

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 14

Job now addresses the Lord, though in the hearing of his friends, and, in fact, Eliphaz reproaches him (in chapter 15) for daring to speak thus to God. There is a discernible elevation of thought from this chapter until chapter 19 (though there is the occasional relapse) as he is led onward by the Holy Spirit to declare truths of eternal life and resurrection in a way unrevealed, or certainly not inscripturated, before.

14.1-2. "Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble." The relative fewness of man's days is a frequent theme of scripture. When Isaiah foresees John the Baptist seeking the Lord's instruction concerning his preaching to prepare the way for the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, he is told where he is to begin – with the brevity of life. "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isaiah 40.6-8). Read also 1 Peter 1. 24-25. Eliphaz had also earlier declared (5.7), "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." Man's life is also as fleeting as a shadow cast by fast moving clouds obscuring the sun. The good ground prepared in the heart of man for the gospel seed is prepared with thoughts of his own brevity of life and its troubles.

14.3-6. Job now turns his reasonings and pleadings towards God. He asks Him why He is concerned to pursue one whose life is so frail, so fleeting and so full of trouble, if it means further suffering. Now we know that the Lord refines character in this way, but this is not what the Holy Spirit is directing Job towards in this chapter, as we shall see. Job reasons that no man can bring a clean thing out of an unclean; one such as he knows himself to be. But, of course, God can justify and sanctify through the Mediator, Jesus Christ.

"Seeing his days are determined." "Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." From the earliest days those instructed by God knew that God had determined beforehand how long each person is to live. "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?" (7.1). "If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come" (14.14). "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" (Hebrews 9.27-28). Days and months soon pass; it is incumbent upon us to spend them wisely, for we have to give an account to the Lord God.

Now Job is in the midst of a crucial battle against Satan, and so long as he does not curse God, he is doing well; but he does not know it. So he pleads that like an hireling (employee) who looks forward to his pay at the end of the day and simply being allowed to get on with the

work for which he is paid he may be left alone by God to enjoy what he can of life, seeing it is so short and troubled, without the extraordinary afflictions with which he is encumbered. "Are not my days few?...let me alone" (10.20). Again he cries, "let me alone" in 7.16. Here he cries "turn from him" – meaning himself. The Lord, who has the best interests of His people at heart, does not give in to these prayers, though they are wrought out of anguish. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" (2 Corinthians 4.17-18).

14.7-9. Now comes the Holy Spirit's great breakthrough in Job's mind. The logic is this:- there is hope of a tree, its new sprouting can often be seen when cut down. But man lieth down and riseth not (12). But just suppose there was a life after death (13). That would be something to be excited about all life long, it would be better than life (14-15). But no, it can't be. And on that downbeat note the chapter ends. But all the time his mind, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is working silently and invisibly upon this theme until it resurfaces again in 19.25 triumphantly as a fully understood and a fully revealed doctrine for himself and for others.

This is something which we have all observed. A tree, whether by a stream or through rain, if cut down to the trunk and left for dead will put forth shoots again. New young, tender, life will appear. Though the root is very old and its hidden root system (probably the meaning of "stock" here as it is said to be "in" the ground and not upon it) to all intents and purposes dead, yet it is not so.

This is a beautiful verse. Truly one admires the thought forms and language of these early men. "Yet through the scent of water it will bud." Scent is for man's nostrils. Yet water is life for all and the tree will sense it and feel after it. It will be drawn to it and will spring into life again. Though it appeared to rot the scent of water will call forth life.

14.10. But it is not so with man. "Man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?...so man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep." When you're dead, you're very dead. Death is a "long home" (Ecclesiastes 12.5) for a long time and, to all intents and purposes as far as further participation in this world is concerned, a long way away. When the dead are buried out of our sight they are gone from this world's scene.

But man is the summit of creation. All things are given him (Genesis 9.2,3). So in this one most vital of matters should he, when cut down, be thought inferior to a tree? This is the point at which the Holy Ghost begins to move in Job's heart to reveal to him about resurrection and everlasting life. The resurrection of the body is not the sum total of resurrection, for we have immortal souls and the body is its home. But the resurrection of the body carries with it the reuniting with our souls which never die and a certainty concerning the one brings certainty concerning the other. It would be good to read John 11 at this stage.

14.11-12. So that the understanding of the resurrection of the body is not grounded in faulty, inadequate thinking, these two verses remind Job and ourselves of the finality of death in mortal experience. The new life of resurrection is something which arises from beyond us, at the behest of God. The Lord Jesus Christ says that there is a "worthiness" involved. "They

which are accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead...neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Luke 20.35-36).

