, thou wilt destroy thine adversaries” (Cassuto, *ibid* p. 8). Note too that Baal’s enemies, i.e. Mot and the demons of the underworld, are paralleled with “evildoers”. Human sinners rather than demons are the real issue.

Job 41:5 Will you play with him as with a bird? Or will you bind him for your girls?- The idea is that the mighty Leviathan was like a caged bird, submissive and entertaining, which brought much delight and intrigue to God's delicate and tender servant girls, who kept caged birds for fun. God is not only the victorious captor of Leviathan, but He can play with him as a pet, and even give him as a pet to His children. And God's children are His people. The same idea is in Job 40:19 LXX "This is the chief of the creation of the Lord; made to be played with by his angels". Ps. 104:26,27 makes the same point: "this Leviathan You fashioned to play with. All of them look to You to give them their food in its season". God tames all animals including Leviathan, but man cannot. Job's bitter question in Job 7:12; 26:12 complains that God is treating him like He treats the sea monster: "Am I Yamm or am I the Sea Beast, that You should put a watch on me?". Quite possibly God alludes to this complaint when He speaks of His relationship with Leviathan, another sea beast, possibly meant to be understood as the same as Yamm. God simply says that He likes playing around with Leviathan. God is not against Leviathan, He is a friend of Leviathan. Job and the friends have a simplistic view of good and evil, as many do today, imagining a cosmos split between God and the Satan. The book of Job often deconstructs this, showing God to be all powerful, all the scary monsters thought to be interfering with Job are in fact all at peace with God and under His control. Of course this is all stated in the account of God creating the sea monsters at creation (Gen. 1:20,21). And man was created to have dominion over all God's creations both in the sea and on the land (Gen. 1:26).

Job 41:6 Will traders barter for him? Will they part him among the merchants?- This alludes to how captives were sold into slavery; see on :2.

Job 41:7 Can you fill his skin with barbed irons, or his head with fish spears?- These weapons would have no effect on the head of a crocodile, which is covered by extremely hard skin. No human device or weapon could destroy the crocodile, only God could take him captive.

Job 41:8 Lay your hand on him. Remember the battle, and do so no more- The idea may be that if Job tries to lay hands on the crocodile, he will do it only once and will not live to do it again. Eliphaz claims that God is preparing to judge Job like a king ready to ride into the battle (Job 15:24). But God's later revelation includes Him demonstrating that man cannot participate successfully in any battle with what God has willed (Job 41:8), and the horse runs foolishly into battle with no regard for consequence (Job 39:25). The connection with the words of Eliphaz may be in that it was effectively Eliphaz who was rushing into battle to do judgment against Job; and he was acting like the foolish horse, forgetting that God alone will fight in the battle, and win (Job 38:23).

"Remember the battle" may be a reference to the well known mythology of the battle between the beast of the sea and other gods [Yamm against Leviathan, later transformed into Marduk against Tiamat in Babylonian mythology]. Job is asked to

recall how terrible and fierce was that battle [in the mythology he believed in- for no such battle actually happened]. And he is being asked how he as a mere man can ever engage in battle with Leviathan.

Job 41:9 Behold, the hope of binding him is vain. Won't one be cast down even at the sight of him?- "Behold..." again suggests that God has made this creature appear to Job; He uses the same term about the 'appearance' of Behemoth. "Vain" is literally "a liar". In Job 24:25 he has boasted of the strength of his own speeches: "If it isn't so now, who will prove me a liar [s.w. "vain"], and make my speech worth nothing?". Job has argued himself into an invincible position, in his own eyes. Indeed, all he says is true; but like the friends, truths are expressed but within a wrong context. God confirms this here by remarking that whoever has hope of overcoming Leviathan, His great beast (perhaps representing death and human mortality) is a liar to think he has such hope. Job has forgotten his humanity, despite being 'right' in his arguments. This is the problem with possessing truth; it can lead us to wrongly forget our humanity and consider ourselves invincible.

Job 41:10 None is so fierce that he dare stir him up. Who then is he who can stand before Me?- The reference is to how crocodiles are seen sleeping by the banks of rivers, but no man dare "stir him up" or even creep near him. But despite God's awesomeness, Job at that point was standing before God. The "sons of God" of the prologue likewise stood before the Lord. The idea is that this can only be possible through God's grace, and Job and the friends had been unaware of how awesome it was to be able to stand before God. If a man dare not attack these monsters, and Job is secretly terrified of them- how can he seek to attack God in court? No man including Job dare even put a bridle in the mouth of Leviathan (:13).

We could translate: "Is he not fierce when one arouses him? Yet who is he that he will take his stand over against Me? Who has confronted Me that I should sue for peace?". Job could not enter into a court case with a beast whom God had created, let alone with the creator of all. And this beast of evil could never confront God. He belongs to God; we could render :11 "Under the whole of heaven, he is mine". Theoretically, Job had seen the truth of all this: "Who has hardened (himself) against Him and survived?" (Job 9:4); but now he was 'seeing' what he had only heard by the ear, theoretically understanding it. Job had thought to confront God and take a stand against him in some court, in the fantasy of his mind. In fairness, each time Job fantasizes about this, he reflects that God is bigger and more powerful than him, so it won't really happen. *But Job is being judged for the things he fantasized about.* That's the point. Truly bad men do what good men only dream of. Our thoughts, even of fantasy, are how God sees us. We desperately need the Holy Spirit to change us.

Job 41:11 Who has first given to Me, that I should repay him?- This is quoted in Rom. 11:35 AV: "who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?". The context is Paul marvelling at God's utter grace. This was clearly how he was led to interpret this verse in Job. There is again legal language here; as if to say 'Who has put me under any legal obligation, forcing Me to do what you say and repay you what I owe you?'. All Job's persistent demands to meet God in judgment were therefore inappropriate (Job 9:34,35; 10:3; 13:3,22; 23:3-7). Here we see, as James puts it, "the end of the Lord... that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy / grace". Paul in Romans 11 interpreted the end of the Lord in the same way. God gave to Job, not because he was righteous and therefore God was in Job's debt. Job seems to have

thought that his Divine blessings were owed him by God because he had served God. But it was all of grace; and Job was given even more at the end, despite having cursed God. The idea is that Job's righteousness had not done God a favour which He was bound to repay through blessing Job. What God wanted was unbought human loyalty. It is what man wants from his loved ones, his wife, his children- not loyalty and "love" for the sake of gifts, but loyalty and love simply so. The voice of the Satan in the prologue is really that of God's niggling doubt, that Job's loyalty was bought and not unbought. This is why God is so thrilled when Job comes finally to [some sort of] repentance, rewarding him so abundantly for really not much at all in terms of works.

Everything under the heavens is Mine- Much of the language used about Leviathan and Behemoth is also used about God's manifestation of Himself. Smoke from nostrils, flame from mouth (Job 41:11,12)= Ps. 18:8; Strength before and dismay behind (Job 41:14 Heb.) = Pestilence before and plague behind (Hab. 3:5); Strong ones and leaders cringe in fear (Job 41:17 Heb.) = Earth reels (Ps. 18:7) and mountains tremble (Hab. 3:6); Deep sea stirred up (Job 41:23,24 Heb.) = Deep sea laid bare (Ps. 18:5) ; Terrible teeth = Job felt that God was gnashing His teeth at him (Job 16:9); Breath carries men away = The breath of God's mouth will carry away the wicked (Job 15:30); On earth there is not his equal (Job 41:33) = Only ultimately true of God. Leviathan is called the 'cruel one' (Job 41:10) – and the very same word is used by Job about God in His afflicting Job in Job 30:21. Leviathan, the seemingly overbearing power of evil in the world, be it in the early satan myths or Baylon, is in fact a manifestation of God to such an intense degree that effectively it 'is' God; God, ultimately, is the adversary / Satan to Job. The epilogue and prologue to Job are evidently related; see on Job 42:6.

Job 41:12 I will not keep silence concerning his limbs, nor his mighty strength, nor his goodly frame- LXX "I will not be silent because of him: though because of his power one shall pity his antagonist". God pities Job because he had thought that in his own strength he could be right with God. This is perhaps what is in view in James 5:11, where we learn that at "the end of the Lord" in His relationship with Job, He showed Himself "very pitiful". This means that God is not shooting out these challenges to Job in anger or in offence at a mortal man, but rather in pity. Job before Leviathan was to be pitied. Let alone Job before God. And God did pity him and showed long patience to him, repeatedly giving him chances to repent until he did.

Job 41:13 Who can strip off his outer garment? Who shall come within his jaws?- The reference is to the scaly "coat" of the crocodile. If that cannot be taken off, there is no chance to open his mouth and enter between his jaws, where crocodiles have ""two rows of sharply pointed teeth, thirty or more on each side".

Job 41:14 Who can open the doors of his face? Around his teeth is terror- This may be an answer to Job's complaint in Job 16:9 that God "has gnashed on me with His teeth". Job 41:14 speaks of how terrible are the teeth of the creature God has made; but He alone can open the mouth of it and is fearless before its' teeth. The idea of the connection back to Job 16:9 is that God knows all about teeth. He has designed them, and even if Job thinks God is gnashing at Him like a beast, he must accept that God creates the beast and its teeth.

