

A Guide To The Reader

Pastor recommends that to obtain maximum benefit from his comments you read in full from the Bible every reference whenever one appears. Otherwise the reading of the comments is simply a skimming over the surface. They are rather designed to make you stop and meditate and even look up further references as the Holy Spirit guides you. Do pray before you read that the Holy Spirit will be your Tutor and that the time you spend will be time spent with Him.

Job 11

11.1. Zophar seems more hot-tempered than the other two friends, though, as befits his status as, perhaps, a ruler, one of the dukes of Edom, there are some memorable expressions and a pleading element to his reasonings.

11.2. He is clearly cross. If truth is on your side, fierceness makes truth discourtesy. But right is not on Zophar's side, though, of course, he thinks it is. Everything that Job has said runs counter to all his God-fearing, but not saving, faith and would appear to go against the grain of his temperament. He does not, in fact, meet Job's arguments, though he claims to answer the multitude of his words. When he talks about justification, we have to look here beyond man to the Lord. If our heavenly Father justifies us then of what significance is man's opinion?

11.3. In this verse Zophar accuses Job of outright lies despite Job's own plea (6.28), "Now therefore be content, look upon me; for it is evident unto you if I lie," where it is clear that Job expects them to agree that he is not lying but open and honest. Zophar's trust in Job has been eroded and this bids fair to curtail their friendship, which, of course, is Satan's device. It is difficult to find an example of Job's mockery. But Zophar's perception may well have been that he was mocking the dearly held beliefs of all three friends in 6.14 when he accused them by their actions of forsaking the fear of the Almighty. Should he not be brought to book for that? Zophar seems to be emotional, "hot under the collar" as we would say, and that is not good for the evaluating of truth.

11.4. What galled this God-fearer in particular was Job's expression of the true evangelical faith, salvation through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ as foreshadowed in the burnt offering which Job implicitly trusted, under the Lord's direction, for the forgiveness of his sins. Job had not said that his doctrine is pure and that he was clean in God's sight in so many words, but that was Zophar's perception of Job's drift and he was not wrong. But the way Zophar expresses it, "My doctrine is pure," and, "I am clean in thine eyes" does make it sound arrogant and was doubtless part of his tactic.

11.5 What Job desired was the open acceptance of his person by a clear resolution of his affairs which would need no room for doubt but that God approved of him. And this is what ultimately happened. So we see here that, while Zophar was right from his own perspective, that is, in his own eyes, his system of thinking is here exposed to be fundamentally wrong. Concerning this very same attitude, the Lord Jesus Christ said, "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God

service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me” (John 16.2-3).

The most serious crime against a king, and for which he would justifiably speak against a subject, is treason. Zophar implies that Job has spoken treasonably against God and longs for God to defend His majesty.

11.6. While it is, of course, a wonderful thing to be shown by the Lord the secrets of wisdom, what Zophar envisages is confrontational and hostile. He desires that God would open his lips **against** Job and show him the secrets of wisdom. At first sight the expression “double to that which is” appears a ploy of exaggeration, for how can the reality be twice the reality? But he probably means, as in Hebrews 11.3 “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” That is, he means double to that which appears. By implication he means that Job is suffering not only less than his iniquity deserveth, but that he deserves double to what he is currently suffering. This is unkind.

11.7. “Canst thou by searching find out God?” This is a memorable expression, to which the answer expected is, “No.” But the New Testament gives a resounding, “Yes” and, seeing that truth is unchanging, was true then but not realised by the comforters or fully even by Job, at this stage.

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened” (Matthew 7.7-8). The force of these words of the Lord Jesus Christ is that while in ordinary matters all who ask do not receive; and all who seek do not find; and in response to a knock not every door is opened, yet in spiritual matters He affirms that it is so. “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” (Matthew 7.11).

“Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?” That is, perfectly find Him. As Zophar himself asserts in the next verse, not in this world. But whereas he affirms that the quest is misplaced the scriptures show that such a quest, through the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord, is not.