14.13. This has opened up a new world of possibility for Job, previously unthought of. He expresses it brilliantly, as the Holy Spirit leads. In my grave, so he thinks, if God were to preserve me; to mark exactly my remains (though no one else knows or remembers) what a wonderful thing that would be. One smiles to think that time needs to elapse for God's anger with him to settle thoroughly, but the full meaning is, of course, that the time of the cursing of the earth be fulfilled and the new earth created. If there were to be an appointed time, as thoroughly appointed as the length of days of a person's life, for personal resurrection when God would remember him and raise Him by the Holy Spirit that would be wonderful and answer to the tree stump budding through the scent of water. Thus is a supreme desire given birth within Job's understanding and it captivates his heart. What a wonderful gift for the Lord to give to the children of men!

14.14. "If a man die, shall he live again?" The Bible answers triumphantly, Yes! Job now instantly sees that, if this could thus be believed and welcomed, it would transform his whole approach to life. So it should be for the people of the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He would live his whole life in view of eternity. He would be excited and look forward eagerly to the change. "Till my change come" – something to be genuinely excited about. And here is that word again, "appointed." If this life is in God's hands how safe it is to leave our souls and bodies with Him for His appointed times and purposes. By "waiting" he does not mean doing nothing. He means all his life's work would be energised by the anticipation that the best, by far the best, is yet to come. The believer will see Christ's glory and be made like Him (Revelation 21.3-4).

14.15. "Thou shalt call." "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15.51-54; Isaiah 25.8).

"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4.16-17).

The shout as the Lord returns, descending from heaven awakening the dead, is what Job anticipates when he affirms, "Thou shalt call." "And I will answer thee." The dead in Christ (as distinct from the living in Christ, on earth at that time) shall rise first. Of course, Job's soul (as with that of every other believer) will have been full of life, instinct with energy, in the presence of Christ awaiting the reuniting of soul and body at the day of Christ's return. This is the force of the words (1 Thessalonians 4.14), "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." They are dead and therefore "sleep" but their souls are alive and will return with the Lord Jesus Christ when He returns,

among other things to call the sleeping bodies to reconstituted life again. All this is, in embryo, envisaged here by Job. He hasn't grasped it all. But there is nothing here which is not of a piece with the full-orbed, and later revealed, doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.

"Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands." The whole idea that God should look forward to welcoming individually each of His born-again children is thrilling. It sets the heart on fire. This is the time to re-read the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15.11-24. The whole chapter is about rejoicing over the lost which is found. Especially savour Luke 15.20,22.

14.16-17. But now, back to earth. For Job, as not having as yet fully grasped and taken into his very being all that is entailed. For us, as able to assimilate these things fully, it is to attack life with more zest and verve, not physical merely for our physical energies may be fading, but with spiritual and inner power, suffusing all of our circumstances with this great and glorious anticipation.

In stark contrast to the glories of a sin-free eternity is the awareness of present sin. It is the very curse of death which new life in Christ overcomes. So in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, guiding Job for himself and for us, He returns him to the issue of sin which, though felt so strongly, is to be dealt with once and for all on Calvary.

Again we have an elegant picture. Here is a carrier bag. It carries all Job's sins. It is tied up and sealed, so that he cannot remove any of them. They are all there and they are all going to stay there. If the bag is to be opened at all it is to put fresh sins in. Of course it was not a plastic bag which was envisaged. So the sealing of such material would have to be sewn. "All sewn up," as we say. All the evidence is preserved against him.

14.18-19. You cannot force views upon someone. Here we see Job having a reaction, if you like; weighing up the opposite view expressed just as firmly. Mountains may be removed; rocks hurled out of place; the waters wear the stones away; floods flush out the germinating seeds and the established plants and nothing will come of them. It is exactly the same with the hope of man. There is a finality about this expression, a defiance:- "Thou destroyest the hope of man." A cut down tree may sprout. But "thou destroyest the hope of man." He has seen a glimpse of something much more wonderful and now the power of death and dying comes home with renewed force. So will Satan batter the hopes of many as they struggle to believe the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. But Christ will have His way and His word is true. "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me," He said (John 14.6).

14.20. Job understands that by definition God will always be stronger and always have the last word on any matter. If death is God's last word upon the curse then death will prevail. But, of course, we can see that eternal life in Christ is God's last word, which Job implicitly believed but knew not how to explain or quantify. If we grant that death *is* the last word then Job's statements are true. This is his struggle and it is the struggle each person faces until in Christ, through faith in Him, each understands salvation by faith, the forgiveness of sins and pardon for them, and everlasting life where there is no further sin nor possibility of sinning. "He passeth" and "sendeth him away" are very powerful and evocative expressions of mankind's personal dismissal from this life by God at the appointed time.

14.21. The departed one will then no longer be able to participate in the life of his/her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren or political, national or cultural heritage of any sort. How poignant it is! “His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not” especially if it is an early death. Of course, Job had seen his sons dying before him.

14.22. Prior to dying we know all sorts of pain and decay in our flesh but this does not compare, perhaps, with the anguish of a soul knowing that its one and only life is about to be foreshortened here and (without Christ) entertaining a dimly recognized doom. The unsaved soul is restless until it finds its rest in the Saviour and will “mourn” with an unsatisfied craving for something beyond its current unredeemed experience.