It is God alone who can "open" or "shut up" Leviathan (:15). Ginzberg demonstrates that the Jews saw the monster 'Rahab' and Leviathan as the same entity;

and twice Job stresses how infinitely greater than Rahab is Yahweh. When God starts speaking about Leviathan, He is therefore confirming the truth of what Job has earlier said about His power over Rahab / Leviathan. The context of Job's comments was to answer the theories of the friends – and God is as it were confirming that Job's deconstruction of their 'Satan' theories was correct. The same Hebrew words are used about God's binding and loosing of the stars [which were thought to control evil on earth] and His binding, loosing and opening of Leviathan's mouth (Job 38:31 cp. Job 40:29). Whether or not Leviathan / a 'Satan' figure, or the bad stars, are for real... God is in utter control of them, and there is thus no conflict, no war in Heaven, no ultimate dualism at all in the cosmos. Which is just the message we would expect from a monotheistic Old Testament book. Israel's God is truly the Almighty.

"Open" is the word for 'loosing'. Job sees God as capable of binding and loosing him, untying the cords that restrain affliction and then binding them up again (Job 30:11 s.w.). God's response is that indeed this is the case, and such binding and loosing is seen throughout the natural creation (s.w. Job 38:31; 39:5; 41:14). And therefore, Job and the exiles are to live in hope of being bound up in safety from affliction, just as God "untied His cord and afflicted me" in Job 30:11.

"Terror" is what the friends believed would come upon Job (Job 20:25 s.w.). "Terrors" are again the judgment of God upon an apostate Israel, whom Job was suffering for whilst innocent, after the pattern of the later Lord Jesus (Dt. 32:25 s.w.). Those "terrors" were likely understood by the friends as some kind of demonic beings. God deconstructs this by explaining that the great beasts He has created likewise were 'terrible' (s.w. "terrors"). But the simple point was that He had created them and was totally in control (s.w. Job 39:20; 41:14).

Job 41:15 Strong scales are his pride, shut up together with a close seal- The scales of the crocodile resemble shields. The idea is that this beast represents the enemies of God's people, with none of their soldiers breaking rank, just as the prophets envisage Israel's enemies. But these are also all designed and created by God and can be manipulated by Him at will.

Job 41:16 One is so near to another, that no air can come between them- "Air" here is *ruach*, the usual word for wind or spirit. If "air" was all that was meant, a different Hebrew word would be used. The idea is that there is a designed unity here between the shields / scales which God's Spirit will not break apart. This is a unity created by God. Unity comes from Him alone. And this is what we see in functional relationships within marriages and true churches.

Job 41:17 They are joined one to another. They stick together, so that they can't be pulled apart- The idea is that they are soldered to each other by God; see on :16.

Job 41:18 His sneezing flashes out light. His eyes are like the eyelids of the morning- In Job 15:12 Eliphaz condemned Job: "Why do your eyes flash?". Job was indeed angry, with flashing eyes. But the expression of emotion is misinterpreted as being angry with God (:13). God's special creation, Leviathan, also had flashing eyes (Job 41:18,19). Perhaps this is God's way of saying that eyes flashing with anger is not necessarily sinful of itself, and is all part of the natural created order, and is not worthy of rebuke in itself. This is said against the backdrop of a Bedouin culture where expressions of emotion were only to be made in appropriate ways.

Job 41:19 Out of his mouth go burning torches. Sparks of fire leap forth- The Leviathan beast / crocodile which had crawled up to Job is now transformed by God into more than an animal (:20 too). He starts to appear like part of the cherubim vision. The "burning torches" is s.w. "burning lamp" in the theophany of Gen. 15:17; Ez. 1:13; Dan. 10:6 and Ex. 20:18. This apparently frightful beast is actually a manifestation of Yahweh's glory. And that burning torch is how Yahweh's salvation shone forth for the exiles (s.w. Is. 62:1), and how the revived Judah could become (s.w. Zech. 12:6).

Job 41:20 Out of his nostrils a smoke goes, as of a boiling pot over a fire of reeds- This continues the language of God manifestation / theophany; see on :19. The "smoke" is s.w. Gen. 15:17; Ex. 19:18 and other visions of God manifestation. "Goes" is the word for 'bring forth' in Job 28:11: "The thing that is hidden He brings forth to light". God can reveal everything physical, if He wishes. But man will still not find "wisdom" if he is searching for it as a 'physical' thing, obtained by a process of mining and subsequent refining. That reveals merely "stones of obscurity" (Job 28:3), nuggets of isolated truth. This message needs to be heeded by those who consider the Christian duty is to search out academic truth, mining it from the pages of the Bible and further processing it. This of itself is not to be despised, but this can be done as the Pharisees did it, and as the friends did- without coming to the awesome personal encounter with God and His grace with which the book of Job concludes. God can dry up the streams so that those panning in them thigh deep for precious stones- find them. He can bring them to light, but this is not the same thing as the "wisdom" of personal relationship with Him and departing from evil in our hearts (Job 28:9,10,28). This is what was happening on Job's life; God was 'bringing forth' light from death, deep things from darkness (s.w. Job 12:22). And this was realized by *God* bringing it forth, and not man's search for 'truth'. Job as a person was to be 'brought forth' *by God* as gold from that fire of affliction (Job 23:10 s.w.). Just as plants are 'brought forth' from the earth without the need for mining under the earth (Job 28:5 s.w.). This is why God's reply to Job keeps on using this word for 'bring forth', labouring the point that *God* 'brings forth' by His processes and initiatives, and not man. And that is as a code stamped upon all of creation (Job 38:8,29,32; 39:4,21; 41:20,21).

Job 41:21 His breath kindles coals. A flame goes forth from his mouth- Similar language is used in Ps. 18:8 of God's anger: "There went up a smoke out of His nostrils, and fire out of His mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it". The apparent anger of Leviathan is actually God's anger. God totally controls him. LXX "His breath is as live coals, and a flame goes out of his mouth". All this is the language of the cherubim. Leviathan, the great wild beast, was under God's control and Judah's whole experience with Babylon would result finally in the glory of Yahweh being revealed through this beast. The tragedy is that Babylon didn't fall as prophesied, at the time (it will in the last days, as Rev. 18 makes clear). The Jews preferred to remain in Babylon, and those who returned didn't act as they ought to have done. But it was the Divine intention that His glory be revealed through the fall of Babylon leading to Judah's exit from exile.

Job 41:22 There is strength in his neck. Terror dances before him- It could be argued that a crocodile has no neck, being more like a lizard, and so this would confirm that in view is a mythical creature of evil, based upon the crocodile, not a literal crocodile.

Or it can be argued that this would be true of the crocodile, whose neck is about the same diameter as its head. AV "Sorrow is turned into joy before him". "Sorrow" or "terror" is also translated "fear". This creature which would strike fear into any man actually turns fear into joy. Through this awful, terrifying beast under God's control, fear of judgment is turned into joy in God's presence. "And sorrow is turned into joy before him" subverts the common idea that a beast of evil turns joy to sorrow. He may appear terrible, but he doesn't function as feared.

Job 41:23 The flakes of his flesh are joined together. They are firm on him. They can't be moved- The body of the crocodile is so compacted together that all its parts must move together, and the crocodile therefore has difficulty in turning. This theme is continued in the reference to him having a stone firm heart (:24). This is all similar language to that of the cherubim, who turned not as they went (Ez. 10:11). See on :19,20. God's movement is likewise multi factorial, all touched by it are part of the wider plan to manifest His saving glory, and it moves one way- towards human salvation.

Job 41:24 His heart is as firm as a stone, yes, firm as the lower millstone- See on :23, which uses the same word for "firm".

Job 41:25 When he raises himself up, the mighty are afraid. They retreat before his thrashing- Likewise Job and all men must retreat before God's raising up of Himself in manifestation, as was happening in the ongoing theophany. Job has already perceived this in theory, saying that he can do nothing when God raises Himself up (s.w. Job 31:23). But now what he had heard by the ear, known in theory, his eye was seeing (Job 42:5). "Retreat" is AV "they purify themselves"; and the friends would soon have to do this, through Job's agency in offering for them as he had once offered for the purifying of his children. "Thrashing" is the word for 'destruction', commonly used of the exiles' destruction (Is. 51:19 etc.). The exiles needed to see in that the raising up of God as leviathan, and to purify themselves in repentance.

Job 41:26 If one attacks him with the sword, it can't prevail; nor the spear, the dart, nor the pointed shaft- No weapon formed could prosper against Leviathan, just as no weapon formed against Israel would (Is. 54:17)- if they were on the side of God's manifestation, if this theophany was for and not against them.

Job 41:27 He counts iron as straw; and brass as rotten wood- All human strength was as nothing before leviathan; and Job grasps this lesson with both hands in the next chapter. See on :26. All human weapons would have no effect upon leviathan; they would be counted as effective as throwing straw at him. What seems invincible to man, however, is totally under God's control and of His creation. That's the point.

