

## **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 7**

7.1. Job now moves to give expression to his feelings but always from the standpoint of being justified by faith. This is not to be seen as an uncontrolled public outburst, but rather within the confines of the privacy of his friends, although the Lord has graciously allowed us for our help to be privy to it. "I will not refrain my mouth" (7.11).

Job clearly knew the truth in his day of what was afterwards more clearly revealed in New Testament days:- "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). The length of our lives is appointed by God and following its termination our time to give an account for our lives to God is also appointed.

Job is going in this chapter to describe his feelings concerning the brevity of life; what any man in his prime and being so suddenly struck down might well feel. Working through their experience with Job they could certainly learn his faith but would also be helped by his experience that they are not the first to be confronted with these issues. Indeed, to have time to reflect upon them is a kind interlude given by the Lord if it means that salvation in Christ will be found. For those who die unsaved in a moment, in tragic circumstances, do not have these appointed times, for their appointment is of a different order. In themselves we might understand it to be a kindness of the Lord to have time to reflect, notwithstanding how much we are regretting the brevity of our lives.

7.2-3. Though Job was an employer he could see that his life situation was like that of an employee, a hireling. How the tired labourer desires shade, the evening shadow, perhaps, heralding the near end of the day's toil, from the unremitting heat of the day! How he is sustained in his work by the expectation of his wages! Unrewarding months passing by and the weary nights of sleepless pain are like the hours which the servant spends in the heat of the sun. As life draws through old age to its close it is easy to exclaim, "What is the point seeing that I cannot serve the Lord as I used to?" But there is a point. Job's very indisposition was defeating Satan simply by his not cursing God. And if a believer's faith remains unbroken through the latter days of being "laid aside" they are not without significance. Indeed, in the sight of God, they may be of equal, perhaps greater, value than the busyness of earlier days.

7.4-5. The Lord does not indicate that Job's reaction to the long weary hours of night is impatient, or rebuke him that by his tossings to and fro all night long he had no sweet meditation (Psalm 104.34) with Him, if indeed he had not. We obtain a glimpse here of just

how sick and afflicted he was; his flesh crawling with worms, and dirt (as well as worms) in his open wounds and cracked skin and the smell of decay.

7.6. The nights may seem long but in retrospect where has his life gone? “My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle.” They have gone at high speed even if purposefully. And as for the present their end can only be death with no further accomplishment to be achieved.

7.7-10. Once again, as in 6.26, he declares his life, as the words which describe it, is wind. Fleeting and invisible. It will soon be gone and Job will be but a memory. However much of life remains he does not expect to see good or feel good about anything good. He declares to his friends that though they observe him now he is but a shadow of his former self and will soon be gone. Though a vanishing cloud means a clear sky and good weather, yet Job can only turn such a helpful observation to mean that from death and the grave there is no return. No return to life, to home or to community. It is as well to pause and observe here that how things seem to us in the midst of ongoing troubles is not necessarily how they are in reality. Or if in reality they are very bad, our jaundiced view of them must not extend to doubting our heavenly Father’s beneficent purposes. Job was yet to see an outcome of rejoicing.

7.11. It would seem that Job moves here from addressing the comforters to addressing God. The next few verses could be interpreted of either but so seamlessly the transition is made that by verse 20 there is no doubt but that he is addressing God Himself.

His complaint then is both to God and man. He has good cause, he says, to give utterance. He kept silence for seven whole days; maybe longer, if the initial arrival and attendance of the comforters was the conclusion of a longer silent period. Anguish and bitterness must find an outlet.

7.12-15. The sea must be watched over. The Lord Himself said (38.11), “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.” Under God, man is to watch to prevent flooding, where by simple diligence he can. In places where whales are frequent an eye must be kept on them; for their own safety as well as that of fishermen.

God may give dreams in the night or Job may be referring to Eliphaz’ relating of his vision in 4.12-17. Immediate death would seem preferable to the recounting of such non-applicable terrors, if it is Eliphaz to whom he is referring.

