

## **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 4**

4.1. It seems more than likely that the Eliphaz of this book is the Eliphaz mentioned in Genesis 36.4,10,12,15 and 1 Chronicles 1.35. In that case he is the eldest son of Esau. He was the father of Teman who gave his name to the Temanites mentioned in the book and also to Amalek who gave his name to the notorious enemies of the Israelites, namely the Amalekites. His half-brother was Reuel the father of Zerah the father of Jobab. As it has been mentioned all along, if, as seems very likely, the Job of this book is the Jobab of Genesis and 1 Chronicles 1 then he was of Job's grandfather's generation. It would certainly account for his words (15.10), "With us are both the greyheaded and very aged men, much elder than thy father."

It is very difficult to attempt to work out the theology of the friends from what they say because they are responding to what Job says in each case, not constructing a well-ordered statement of their beliefs. Eliphaz says some very fine things which are undoubtedly true, as we shall see. But all the things that are rightly held about God are vitiated by what seems to be basic to the thinking of all three, "Remember, I pray thee, whoever perished, being innocent? Or where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, they that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same." (4.7-8)

At all times they are insinuating that the only possible reason for Job's sore affliction was secret sin and that God had exacerbated the affliction because of the secrecy of this sin. All the fine things which they say are founded upon this presupposition (and therefore disqualified before the Lord, and in Job's own reckoning) because we know from chapter 1 that this is not how God regards Job. It is not difficult to imagine how Job must have felt about the implications. They added to his acute misery.

Though Job searched his heart and was aware of his sin, he knew he had always offered the prescribed burnt offerings for sin and therefore his sins were all forgiven, as that was the aim of the offerings. To doubt that would be to disbelieve the Lord and His provision. So he regarded himself, to use a more modern expression, as a sinner saved by grace.

Now this the friends could not stomach. All his protestations that he was without sin in the sight of God were viewed with horror by the friends, whereas Job was not protesting his innocence; only the effectiveness of God's provision to take away confessed sin; which he had done in the offering of his sacrifices.

4.2. With that as a basis we come to Eliphaz' actual words. Eliphaz suspects that Job will not take kindly to what he has to say, so he begins by asking him not to be grieved if he attempts

in fellowship to help Job. There are things, he affirms, that must be said in view of Job's speech.

4.3-6. These words of Eliphaz, as a very senior man, will cut deep. It is of the essence of comfort that when we all meet with situations which have not befallen us personally we identify with the sufferer as best we can. If we thought that one day, should the same things happen to us, we might not manage as well as the ones we are currently comforting, we would not offer our comfort for fear we would be unable to abide by our words in our turn. So in each situation we give what comfort we can with regard to that present situation.

It was an excellent trait in Job to have done such a thing, and to have done it frequently, as Eliphaz infers. So this is an unkind cut of Eliphaz. He is effectively saying that Job is setting a terrible example, made worse by the honour in which he had been held, especially by those whom he had comforted. Now they would be offended at such a reaction, such speech from such a one as he. They would be justified in setting at naught all the good words he had ever given them.

Eliphaz asks Job whether this is what his fearing God and eschewing evil (1.1) amounts to. His faith must be a fraud, because "whoever perished being innocent?" Job rebuts the first two of these charges (concerning his fear and his confidence) in 31. 23,24,28, "destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure. If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence...I should have denied the God that is above." He was greatly exercised about hope (14.7,19) but the true ground of hope was revealed to him in 19.25-27. The final charge he refutes throughout chapter 31.

4.7-11. Eliphaz had lived many years so the force of his argument must be felt. In his long life he says he had never seen anyone afflicted who didn't deserve it. Now, of course, it is true that we have all sinned and deserve its consequences. But it leaves no room for the merciful pardon of the Lord other than in repentance. It is repentance which they desire to see from Job and plead with him that he will show. But, of course, Job stands to his standing in the sight of God as he (rightly) understood it. Though Abel had lived long before, had not Eliphaz heard that here was an innocent man who perished? The imagery of verse 8 is powerful. Not only must Job have sinned, but he must have persistently and of settled purpose pursued it. He must have ploughed iniquity and sown wickedness. These are cutting words.

Verse 9 does not help Job much, either. All the things which Job is suffering are the prelude to inevitable death. The only conclusion to which the friends come is that Job is dying before their eyes, unrepentant. What has to be said is that, though Job doesn't know it, and they don't know it, their premise is wrong. Job is approved by God and viewed as "perfect and one that eschews evil." It is what God makes of us that counts.

4.10. Job is likened to a lion, perhaps not quite old but rather like the fierce lion in the pride of his strength, grown mangy and old before his time by the ravages of sickness. So he can be likened both to an old and a fierce lion. But what an unkind reference to the death of his children! "The stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad."

4.12-21. Eliphaz here gives the game away. He speaks of a spirit which, among other things, made his hair stand on end. Does the Holy Spirit ever do this? Clearly he is basing his teaching on revelation; but not the revelation of God but of Satan through one of his fallen spirits. It sounds impressive, and the same spirits under Satan's direction still deceive many today.

Why would Satan wish to impress this truth upon Eliphaz and through him upon others? (Though we are not told, we may well wonder whether this experience had happened long ago or while sitting these recent seven days with Job.) "Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his maker?" Now we know that "the devils also believe, and tremble" (James 2.19). These words are true and expressed finely. Peter reminds us that long before this time, before the flood indeed, "God spared not the angels that sinned but cast them down to hell" (2 Peter 2.4). Whatever may be the explanation of this apparition "it cometh from evil" (Matthew 5.37).

We see here the sneer of Satan, as in 1.9; 2.4. Satan, who had tried to become like God (Ezekiel 28.12-19, especially verse 17), could not allow that a mere man should attain what he had failed to achieve, to be more just than God. His aim, as in the garden of Eden, was to defile (Ezekiel 28.18). It was a delusive spirit that Eliphaz saw. God did trust his servants, as He was now trusting Job. It was the fallen angels and the fallen servants in whom He put no trust. This fallen spirit peddles fear and deceit and, when a man of Eliphaz' stature is duped, how great are the implications for the true religion when many, believing Eliphaz' teaching, will also be deceived. It is Eliphaz, in fact, and not Job who is deceived. The words of this evil spirit are truth (verse 17) mixed with lies (verses 18-20) and all coated with the malice of a fallen spirit with his master, Satan to make them seem attractive.

Certainly no flesh may glory in God's presence; its excellency "goes away." But Christ Jesus is made wisdom unto believers (1 Corinthians 1.29-30) and they that die in Him die in wisdom.