Job 41:28 The arrow can't make him flee. Sling stones are like chaff to him- Or "slingers". All the military strength and device of Gentile nations against Babylon would come to nothing. And yet Judah trusted desperately in Egypt and other Gentile nations to save them from Babylon. But God as the creator of this beast would remove it in due time. See on :26.

Zophar claims that Job was going to flee from the arrow of Divine judgment, but would all the same be struck through by it (Job 20:24,25). God's response was that

His creatures didn't flee from His arrows (s.w. Job 41:28). Neither did Job flee from God; he uses the same term to describe how the wicked vainly tried to flee from God (Job 27:22). He was in harmony with the natural creation. Zophar was wrong. Job didn't flee from God but quite the opposite- he keeps begging God to reveal Himself, and He does so at the end of the book.

Job 41:29 Clubs are counted as stubble. He laughs at the rushing of the javelin- This is all the language of Divine judgment (Nah. 3:3; Lam. 3:13). The horse doesn't fear that (Job 39:23), just as Leviathan doesn't (Job 41:29). He is as he is, not always wise, but free from the fear of judgment, not fearing the battle as men fear it. And this was perhaps how God wants His people to be, and this was in fact how Job was. See on :26. God is speaking and showing all this to Job out of the whirlwind of Divine judgment. Leviathan is closer to God than Job, for he is not afraid of such judgment. The allusion is to how Baal was thought to have defeated Leviathan with a club. God is clearly alluding to the mythology Job apparently believed in, and deconstructing it. God is Almighty. Leviathan is made by Him and therefore of no real power and certainly no radical factor in Job's sufferings. Leviathan, like Behemoth, is being deconstructed.

Job 41:30 His undersides are like sharp potsherds, leaving a trail in the mud like a threshing sledge- "His belly is covered with jagged scales"—a thing which is true of the crocodile, but scarcely of any other beast. LXX appears to more pointedly refer to Babylon, the 'golden city': "His lair is formed of sharp points; and all the gold of the sea under him is an immense quantity of clay". But the idea is that Leviathan has spikey scales that leave a mark on the mud when he lays on it, as if a threshing instrument or plough with sharp teeth had been driven over it.

Job 41:31 He makes the deep to boil like a pot. He makes the sea like a pot of ointment- Referring to how the path of the crocodile through water causes an impression of boiling water. The sea / water was seen as the habitation of evil, radical evil out of God's control. But Leviathan / the manifestation of God could make it boil, and yet also make it as placidly calm as a pot of ointment when he is finished. And that was what was about to happen to Job.

"Boil" is the word used of Job's afflictions in Job 30:27 AV "My bowels boiled". This is the word used for the boiling of the exiles under Divine judgment (Ez. 24:5). God is able to make things boil in the natural creation and then make them perfectly still (Job 41:31 s.w.); and the message was that the days of affliction, the intense boiling of Job and later the exiles, could be made still in a moment.

Job 41:32 He makes a path shine after him. One would think the deep had white hair- Referring to the white path of spray left by the crocodile as it passes through water. Job's experiences were of affliction set in his "path" (s.w. Job 19:8). And the Bedouins he curses in Job 30:1-12 were those who had abused him in that "path" (Job 30:13). So it seems he has in view the Sabeans who had abused him in the prologue, and yet this section also has clear reference to the friends. Yet that "path" of affliction which God had given Job was the path of wisdom and relationship with Him which was indiscernible to the human eye (Job 28:7 cp. 28); the fact that the ultimate path is invisible to the secular, naked eye is a truth stamped upon the natural creation (Job 38:20), and yet after the affliction or trouble caused by the passing of Leviathan, perhaps symbolic of the huge grief in Job's life, the pattern for Israel's future suffering

at the hands of the beast... this path shines clearly (Job 41:32). And this was to be Job's experience at his restoration, as it could have been likewise for the exiles.

Job 41:33 On earth there is not his equal, that is made without fear- "That is made" has the idea of a made or created being- hence GNB "he is a creature that has no fear". He is a created being- created by God. LXX "There is nothing upon the earth like to him, formed to be sported with by my angels". Again, we see taught the utter supremacy of God over the greatest of the wild beasts, Babylon.

Job 41:34 He sees everything that is high. He is king over all the sons of pride- The idea may be that the crocodile is king over all the animals, even the proud lions- representative of Babylon, in the context of the exiles. LXX "He is king of all that are in the waters", speaking of Babylon's supremacy over the nations. We note that throughout God's responses to Job, He rarely speaks of man. He speaks of His creation on earth and of the cosmos, but says little or nothing about man. Job's idea was that man must be at the centre of God's creation, and issues of human suffering must therefore be central to the cosmos. God's response is that this is laughably just not the case. And Job sees the point.

"He sees..." could imply that he has his eyes on Job as a proud man and is coming after him... And so this is God's final statement before Job finally repents properly. The idea seems to be that all proud people are terrified of him. And Job was one of them; he was cowering in fear before God's description of leviathan. Pride was Job's essential problem, indeed it is the root of all sin. This the punchline, the end stress, of God's final speech to Job. Humility is of the essence, and is critically important for true repentance.

JOB CHAPTER 42

Job 42:1 Then Job answered Yahweh- Job finally answers, and we are all ears. For God has said earlier that He doesn't accept Job's silence. He wants an answer of sorts, although there is no legitimate one. It has been observed that the Covenant name of Yahweh is not used in the speeches of Job and the friends. Instead they speak of God as *El* (power) or *Shaddai* (the fruitful one). This shows how they perceived God as the awesome power of the universe, the one who granted their physical blessings in response to their obedience to Him. 'God' was like a profitable insurance policy. But *Yahweh* is fundamentally a saviour-God, one who manifests Himself in men for their salvation, and is supremely manifested in the Son. Significantly, we are told in chapter 42 that Job finally spoke to *Yahweh*; it was to Him that he said: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee" (:5). He came to understand God's Name, His personality, in far greater fullness. He came to appreciate far more the extent of God's manifestation in the true friend which he looked forward to. Our sufferings and traumas have a like effect, if we respond as Job did. Note that both Jacob and Samson, in their time of spiritual maturity, also reached a higher appreciation of the names of God. Reflect likewise how Abraham told Isaac that "Elohim yir'eh", the elohim would provide the sacrifice; but after the wonder of the ram being provided, he named the place "Yahweh yir'eh" (Gen. 22:14). The experience of this foreshadowing of the cross led him to know the Yahweh Name more fully; and for this reason it can be shown that the cross was the supreme means of that Name being declared to men.

Job 42:2 I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be restrained-

The connection between God's utter sovereignty ["You can do all things"] and Job's repentance is because he rejects the idea that there can be anything somehow to blame for his sins and his sufferings. It's God and Job, with no other factor or entity present. It's why despite all the similarities between the epilogue and the prologue, the Satan figure of the prologue is distinctly absent in the epilogue. See on Job 40:17.

This confession perhaps implies that earlier, Job had considered the continuation of his sufferings as being because God was somehow limited; unable to stop his suffering. He thought the forces of evil, symbolized in his own mind by Behemoth and Leviathan, were beyond God to control. Now, after God's speeches about them, Job sees God as perfectly able to control them. He thought God was a bad God, because he considered God unable to on one hand show love to him, and on the other make his life a misery. Or that He as the righteous God was unable to justify a sinner like him. God's purpose to save man at best was restrained by human failure and sinfulness. Our judgment day experience will teach us the same; God can do all things, and that includes saving even me.

Job has said this already in Job 10:13 LXX: "Having these things in thyself, I know that thou canst do all things; for nothing is impossible with thee". Job at the end repeats these words, but really understanding and meaning them as a result of his sufferings, turning theoretical knowledge into experience (:5). In Mt. 19:26 the Lord explains the irrelevance of riches and human power to salvation and entering the Kingdom, saying that "with God all things are possible"- without money. This is almost quoting Job 42:2, where Job comes to the conclusion that all human strength is meaningless: "I know that You can do everything". It may be that Jesus is even implying that through the tribulation of his life he had come to the same conclusion as Job.

I have pointed out that Job all through rejects the ideas promoted by the friends, the view of traditional wisdom (especially emphasized by Bildad, Job 8:8–10), that various supernatural 'Satan' monsters and figures were responsible for his experiences. Job began by saying that we receive both good and evil from God's hand (Job 2:10 cp. Is. 45:5–7). And he ends saying the same – that the Lord brought the trouble upon him (Job 42:11). He repeatedly sees God as the source of all his affliction. Hence God can say that Job has spoken about Him that which is right (Job 42:8). But Job came to realize the massive practical extent of what he had previously known in theory, what he had "by the hearing of the ear". Now his eye saw / perceived that truly no plan of God can be thwarted, by any of the various 'Satan' monsters imagined by men (Job 42:2). We too may say that we believe in the omnipotence of God; but such a belief requires us to throw out all beliefs in supernatural Satan figures. And that's not a merely intellectual exercise; to see the tragedies and cruelties of our lives as being ultimately from God and under His control is something which shakes us to the core. See on Job 41:1.