11.8-9. “What canst thou do?” “What canst thou know?” Maybe David had meditated on these words when he penned Psalm 139, especially verses 6-12, in which he maintains that he cannot attain to this knowledge but that God surrounds him, leads him, covers him and possesses him. Not that he can attain them from below; but that they are freely bestowed from above. Though these things be beyond our attainments, they are not beyond the revelation of God to His elect.

11.10-11. There is nothing wrong with the truth of verse 10 and this verse could be quoted independently and be absolutely true. It is the assumption in verse 11 that as God has “cut off” and “shut up” Job, as he thinks, then Job is vain and wicked. Of course, God ponders wickedness. “What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground” God said to Cain (Genesis 4.10). The Lord “pondereth the heart” (Proverbs 24.12).

11.12-13. Again 11.12 is a fine verse and speaks eloquently of repentance, a new heart, even a new birth; it is simply misplaced in being applied to Job. If a vain man, wild as a freeborn ass's colt, were to plead with God and repent, it would be his wisdom and he would be forgiven, given a new birth so that he is no longer a wild ass's colt but one of Christ's sheep. This is beautiful and the pleading element is to be applauded, were it applied to another and not in this instance to Job.

11.14. Granted Zophar says "if" but he doesn't mean "if," he means he certainly has committed iniquity. It is a device of language, as with Zacchaeus (Luke 19.8), "if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold" which, of course, he had, else why mention it?

11.15-16. Zophar now sets out until verse 19 the rewards of repentance as Eliphaz had done in 5.17-26 and Bildad in 8.20-22. This is commendable. It is good gospel procedure to portray the forgiveness of sins, everlasting life and the presence of the Saviour in the heart as the reward of true repentance. It is simply that his assumption as to Job's status is misplaced. To hold out hope of recovery, as he does in verse 16, is faithful and the imagery that when the misery is all over it will be as the flow of waters to the sea is elegant.

The Saviour presents His church without spot, so this is a very early picture of restoration. Christ also loved the church...that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5.25,27). Stedfastness is another attribute of the redeemed, for which one example will suffice. Peter encourages believers to resist Satan with these words, "whom resist stedfast in the faith" (1 Peter 5.9). "Fear not" is a constant exhortation to believer as, for instance, in Revelation 1.17.

11.17. In this verse Zophar's mastery of language reaches its zenith. Isaiah takes up this theme in regard to the noonday(Isaiah 58.10). David takes up this theme with regard to the morning (2 Samuel 23.4). Both these are fine writers directed by the Holy Spirit to allude to that which He had previously given many years ago to an Edomite. Jeremiah speaks of the famed wisdom of Teman, "Concerning Edom, thus saith the LORD of hosts: Is wisdom no more in Teman? Is counsel vanished from the prudent? Is their wisdom vanished?" The true faith may have degenerated into God-fearing wisdom only and that into mere worldly wisdom but Edom had that reputation for wisdom over many years. "Shall I not in that day, saith the Lord, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau?" (Obadiah 8).

11.18. It is always of the essence of the gospel message to hold out hope for the repentant sinner. Zophar was not wrong in his intent. We could think it were a kind intent if it were not for verse 5! Perhaps it is this very word that turns the tide in Job's mind because, as we shall see, when his eyes are opened by the Lord, the lofty passage which describes it, commences, "For there is hope of a tree" (14.7).

11.19. The things which Zophar here predicates of the restoration of a repentant sinner happened, in fact, to Job They "made suit" to him (42.11) and he lived a further 140 years which implies peace.

11.20. He cannot resist a final dig at Job, a final reminder that failure to repent of his secret sin will mean inescapable death and that all they have to hope for is “the giving up of the ghost.” As we have seen from chapter 7 Job thought he was in imminent danger of death so this statement that it is for his wickedness is heartless and cruel; the worse for being misplaced. The expression “the giving up the ghost” suggests the truth of the separation of the soul from the body at death, as Solomon later exemplifies in Ecclesiastes 12.7. “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.”