

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 12

12.1-2. There is heavy irony here more redolent of trades union dealings! The more ironic because the friends were indeed representatives of people but not in the modern sense, for they were rulers. That they should be the sole repositories of wisdom and no alternative wisdom to be found anywhere is to Job laughable. They must have given him that impression very powerfully to evoke such a response. The poet Dryden, speaking of the people, so to speak in the papal chair, writes, “the power is always theirs, and power is ever wise.”

12.3-4. Job affirms that there is nothing here that he couldn't have said or didn't from his own theological base believe. He says, in effect, that not their thoughts but their application was wrong. By the expression, “who knoweth not such things as these?” he does not mean that these are trite things but basic things such as any student of any religion would know.

Calling Zophar his neighbour, and referring to 11.5, he says that if God answered Zophar rather than himself it would be a mockery. Job does not think that he could interpret events to mean that God would so mock him.

12.5. The armchair critic finds it easy to belittle political prowess or sporting achievement. So it has always been. The humble believer is often despised and ridiculed by indolent power brokers. The picture is of a discarded lantern. There is no use for a lantern in the house of the wealthy surrounded by this world's good who has no intention of going outside to disturb his contentment and ease. And when that “slipping” is the slipping away into death, as Job seriously thought himself to be, the abandonment is more keenly felt.

12.6. As we have seen the prosperity of the wicked was a problem to the psalmist in Psalm 73.3 even in later days, and maybe there are circumstances in the lives of many believers when they have to wrestle with this and come to the conclusion of Psalm 73.15-19. Concerning his being envious at the prosperity of the wicked, the psalmist there declares, “If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment!”

12.7-10. Job does not doubt that the “LORD hath wrought this.” It is the reason why the Lord hath allowed this to happen to him that Job struggles with. “Ours not to reason why” is sometimes correct when dealing with high command, but, inasmuch as the Saviour has said (John 15.15), “The servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for

all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you” believers do have the freedom of enquiry It is this fatherly relationship which Job was feeling after if haply he might find it.

“In whose hand is the soul of every living thing.” Human beings differ from animals in that that we have souls, the beasts don’t. Sometimes the Greek word for soul is translated “life” in the New Testament and it is also true that the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) of this verse is the same word (psyche).

An easy place as anywhere to come to grips with this is in Mark 7.35-37. Verse 35 has “life” twice; verses 36 & 37 each have “soul” once. But it is the same Greek word (psyche) translated throughout, in each of the four places. In other words, our 1611 translators have made a judgment that the true force of the word of the Lord Jesus Christ is best expressed by translating it as “life” in verses 35 and “soul” in verses 36 & 37 because of the context.

“In whose hand is the soul of every living thing.” Not in general but in particular. That is to say we are not to think that in general God diets lions, tigers, swallows and so on. But that each beast in particular is so supported. Because the Lord Jesus Christ said, “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father” (Matthew 10.29) and, on a different occasion (Luke 12.6), “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God.”

12.11. Elihu says in 34.3. “For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat.” The analogy is not exact. Taste is distinguishing; hearing distinguishes sounds but it is, of course, the brain which interprets them. While the brain is involved in both experiences, there is an extra stage in processing thoughts.

It was a signature expression of the Lord Jesus Christ (eg Matthew 11.15), though not always in exactly the same form of words, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” This is still a stage further. The Saviour urges that beyond a mere taking in of the words that we should assimilate their spiritual import.

Job means here that his “palate” is as sharp as theirs. And in things that natural religion, as theirs, and revealed religion, as his, have in common he does not come a whit behind them. He now proceeds to list some of these, to prove his points.

12.12. Christ is made unto His people wisdom, by His heavenly Father (1 Corinthians 1.30). All a believer’s wisdom is in Him. As Elihu later says, “Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom...Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment” (32.7,9). If there is true growth, both in the natural and the spiritual sphere, then the experience of age should yield both earthly and spiritual wisdom to a believer. With the caveat that, though this should be true it doesn’t always happen, we may agree with Job.

12.13. But as we read on we realise that Job is here referring not to ancient men, whether elderly men or men of former generations, but to the Lord the Ancient of Days. None of the things he goes on to describe to the end of the chapter could be ascribed to man. Daniel well understood these things in his turn as Daniel 2.19-23 shows.

12.14. Isaiah takes up this theme, if not first revealed here for maybe others knew this truth, but certainly first inscripturated here, in Isaiah 22.22 and applies this specifically to the Saviour as it is in Revelation 3.7. It is alluded to in Jeremiah 18.7. Psalm 88.8 takes up the theme of the second part of the verse and Psalm 105.18-20 speaks of the experience of Joseph so shut up that there could be no release until the Lord, who brought about the imprisonment overturned the wrath of man to praise Him(Psalm 76.10).

12.15. The exact timing of the drying up and then the flooding of torrents even on a regular basis lies with the Lord, who can, of course, extraordinarily both dry up or cause flooding when it pleases Him to discipline mankind.

12.16. How near Job is to the truth of his own situation here! Satan has been permitted within carefully defined parameters to unleash assaults upon him. God does take responsibility for this to His ultimate glory and man's ultimate blessing.

12.17. The incident recorded in 1 Kings 22.22 well illustrates this truth concerning the deceiver and in the story concerning Ahithophel and Absalom in 2 Samuel 17 (especially note 2 Samuel 17.14) Absalom is the one who is deceived.

12.18-19. There are many scriptural examples and I select 2 Chronicles 14 because the enemy army was a million strong, which must have looked formidable and frightening. Asa's prayer was, "LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude..." The sequel describes a complete rout.

12.20. Ahithophel, as we have seen, many years later proved this point as we see in 2 Samuel 15.31 and the history which surrounds that verse. The same Asa's decline is chronicled in 2 Chronicles 16. It is good to read the whole chapter to discover that first he deserted prayer for a league with the nations; being brought to book by the seer Hanani when the consequences of his actions are pronounced, "Herein hast thou done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars (2 Chronicles 16.9), after which we read that Asa "was in a rage...and oppressed some of the people the same time" as his anger against Hanani. Finally he was diseased in his feet, "yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians."

These things happened many years later, proving, even in those early days (in words not at that time formulated, but the principle was fully in operation) that, "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" (Romans 15.4).

12.21. The previous examples illustrate this verse also but if you read the whole of Daniel 4 you will observe the unfolding of this very principle before your eyes; that is, the eyes of your mind.

12.22. Elihu repeats this in 34.22. The Lord Jesus Christ said (Luke 23.30 alluding to Hosea 10.8) "Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us" but to no avail, for "every island fled away, and the mountains were not found" (Revelation 16.20).

12.23. The succession of world empires proves the truth of this verse. We see one such transition in Daniel 5. Of course, the principle is revealed in lesser empires and in lesser affairs of business and politics.

12.24-25. Perhaps, while not literally true, these things may be said to have been fulfilled, for example, in Zedekiah (Jeremiah 52.1-11). .