AV "That no thought can be withholden from thee". Perhaps now Job realizes that his sins had indeed largely been in his thoughts, and that he was justly being brought to judgment for them. This is a chilling challenge to religious folks who appear not to sin much in their actions but do so abundantly in their minds.

Job 42:3 You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' - Job is here

quoting from God's accusation against him in Job 38:2 LXX (see note there), and accepting it as true. His many words had darkened or hid the word / counsel of God.

Therefore I have uttered that which I did not understand- Job here directly engages with God's words in Job 38:18, using the same words as when God asked him if he could 'utter' his 'understanding' of the breadth of the earth. Those amongst the exiles who repented would be able to 'utter the understanding' once they perceived God's grace (s.w. Is. 40:21; Jer. 9:12). Job had initially been sure that he could "understand" what God was doing (Job 6:30), but progressively came to realize that he could not "understand" God's ways (Job 9:11; 23:8). Now he realizes that even that confession that he didn't "understand" was inadequate, for if he really meant it, he would have not spoken as he had. It was through the work of the suffering servant that God's people would come to understand that which they had not understood (Is. 52:15 s.w.). For in the death and work of the Lord Jesus there was a like theophany going on to that which Job was experiencing, and our response to it should be as his.

Things too wonderful for me, which I didn't know- Job had earlier admitted that God's ways were too wonderful for him (s.w. Job 9:10), but now that theoretical knowledge of his own humanity was felt in reality (:5).

'Taking counsel in our own soul' is typical depressive human response (Ps. 13:2). We think our best and only counsellor is ourselves, in our self talk, we ask ourselves the questions and get often wrong answers. The spiritual mind takes counsel in God; David speaks in Ps. 119:24 of God's words being his counsellor, and describes God's words as His "counsel". If those words are in our hearts, then that will be the response we get. Otherwise we are mired within ourselves, bogged down with endless self talk and introspection which leads to no good answer, and often to very contorted and wrong self advice. "There are many advices [Heb.] in a man's heart; but the counsel of Yahweh shall stand" (Prov. 19:21). Job 18:7 says that a man's "own counsel [s.w.] shall cast him down". God's comment on Job is that he had "darkened [God's] counsel by words without knowledge" (Job 38:2). Job did this by doing what David is here tempted to do, taking counsel in his own soul. Job had refused the "counsel" of the friends, which was wrong; but had turned into himself for counsel and thus had "darkened" or obscured the light of God's counsel. Job agrees with this when he confesses that indeed he has hidden, or hidden himself, from [God's] counsel, and he was without knowledge. That is my paraphrase of the difficult Hebrew of Job 42:3: "Who is / how is he that hides counsel without knowledge. Therefore have I uttered that I understood not".

Job 42:4 You said, 'Listen, now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you will answer Me' - In his brief speech, Job engages directly with God's words, here in Job 38:3; 40:7. His repentance and restoration were a direct result of his careful response to God's word, and this too was to be the path of Israel, if they would share in his restoration. God twice told Job that He was going to demand of him, and receive an answer (Job 38:3; 40:7). I suggest that God puts the words of repentance to Job, and Job then meekly repeats them. The same was intended to be true of the exiles' repentance (Hos. 14:2). This is what Elihu, on God's behalf, had several times offered Job- a formula of words he could say for repentance.

There appears to be a purposeful ambiguity in the text. GNB: "You told me to listen while you spoke and to try to answer your questions"; whereas LXX "But hear me, O Lord, that I also may speak: and I will ask thee, and do thou teach me". The LXX seems more likely, as the other readings then have little logical flow of connection with the next verse.

We could argue that these are God's words. He is asking for a greater declaration of sin from Job. And Job makes it in :5 albeit so briefly. And God is thrilled with it. We marvel at how God respectfully pauses twice for Job to have his say in response (Job 40:2; 42:4). Job was getting what he had fantasized about- a day in court with God, dialogue with the Almighty. But like Moses wanting to see God's face, he comes to see how totally inappropriate was his desire.

Job 42:5 I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You- This must be connected with Job 19:27, where Job reveals that his perception of the Kingdom is that *then* he would see God with his own eye. But by now he has come to the realization that what the depth of Divine understanding which he thought would only be possible in the Kingdom, was in fact possible *here and now*. This same progressive, awesome realization that *so much* is possible here and now is something which both individually and collectively we must go through. He had thought this would only be at the resurrection (19:26), seeing a full relationship with God was, he felt, impossible in this life (28:12,20); but he came to see that even in this life, with the joy of a good conscience, the principle is even now realizable. He exalted that now, his eye saw God. It wasn't all abstractly reserved for the Kingdom.

Job finally recognized that he had only heard of God "by the hearing of the ear". There had been no real spiritual vision of God, no real *personal understanding*- just hearing in the ear. Note how the Queen of Sheba alludes to Job's words- she had heard in the ear, but her spirit failed when she saw with her eyes. In the theological context in which Job was, the idea of seeing God for oneself was a huge paradigm jump. Centuries later, righteous Isaiah was sure he would die because he thought he had seen Yahweh (Is. 6:5). Job reached the same spiritual peak of ambition and closeness to the Almighty which Moses did when he asked to be shown God's glory, with the apparent implication that he wanted to see Yahweh's face (Ex. 33:18,20). This peak of ambition which characterized Job's maturity was partly due to the way in which God recounted His greatness before Job (e.g. ch. 38). And yet (as the above chart makes clear) an appreciation of the physical greatness of God was something which had consistently featured in Job's words. Yet he had to be taught that what he thought he knew and appreciated so well, in fact he didn't.

"The hearing of the ear" could mean that he had been merely taught theory about God by others- and the opinion of the elders has been a major issue for Job and the friends. But now, he sees with his own eye. The Hebrew is similar to the words of the Queen of Sheba, possibly from an area near to the land of Uz, when she says she had heard reports of Solomon's wisdom but now she had seen with her own eyes (1 Kings 10:1).

Job 42:6 Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes- "Abhor" is the word commonly used for spiritual rejection or condemnation, used in 1 Sam. 16:1 of how God "rejected" Saul. Job condemned himself; he recognized he as a sinful man of himself should be condemned. Perhaps God's imputed righteousness, whereby He counted Job as "perfect", had led Job over time to forget his own humanity and sin. And we who are justified in Christ can take a warning from this. Job had recognized that his flesh was 'abhorrent' (s.w. Job 7:5); but he had to stop making that an excuse for not perceiving that he himself was personally sinful. Whatever we view we take of our own nature, we must ever remember this.

We could translate: "I repent on dust and ashes", referring to how he, dust and ashes, was located on the dust and ashes of the village 'gehenna' / rubbish tip (Job 2:8). Earlier he had complained that God had unjustly made him as dust and ashes: "He has cast me into the mire. I have become like dust and ashes [LXX "my portion is in dust and ashes"]" (Job 30:19). Now he recognizes that this is just and right; all his sufferings, including the loss of his ten children, ending up in and on "dust and ashes", were all just. This is what sin leads to, no matter if it were previous sins of youth or what men would consider lesser sins. His arguments had come to a climax in Job 31 when he presented his case for his utter innocence, and therefore God's misjudgment. Earlier he had lamented his loss of honour, and we must remember that their society was built around shame and honour. To be shamed as Job was, with children and elders alike mocking him, was a fate worse than death. He desperately wanted his honour back, and so pitted himself against God in court- at least in his mind. And now he willingly takes the lowest shame. But even so, one would rather expect a greater statement of remorse. He has sought to resolve everything by his own innocence rather than God's grace. But we don't quite find him clearly stating that. After all, we have had chapter after chapter of his self justification; and now we have a few sentences agreeing with God, and a few words of repentance. The remorse factor seems somewhat lacking. But God eagerly accepts it as 'enough'. And even the words of repentance, "[I] repent in dust and ashes" fail to use the standard word for "repent" in a moral sense. The word Job uses occurs six times in Job, and is always rendered 'comfort'. It is found in :11, where his family "comfort" him. It can indeed mean to repent because of its core meaning of 'to sigh'. A comforter sighs alongside the comforted. But it is not as crisp a statement of repentance as we would ideally like to see. At best, Job is saying that he sighs in his dust and ashes because of his behaviour. LXX "I esteem myself dust and ashes", just as Abraham did, saying those words without any context of personal repentance (Gen. 18:27); Rashi "I reject my life". He does indeed declare God right, but no word for "sin" crosses his lips. There is no specific confession, no apology to God, unlike in the repentance of David. "I abhor myself" likewise is vague as to its intention; LXX "therefore I consider myself worthless and waste away". We could take this as Job accepting his condemnation, assuming he was going to be slain by God, and saying what he imagined would be his last words before death. You can hate yourself and accept death, without being specifically repentant of your sins. "Abhor" is the word used of despising God (Num. 11:20; 1 Sam. 8:7; 10:19 'rejecting' Yahweh as king; 1 Sam. 15:26 rejecting God's word; 2 Kings 17:15; Ps. 118:22; Is. 5:24; 30:12; Jer. 6:19). Job had despised God; but here he says he despises himself. There is no word of repentance for the horrible things he had said about God, chapter after chapter of them, when he had despised God. Job has earlier said that he hates / abhors his life and his suffering flesh (Job 7:5,16; 9:21 s.w.). And we could argue that he simply repeats that now at this point. What we look for in repentance is a specific statement of what has been done wrong, and a specific recanting of it, with remorse and begging for forgiveness. There is none of that here. But God took what Job said as repentance. God twice repeats that Job has spoken what was right about Him (:7,8). This gives the impression that He was thrilled with Job's few words. Likewise, just as God boasted about Job being His "servant" to the Satan (Job 1:8; 2:3), now in the prologue God again boasts to Eliphaz of Job as His "servant" (four times in two verses). God had presented Job to Himself as His servant, and He is thrilled to as it were have him back as His servant. The extravagant blessings of Job which conclude the book [making the wealthiest man twice as wealthy, a sudden, spectacular restoration] all appear to be likewise triggered

by these few words of not very high quality repentance. The unclarity of the Hebrew words used in the 'statement of repentance' is surely intentional; it reflects how the quality of that repentance was unclear.

The epilogue and prologue to Job are evidently related. Job begins sitting in dust and ashes and ends repenting in dust and ashes (Job 2:8; 42:6). The silence of the friends at the opening of the book is matched by the silence after God has finally spoken (Job 40:4). Job intercedes for his children (Job 1:5) and ends up interceding for his friends. Job begins with the description of being the Lord's servant; and the book concludes on the same note (Job 42:7,8). The question of course is: 'So what's the equivalent of the 'Satan' figure in the epilogue?'. The omission is intended and obvious. Ultimately the answer is the essence of the whole book: the 'Satan', the adversary, is none other than God Himself, in His love.

LXX "I have counted myself vile, and have fainted: and I esteem myself dust and ashes". This sounds as if Job now accepts in reality the truth of the mortality and frailty of man, whereas previously (and he has had much to say about it in his speeches) he was only mouthing the theory of it. If we go with the LXX, God's arguments were so powerful that it seems Job lost consciousness. We could translate "Therefore I recant, and change my mind regarding the human condition (dust and ashes)". Or we could make the obvious connection that Job has been sitting on the ash heap all this time since Job 2:8, complaining that he is there unfairly. This would be particularly evident if in fact the book of Job was intended as a drama production. Now he recognizes that he is in the right place, despite so many chapters protesting that he is unfairly there. The rabbis teach that a man should carry two stones in his pocket. On one should be inscribed, "I am but dust and ashes". On the other, "For my sake was the world created". And he should use each stone as he needs it.

"Wherefore I loathe my words and repent" (Job 42:6 RVmg.). Job fell into the trap of thinking that his terrible situation somehow allowed him to speak whatever words came into his head. Job felt he hadn't been 'fed' and so he was entitled to "bray" and "low" over his misfortune (Job 6:5). Because of the weight of his sufferings, he thereby justified the fact that "Therefore have my words been rash (Job 6:3). Likewise "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit" (Job 7:11). "I will give free course to my complaint. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 10:1 RV). Zophar criticizes Job being "full of talk" and speaking "the multitude of words", "for thou sayest, my doctrine is pure" (Job 11:1-4)- as if Job felt that because he held true doctrine he was justified in pouring out words as he did. "Why should I not be impatient?" (Job 21:4 RV). "Today is my complaint bitter. My stroke is heavier than my groaning" (Job 23:2)- i.e. his complaining was due to his sufferings. "If I hold my peace, I shall give up the spirit" (Job 13:19 RVmg.). Job felt that the situation he was in *forced* him to use the words he did, and certainly justified it [we may well have used this reasoning ourselves when justifying the use of bad language]. But in the end, Elihu on God's behalf rebuked him for his wrong words. And Job himself recognized: "I am vile. I will lay mine hand upon my mouth" in regret of his words (Job 40:4). "Wherefore I loathe my words and repent" (Job 42:6 RVmg.). He realized his mistake: he had thought that the situation justified his words. Now he hung his head and admitted that there was no justification for speaking in the way he had. Especially in the matter of the tongue, we can so easily justify ourselves; 'I only said / did it [or didn't do it] because...'. And it is all so child-like. Once we leave off *all* attempts at self-justification, we will face up to our sins.

But the quality of Job's repentance isn't great. The speeches about Behemoth and Leviathan have apparently elicited it. But he makes no specific statement of repentance nor specific retraction of his blasphemy, as we would imagine a verbose person like Job would've done. For he answers every word of the friends with almost two words from himself. It seems he is more persuaded and awed by God's undoubted greatness than he is by his moral smallness.

Job 42:7 It was so, that after Yahweh had spoken these words to Job, Yahweh said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against you, and against your two friends-

We would expect the text to say that after *Job* had spoken these words, God spoke to the friends. For it is Job not Yahweh who has been speaking in the last six verses. It's as if God skipped over Job's words. He hates to see man grovelling before Him in the way Job did- necessary as it was, and indeed it was the intended outcome of Yahweh's words. But He wanted eagerly to move on, and perhaps this is why there is this strange comment- as if He had skated on past the highly significant words of Job's repentance. Or we can say that "these words" highlights how short they were, in response to the greatness of the salvation and restoration God would now show. God as it were allows chapters of ranting against Him to be undone by just a brief few sentences. This points up how sensitive He is to humble repentance.

Job spoke far worse about God than did the friends. Much of what they said was right. He had not asked them to repent; but their silence is seen as a sin worthy of instant destruction, requiring Job's immediate intercession. Job's repentance was intended to elicit their repentance; when they didn't repent, they were held intensely guilty. We have a similar situation in Mt. 21:32 when the Lord condemns the Jewish leadership for not repenting after they had been set an example by the repentance of prostitutes and tax collectors: "John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and afterwards when you saw it, you still did not repent and believe him". If we see others convicted of sin and repenting, then we are held accountable if we refuse to repent of *our* sins. The Lord seems to use the repentance of the Ninevites likewise.

Job feels God's wrath kindled against him (Job 19:11). The innocent Job experienced the judgments of God's people, against whom God's wrath was kindled (Dt. 11:17; 2 Kings 23:26). Significantly, we find Elihu's wrath kindled against both Job and the friends (Job 32:2,3), but the wrath of God was kindled only against the friends (Job 42:7). Elihu is therefore not fully reflecting God's position about Job. I have repeatedly demonstrated that the innocent Job was suffering the judgment for the sins of God's people. In the end, this came to full term in the salvation of the friends on account of Job's intercession. God's wrath was not personally against Job, it was against the friends. But Job suffered God's wrath against him, because he was to be the saviour of the friends by offering sacrifice for them and praying for them. This looks forward to the work of the Lord Jesus, the suffering servant based upon Job; experiencing the judgment for our sins, and through the representative nature of His sacrifice, being able to save us. For other examples, see on Job 20:15,16; 24:9.

For you have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job has- "Of Me" is literally "to Me". What is in view is the statement of repentance made by Job to God. Not the speeches or theological positions expressed in them. Getting your theology wrong is surely not a moral 'sin'. Job's words of repentance were words all

about himself; not about God. The quality of that repentance was not great, but God took it as expressing the ultimate truth about Himself. Repentance is to confess that God is right; the Greek word *homologeō* translated "confession" means "to say the same thing as" or "to agree with" God. David's repentance was a statement that God is justified in His words and blameless in His judgments (Ps. 51:4). Refusal to confess our sins is to make God a liar (1 Jn. 1:10); to confess sin is therefore to say that God is truthful. This is why those who repented are described as 'justifying God', declaring Him right or just (Lk. 7:29). Lam. 1:18 brings together the ideas: "Yahweh is righteous; for I have rebelled against His commandment". To repent is to submit to the rightness or 'righteousness' of God (Rom. 10:3). Pharaoh's brief repentance expressed this: "I have sinned; Yahweh is righteous, and I and my people are wicked" (Ex. 9:27). Repentance is therefore a declaration of God's glory, accepting that He indeed is true: "Achan, My son, please give glory to Yahweh the God of Israel, and make confession to Him" (Josh. 7:19).

LXX "You have sinned". There is reason to think that Eliphaz, the leader of the friends, may have been the specific individual referred to as 'satan' in the prologue. God singles him out for especial condemnation at the end. After one of Eliphaz's speeches, Job responds with what appears to be a comment upon him, rather than God: "He hath made me weary: thou hast made desolate all my company. And thou hast filled me with wrinkles... he teareth me in his wrath, who hateth me (surely Job speaks here about Eliphaz, not God): he gnasheth upon me... mine enemy (satan) sharpeneth his eyes upon me. They (the astonished friends?) have gaped upon me with their mouth, they have smitten me... they have gathered themselves together (as the friends did to Job) against me" (Job 16:9-11). Eliphaz was a Temanite, from where Job's afflictors came (Job 6:19). See on Job 1:6.

Eliphaz in Job 22:3 was propelled by his obsession against Job to say things about God which are wildly untrue, and is specifically rebuked above the other friends for doing this at the end (Job 42:7). I would surmise that his words of Job 22:3 are specifically in view: "Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that you are righteous? Or does it benefit Him, that you make your ways perfect?". For this is a complete denial of all that God reveals Himself to be. Job rightly understood that God as human creator has a tender desire to the work of His hands (see on Job 14:15). But Eliphaz speaks as if God has no interest nor feeling towards those who are righteous, so far above caring is He. And this could not be a more serious misrepresentation of the God who is thrilled by every move a man makes towards Him.

Job appeals for 'witnesses' (Job 9:33-35; 16:18-22; 19:20-27), an advocate in Heaven (Job 9:33), denies his guilt and demands a legal list of his sins (Job 13:19), he wishes for God to come to trial (Job 9:3), and thus Job is described as a man who has taken out a 'case' with God (Job 23:4; 40:2). Job 29-31 is effectively Job's declaration of legal innocence and an appeal to God to hear his case more sympathetically (Job 31:35). And of course God pronounces a final legal verdict at the very end (Job 42:7), in response to Job's earlier plea: "Sleeplessly I wait for His reply" (Job 16:22). It's as if the whole experience of Job was [at least partly] in order to test out the Canaanite theories of 'Satan', suffering and evil in the court of Heaven; and also the various theories which arose to explain Judah's captivity in Babylon. The friends represent the traditional views of evil, and often make reference to the myths of their day about 'Satan' figures. They speak as if *they* are the final court – Eliphaz speaks of how the judges and elders of their day, the "holy ones", had concluded Job was guilty, and that they, the friends, were right: "To which of the holy ones will you appeal [legal language]?... we have [legally] examined this, and it [Job's guilt] is true"

(Job 5:1,27). This is of great comfort to those who feel misjudged by man – above them in Heaven the ultimate Heavenly court is considering our case, and that is all that matters.

Although Job did not speak wrongly about God (42:7;2:10) and kept patiently speaking the word of God despite the mockery it brought from the friends (James 5:10,11), this does not mean that Job or all that he said was blameless. The friends are not reprimanded for speaking wrongly about Job, but about God. Thus there was probably a fair degree of truth in their accusations concerning Job. Elihu also severely rebukes him, and unlike the three friends he is not rebuked for anything in the final analysis by God in Job 42; not to mention the accusation of 'darkening counsel without knowledge' (38:2) by the Lord Himself, backed up by four chapters of heavy reprimand of Job's reliance on human strength and wisdom. This led to Job retracting much of what he had said: "I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth... I will not answer... I will proceed no further... I uttered that I understood not... wherefore I abhor myself and repent" (Job 40:4,5; 42:3-6). This clearly establishes that much of Job's reasoning was faulty, although what he spoke before God was correct. Job was a prophet (Job 29:4 cp. Job 15:8;23:12; Prov.3:32; Amos 3:7; the secret of God being with him made Job a prophet) and it is in his role as such that he is commended in James 5:10,11- i.e. for the words concerning God which he spoke. The words for which God and Elihu rebuked him were therefore about other things. Elihu accused him of speaking "without knowledge" (Job 34:35), which Job admitted to doing (42:3).

The problem of reconciling the rebuke of Job's words with the statement that he has spoken what is right about God as opposed to the friends is the same as the frequent pronouncement that some kings of Judah walked blamelessly before God exactly as David did, when there is clear evidence in the record that this was not so. This may be because God imputes righteousness to a believer's whole life if his final acts are acceptable (cp. Ez.18:27,28). "Ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath" may refer to the response of the friends and Job to the rebukes of Elihu and the manifestation of God's power in the thunderstorm which must have been witnessed by the friends as well as by Job. Maybe they made some unrecorded response about God which was not right, whereas Job's supreme recognition of God's righteousness and humbling of himself was speaking that which was right about God. It has to be admitted that it is hard to understand all that Job says in the book about God as being "right", and he is specifically rebuked by God for his words.

Consider how Job shook his fist at God through many of his speeches- so much so that Elihu, on God's behalf, had to rebuke him at the end. Finally, Yahweh asks Job to "declare thou unto me" (Job 40:7; 42:4): to make a declaration. And Job does, in a matchless humility: "...therefore have I uttered that I understood not...I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes". And Yahweh immediately comments to the unrepentant friends: "Ye have not spoken of ['unto'] me the thing that is right [Heb. 'prepared'], as my servant Job hath" (42:7). Evidently Job hadn't spoken "right" earlier; but it's as if God seizes upon this one recognition of failure and is so pleased with it. He was looking for repentance in Job, and triumphantly seizes upon it once it is stuttered out by him. And so with our preaching of the Gospel and in our seeking to win back brethren who go astray [and I do hope we all make some personal effort to do this...]: *seek* for response.

As an example of how Job had indeed spoken wrongly about God, consider Job 19:6: "know now that God has subverted me". "Subverted" translates a Hebrew word

which clearly means to be perverse or wicked with another person. Elihu sternly rebukes Job for this statement, saying that God will *not* "pervert judgment" (Job 34:12). Again we marvel at the grace of how God now says that Job has spoken what was right about Him (Job 42:7). Whilst that statement may refer simply to Job's expression of total repentance, we would still expect it to be qualified by some clause to the effect that "although earlier Job accused me of many awful things". There is no such clause in Job 42:7. The absence of it, bearing in mind Job's wrong statements about God which Elihu has reminded us of, is surely noticeable and intended to be noticed. We are left marvelling at the extent of grace and imputed righteousness, through faith by grace.

The words of God and Elihu brought Job to a shuddering spiritual climax. From his heart he cried: "I am vile... I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes... I am melted" (42:6 LXX). It was concerning this matchless confession that God could say that Job had "spoken of me the thing which is right(eousness)". God swept over the times when Job shook his fist at God, imputing righteousness to him on behalf of this confession. Thus the Spirit later speaks of the long-enduring patience of Job (James 5:11); God was able to look on his good side rather than the bad side, due to Job's confession of that bad side. To confess our sinfulness properly is to declare, by implication, righteous things about God.

LXX "Thou hast sinned, and thy two friends: for ye have not said anything true before me, as my servant Job". The speeches of Elihu and possibly God too were aimed at the friends as well as Job. And they had not said anything in response. Whereas Job did. Hence we can translate "You have not spoken *to* Me [LXX "before Me"] what is right, as My servant Job has". To speak "*to*" is how the Hebrew is consistently translated (Job 2:13; 4:2, 12; 13:3; 40:27; 42:9).

The satan had suggested Job would curse God. He did. He was rebuked for it and repented. What he spoke right about God was to repent. Speaking right about God is not theology. It is repentance. God fires many questions at Job, e.g. Have you created the sea? Did you place the stars in the sky? Do you provide for the needs of the lionesses and the raven? The answer to them all was "no", or, "no, I do not understand", and accepting that all Job had spoken about God [right or wrong] was "words without knowledge". And that is seen by God finally as speaking rightly about Him. The Hebrew behind "spoken of Me" is literally 'spoken toward Me'. The idea is the *direction* of the speech and not necessarily the content. What God has in view is Job's confession of sin, spoken toward Him. LXX has "before Me". Satan had posited that Job would curse God to His face, i.e. before Him, in His presence. And God seems to be saying that only now, after Job's repentance, did Job speak right before God. All that Job had spoken wrong about God, he had taken back by placing his hand upon his mouth and admitting it was so wrong. For that is what placing the hand upon the mouth meant in a legal context. When God forgives, He removes the sin committed. What God saw was Job's words of repentance, and for God, they were words about Him. Spoken rightly. For to confess sin is to declare God right, as we learn from the words of Achan and the repentance speeches of David in the Bathsheba psalms.

Four times here, God calls Job "My servant". It is another example of His absolute joy that Job has 'come through' even if we might consider his few words of penitence as being of low quality.

Job 42:8 Now therefore, take to yourselves seven bulls and seven rams-

"Therefore" is because of their sin of not speaking right about God as Job had (:7). Job's speaking rightly was in repentance, it has no reference to the words he spoke in the dialogues. I suggest therefore that the sin of the friends doesn't refer to anything they said in the dialogue. I cannot believe God would condemn people for false theology alone. Their theology was simply that God punishes sinners and blesses the obedient; and that was not altogether wrong. Job himself, both in the epilogue and prologue, was an example of how God did more or less work like that at the time, at least with His blessings. And in any case, the theology of the friends and of Job was pretty much identical. 'What you know, I know also', as Job commented to them. God and Elihu have in any case made the point that man cannot in fact write or draw a totally correct theology, because God's ways are so far above man's ways. So having laboured that point, God is hardly going to now commend Job got getting it right and condemn the friends for getting it wrong. It's not that God condemns the friends for a false theology but justifies Job for having a true theology. He says that the friends have not spoken to Him [not 'about Him'] what was right as Job has; and surely He refers not to their previous speeches, but to the fact they had spoken nothing, they had not spoken repentance to Him. I suggest therefore that their sin, which required atonement, was a sin of omission- omitting to repent. To repent of what? Not of wrong theology. But of the same sins Job had been convicted of- "sins of youth" and the "sins" they glossed over beneath the generic statement 'Of course, we're all sinners, only God is perfect'. Their silence and refusal to repent was their "folly".

These were numbers and offerings understood to be necessary when approaching God (Num. 23:1,29). But this is a very large sin offering. Seven bulls and seven rams is the offering required for the sins of all Israel in Ez. 45:23. This is the massive consequence of wrong theology leading people into major sin; and the danger of using 'it logically follows...' to destroy another man.

And go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept him, that I not deal with you according to your folly- LXX "And my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will only accept him: for but his sake, I would have destroyed you, for ye have not spoken the truth against my servant Job". Job's earlier appeals to the friends to hear and listen may not be simply asking them to hear his words; they may be an appeal to them to hear and repent (Job 13:6). This desire for their repentance and understanding builds up within Job as the speeches progress. And again, this is preparing him for the Lord's final request to him- to pray for the friends and bring about their salvation. We note that the intercession of a third party alone cannot save; the friends had to offer "for yourselves" an offering. And yet in the final equation, Job 42:8 implies that the forgiveness of Job's friends was only because he prayed for them. What stronger motivation could we have to pray earnestly for each other? I have pointed out several times that Job suffered the judgment for sins which he had not committed, but the friends (and later Israel) had done. The endurance of suffering is always helped by appreciating that there is an element to it which is for the benefit and salvation of others. Hence Paul reasons in 2 Cor. 1 that whatever we suffer is so that we may minister salvation and comfort to others; perhaps he had Job in mind, as a pattern for us all.

For you have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as My servant Job has- Job had not always spoken right of God; for He does not mock at the "sudden" suffering of His people, such as Job experienced in the sudden loss of all he had, as Job had wrongly claimed in Job 9:23. So we marvel the more at God's final statement that Job had spoken rightly about Him. This Divine comment may indeed simply be upon

Job's statement of repentance. But all the same, we would expect God to clarify that was what He intended, and to offer some note that Job had indeed falsely accused Him. But God doesn't. He doesn't need to. He has completely justified Job by faith, clothing him with imputed righteousness. And His demonstration of His ways has in any case made the required point, and Job recognized that. See on :7.

LXX "I would have destroyed you, for you have not spoken the truth against my servant Job". This could imply they needed to have criticized Job for his words, but they didn't. Their words were so important that God wanted to kill the friends for saying them. Words and thoughts and positions really matter to God.

There are copious connections between Job and the suffering servant of Isaiah:
Is. 49:7 – The servant is abhorred = Job 19:19 s.w.

Is. 50:4 – The servant has the tongue of a teacher and sustains the weary = Job 4:3, 29:21 – Job instructed many,

strengthened the weak, and counselled others.

Is. 50:6 – The servant gave the cheek to those who would pull out his beard = Job 16:10 – Job's tormentors struck him on the cheek (s.w.)

Is. 50:6 – The servant did not hide his face from insult and spitting- Job 30:10 – Job is abhorred and spat upon (s.w.) Is. 50:8,9 – The servant has a vindicator to vouch for him, and he is confident he will be justified- Job 19:25; 13:18 Job has a redeemer to help him, and he is confident he will be vindicated.

Is. 52:14 – Many were appalled at the servant, whose appearance was distorted- Job 17:8 (cf. 21:5); 2:12 – The upright were appalled at (s.w.) Job's circumstances, and his appearance was almost unrecognizable to his friends.

Is. 53:3 – The servant was despised by men- Job 19:18 Job was despised even by children.

Is. 53:3 – The servant was rejected by men- Job 19:14 – Job was rejected (s.w.) by his loved ones.

Is. 53:3 – The servant was a man of suffering- Job 2:13 – Job's suffering (s.w.) was very great.

Is. 53:3,4 – The servant bore the diseases of the people- Job 2:7; 7:5 – Job was afflicted with disease.

Is. 53:4 – The people accounted the servant touched by God- Job 19:21 – Job said that the hand of God had touched (s.w.) him.

Is. 53:4 – The people accounted the servant struck by God- Job 16:10 – Job was struck (s.w.) on the cheek

Is. 53:6 – God afflicted the servant- Job 7:20 – Job felt he was the target of God's affliction (s.w.)

Is. 53:9 – The servant was not guilty of violence- Job 16:17 – Job claims there was no violence (s.w.) in his hands.

Is. 53:9 – There was no deceit in the mouth of the servant- Job 27:4; 31:5 – Job declares that his tongue will not utter deceit (s.w.), and his foot has not hurried to deceit (s.w.).

Is. 53:9 – The servant is innocent of wrongdoing- Job 1:8 Job is blameless.

Is. 53:10 – It was God's will to crush the servant- Job 6:9 Job's desire is that God would be willing to crush (s.w.) him. Is. 53:10 – After God crushed him, the servant would see his offspring and prolong his days- Job 42:13,16 After his suffering came to an end, Job had more children and lived to see four generations of his descendants.

Is. 53:12 – God reinstated the servant- Job 42:10 God restored Job's fortunes, giving him twice the riches he had before.

Is. 53:12 – The servant made intercession for transgressors- Job 42:8, 10 Job made intercession for his friends.

Job 42:9 So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did what Yahweh commanded them, and Yahweh accepted Job- LXX "And he pardoned their sin for the sake of Job". We have another example of sin being forgiven for the sake of third parties in Mk. 2:5; and there is huge implication in this for our own prayers and concern for others. Literally, "Yahweh accepted the face of Job", as in :8. In Job 22:26 the friends had insisted that Job could not lift up his face to God. Perhaps the Lord had this in view when He commended the man who like Job would not lift up his face to God (Lk. 18:13). But now the friends are only saved because Job was allowed to lift up his face to God for them. This was all a powerful way of teaching the friends that they were being saved by absolute grace. The man Job, whose face they were sure God would not accept, saved them by lifting up his face to God. It was the exiles whose faces God would not accept (s.w. Mal. 1:8,9). Job was treated like them although he was not like them; he was bearing the punishment of their sins in order to save them, just as he did for the friends, whose faces were likewise unacceptable to God.

The conversion of Job is a poignant lesson in interceding for others motivated by our own forgiveness; he prays for his friends, he mediates for them, after gratefully realizing that his own search for mediation with God in order to obtain forgiveness had somehow been answered, by grace (Job 42:6,8).

"Accepted" is literally 'accepted the face' of Job. The friends had mocked that if he confessed his sins, God would accept his face (Job 11:15; 22:26). There was complete appropriacy that finally this came true, to their salvation. We also see here God's disagreement with Elihu, who had argued that God didn't accept the faces of any man (Job 34:19). God was likewise prepared to accept the faces of the exiles, but their behaviour precluded this (s.w. Mal. 1:8,9).

Job 42:10 Yahweh turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends-

God's answers to Job are effectively saying: 'You in fact are not at all the centre of the universe. You and your pain and your complaints are nothing in the bigger picture of things'. But God says it in such a way that the spiritual man is not offended, doesn't stomp off muttering about 'cold comfort', but actually 'gets it'. God brings "rain on a land where no one lives, on the desert, which is empty of human life" (Job 38:26)- to make the point that man does not in fact hold the central place in the universe which he imagines he does. Job is restored when he prays for his friends / enemies (Job 42:10)- the proof that he had now moved out of his self centredness.

The language of Job's captivity being 'turned' is the very term used about the restoration of Judah from Babylon (Jer. 29:14; Ps. 126:4). The idiom of turning the captivity is clearly used to connect with the exiles returning from captivity when they repented. That was the intention, anyway. And they were to pray for those who had abused and misunderstood them, and they too could be forgiven.

Perhaps the Lord alludes to Job favourably at this point; for He taught that instead of doing evil to our enemies, "I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you" (Mt. 5:44 = Job 31:30). And this is what Job did- his prayer for the friends, who apparently were his actual persecutors, bringing many of the trials upon him, was finally answered.

James 5:11 comments: "Behold, we call them blessed that endured. You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the result that the Lord intended, how the

Lord is full of pity and is merciful". Job was a prophet (Job 29:4), one of those referred to in the preceding James 5:10: "Brothers, take for an example the suffering and patience of the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord". "Full of pity" is very intense in Greek- elsewhere it is translated "bowels", "inward affection". Thus the position of Job touched the Lord's heart in a way few other human experiences are said to in the word. The tremendous pity which God showed for Job would also be shown to the friends if they fully fellowshipped his example by their patient endurance. *Perhaps the "pity" in view is God's pity to the friends rather than Job.* James 5:13 *"Is any among you suffering? Let him pray"* uses the same word translated "affliction" in James 5:10 concerning Job's hardships. *The idea is that we should channel all our feelings and words through prayer, rather than indulge in the circular talking of Job and the friends which was the exact opposite of "Yes, yes... no, no".* James 5:16 continues the Job allusions: "Therefore, confess your sins to each other, and pray for each other, so that you may be healed. The supplication of a righteous man avails much in its working". Job confessed his sins and prayed for his friends, and they were forgiven.

Yahweh gave Job twice as much as he had before- This is the historical basis for the restoration prophecy of Is. 61:7 "Instead of your shame you shall have double". The idea may simply be that they inherit double what they ought to, such is God's grace to them and desire to load them with double blessing (Is. 40:2; Zech. 9:12), just as He gave double to Job as representative of restored Israel (Job 42:10). The revival of Job's fortunes is surely behind the Lord's promise to each of us in LK. 18:10, that whoever loses house, brothers, wife or children shall receive them many times over in this life, and salvation in the age to come. This means that the Lord understood Job's path as that of every man.

Job 42:11 Then came there to him all his brothers, and all his sisters, and all those who had been of his acquaintance before, and ate bread with him in his house. They comforted him, and consoled him concerning all the evil that Yahweh had brought on him. Each one also gave him a piece of money, and each one a ring of gold- The apparently hopeless situation of being rejected by all his family in Job 19:13-16 was reversed at the end when all his relatives again came to him (Job 42:11). The way they give him a piece of money and an earring appears to be some kind of gratitude for his salvation of them. They thus recognized their guilt and expressed deep gratitude that although they had rejected him, his sufferings and their rejection of him had led to their salvation. For we can deduce from the gift of a piece of money that they feel they have sinned, and he has saved them. So again, his restoration was the restoration of others, the friends and his family who had rejected him. He had born the sufferings for their sins, and thus becomes a type of the Lord Jesus, who suffered the judgments for sin in order to save those who had rejected and abused him.

LXX "and each one gave him a lamb, and four drachms' weight of gold, even of unstamped gold". The gift of a lamb would perhaps hint at their need for forgiveness; and they gave him the lamb to offer it for them as the family priest. Again, the sufferings of Job, like those of the suffering servant, were finally towards the salvation of others.

Job 42:12 So Yahweh blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning- The word *barak*, "blessed", occurs seven times in Job, just as it does in the account of creation. Through all the drama and with all the unresolved questions, this has been

God's path to a new creation for Job out of the chaos and darkness. The friends had all spoken of the restoration of Job's prosperity at this "latter end", if he accepted their false accusations of him (Job 5:18,26; 8:20,21; 11:13-19). That restoration now came about, but not on their terms. But rather, according to God's pure grace. It is this "latter end" which may be in view when James speaks of God's tender pity at "the end of the Lord" (James 5:11). The end of the Lord was the "end of Job". God and His child were intimately bound up in their destinies. That became evident in the end of Job, and it was a parade example to God's child Israel.

The friends had insisted that Job had lost his blessings because of disobedience, but his "latter end" (s.w.) would "increase" if he repented. Hence Job 8:7 "Though your beginning was small, yet your latter end would greatly increase". Job's "latter end" did increase (s.w. Job 42:12) and Bildad lived to see it, and thereby realized how wrong his judgment had been. Bildad's words may be a recognition of how Job arose to wealth from small beginnings, implying that his "latter end" would only really increase if he were repentant and Godly (:5,6). The fact Job's latter end did increase was therefore evidence that God accepted him as Godly. The same word is used of the "latter end" of Israel, which will likewise be "increased" and blessed; and could have been so for the exiles had they followed the path of Job (Is. 41:22; 46:10; Jer. 29:11; 31:17).

He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand female donkeys- This may be intended to demonstrate that his wealth was exactly double what he had before. For someone living on the edge of the wilderness, from where whirlwinds could blow in and Bedouins invade, these were huge numbers. It would have to follow that he had a huge retinue of servants able to care for them all.

We note that whilst Job's position is restored, there is no mention of the restoration of his body, which bore the marks of his illnesses. Possibly we are to understand the marks remained- as with the Lord.

Job 42:13 He had also seven sons and three daughters- The connection is with Is. 49:20 "The children of your bereavement shall yet say in your ears", or LXX "For thy sons whom thou hast lost shall say in thine ears". The idea of receiving back children who had been once slain is clearly alluded to in Job's experience, who is set up as representative of the Jews in exile. The language of the LXX suggests their resurrection of lost children. The idea is obviously that Job's situation was restored. But the loss of children is not capable of restoration in any meaningful sense. One wonders therefore if his slain children were resurrected. All his sufferings were the innocent suffering the judgment for others' sins. And those others were his friends and family He was not just suffering for himself. He, the innocent, had born their sins in his own body, just as the Lord did. Earlier he had offered sacrifice for his children, but this was not enough; a representative sufferer was needed. If indeed his experience of representative suffering led to the resurrection and salvation of his sinful children, we would have an even more powerful and detailed prefigurement of the work of the Lord Jesus, the ultimate suffering servant. See on Job 21:12.

I discussed on Job 1:1, there are parts of the story which appear crafted, e.g. the way Job loses his children but then has new children to replace them and apparently the loss is thus easily compensated; and the way after each loss, one person survives and comes to tell him. As holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel observed, "Tragedies do not cancel each other out as they succeed one another". It is not fiction, but it is a poem

[men don't talk amongst themselves in poetry] and story only based on fact; it could be called 'faction'.

From the human viewpoint, there is no happy ending here. Because the tragic loss of all ten children cannot be counterbalanced by having more children. Wiesel is so right: "Tragedies do not cancel each other out as they succeed one another". Everything in us cries out in protest at this 'happy ending' of Job. It is unrealistic- from our viewpoint. But not from God's. And so we are returned to the essential issue in Job- God's ways and narratives are not human centred. But He is of tender mercy, in His final end, and shall eternally save us. Hence the LXX conclusion to Job, "And Job died, an old man and full of days: and it is written that he will rise again with those whom the Lord raises up" (Job 42:17). There are so many interpretations of Job that we can conclude that the message is ambiguous. I suggest it is not at all ambiguous. The Lord's final answer is that we only see a fraction of His ways, we have no right to question let alone rail against His ways. If we trust Him, we shall be saved. But that means submitting our sense of right and wrong, fair endings, justice etc. beneath the reality of Him.

Job 42:14 He called the name of the first, Jemimah- "Day of Yah", looking forward to how Job's restoration was a foretaste of the coming day of Yahweh at the restoration of Israel.

And the name of the second, Keziah- Possibly 'scraped or peeled by Yah', perhaps referring to the scraping off of leprosy (s.w. Lev. 14:41), as Job had scraped his skin.

And the name of the third, Keren Happuch- "Keren" is 'horn' or 'hill', recalling how Job's horn had been in the dust (s.w. Job 16:15), perhaps referring to his own reproductive organ, and thereby recalling his ultimate degradation (representing Israel's, Lam. 2:3) now so gloriously restored. "Happuch" is 'colours', looking ahead to the final restoration of Israel decked with "fair colours" (s.w. Is. 54:11).

Job 42:15 In all the land were no women found so beautiful as the daughters of Job- Perhaps they looked ahead to the revival of the daughters of Zion, which was to become the most beautiful place in the land (Ps. 48:2 s.w.).

Their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers- Job gave his daughters an equal inheritance with his sons- something which would have been unusual in those times. Through all his sufferings, Job came to see the value and meaning of persons before God, be they male or female; he overcame the background culture, the thinking of his surrounding society, and openly showed to all the immense value he had come to place upon each and every human being, regardless of their gender.

Job 42:16 After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, to four generations- Seeing his sons may be another hint they were resurrected. Seeing Job lived after the time of Abraham, this was a great lifespan for the times.

Job 42:17 So Job died, being old and full of days- The very language used of the death of the patriarchs, as if to show that although Job was not directly their seed, he was in spirit.

I have suggested that the sufferings of Job are framed in language which connects with the sufferings of Hezekiah and also Israel, whom he epitomized, at the time of the Assyrian invasion. Hezekiah and Israel are both types of Christ (note how so

many of the curses on Israel for their disobedience came upon Christ on the cross). The suffering servant of Isaiah often concerns all three of them. Thus Job's sufferings point forward, via Hezekiah and Israel, to Christ. His final vindication when he prays for his friends, lives many years, and sees his sons (Job 42:8,16) thus connects with the prophecy of Christ making "intercession for the transgressors" who persecuted him- i.e. the Jews- and seeing his seed, prolonging his days, after his crucifixion and resurrection (Is.53:10,12- note how Is.53 is a chronological account of the events of Christ's death, resurrection and ascension). The description of Job as the son of man and a worm uses identical language as that used about Christ on the cross in Ps. 22:6. Thus the friends for whom Job prayed are equated with the Jews who persecuted Christ, for whom Christ made intercession both on the cross and after his ascension.

LXX adds: "And then he died at a very great age. And Job died, an old man and full of days: and it is written that he will rise again with those whom the Lord raises up. This man is described in the Syriac book as living in the land of Ausis, on the borders of Idumea and Arabia: and his name before was Jobab; and having taken an Arabian wife, he begot a son whose name was Ennon. And he himself was the son of his father Zare, one of the sons of Esau, and of his mother Bosorrha, so that he was the fifth from Abraam. And these were the kings who reigned in Edom, which country he also ruled over: first, Balac, the son of Beor, and the name of his city was Dennaba: but after Balac, Jobab, who is called Job, and after him Asom, who was governor out of the country of Thaeman: and after him Adad, the son of Barad, who destroyed Madiam in the plain of Moab; and the name of his city was Gethaim. And his friends who came to him were Eliphaz, of the children of Esau, king of the Thaemanites, Baldad sovereign the Sauchaeans, Sophar king of the Minaeans".