7.16. This verse may well represent the transition point. There is no doubt that his cry, “let me alone” could be addressed equally to the comforters or to God Himself. Afterwards in 10.2 Job certainly addresses God and goes on in 10.20 to say, “let me alone” to Him. Everlasting life sounds an attractive proposition to the fit and healthy; but to the sick, if what is meant by everlasting life is simply a continuation of life in this world, it is not at all welcoming. This in itself weans us from this world, and if eternity is in our hearts, we begin to think it must be spiritual rather than worldly. “I would not live always” is a true response without Christ and without hope. “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead” (1 Corinthians 15.19-20).

7.17. It seems unlikely, though possible, that Job would address the words “What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him?” to his friends. They had not exactly, with the best will in the

world, set their hearts upon him. It would seem more likely that here is an affectionate Job beginning to plead with an affectionate God, the outcome of which would issue in the truth of 19.25. Does not David allude to Job here, or even quote him, when he writes (Psalm 8.4) "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?" David draws better conclusions having "heard of the patience of Job, and...seen the end of the Lord" (James 5.11). His words in Psalm 144.3 are scarcely different.

7.18-19. While it is a wonderful thing that our heavenly Father should set His love upon us and visit us every morning so that we might "continually resort" (Psalm 71.3) unto Him also, Job sees only a bad outcome from such a fatherly interest. He sees it of setting a standard he cannot reach; of constantly searching out his sin and therefore destructive of his liberty. But he is wrestling with himself even in this. For he acknowledges that, if left to himself, he would swallow down his spittle. That is to say, his end would be choking, revolting and cheerless if unaccompanied by God.

7.20. There is no question now but that Job is addressing God in the hearing of the comforters. His confession of sin is clear enough here and it should not from this point onwards have been an issue with his friends that he was asserting his own righteousness. It is, of course, one thing to confess our sins to God and quite another to confess them to man specifically. He speaks only in general here. But it is heartfelt and is perfectly proper. The spelling out of our sins is for God's ear alone; if man is to be privy to them it should only be to those who have been hurt by them.

"What shall I do unto thee?" seems to be an acknowledgment that there was no way that he could make an atonement or make up for his sins in any way. He acknowledges that God will not benefit by his contrition. That should have been sufficient to prevent Eliphaz' later indignant outburst (22.3) "Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? Or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?"

Job further acknowledges that he is a marked man but cannot yet see that that "marking" is the favour the Lord shows to His elect. Whatever burden it is to be favoured by God, whatever of greater responsibility in this world to portray Him truly, is far outweighed by the perfection and glory of eternity.

7.21. There may be doubt expressed here, exacerbated by anguish. But it may rather be a far truer observation on his part that though the elect's sins are forgiven by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ perfection has not yet been achieved; that there are always sins to be accounted for and that a believer's standing as sinners saved by grace is somewhat clouded when sin appears again.

Clearly Job is anticipating that he will soon die. Once he is buried in the dust, as he understands it, the Lord will be unable to have fellowship with him and this is the plea he presents for the preservation of his life and the cessation of his miseries.

"I shall not be." Man has an everlasting soul and cannot go out of existence. Job here is merely speaking of his earthly life that he will no longer be around among friends and family. "The place thereof shall know him no more" (Psalm 103.16). When David writes "O spare me, that I

may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more” (Psalm 39.13) he does not mean that he did not believe in everlasting life but that his earthly days would be finished; and that is how we are to use the words of the psalm ourselves. Believers may legitimately pray to the Lord “O spare me, that I may recover strength.”

It is not to be thought that Job doubted God’s omniscience when he said “thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be,” as if God didn’t know. It is much more an expression of his own anguish that he could no longer have fellowship with Him. With this firmly in mind, it will be possible to trace between now and chapter 19 how the resurrection of the body and eternal life are the answer to his plea, slowly, so slowly, revealed to him - for of what significance is the pardon of sins and fellowship with the Lord, if not for eternity?

So, though the book of Job teaches us about the shortcoming of religion without atonement in the blood of Jesus Christ; and though it also teaches us that while there is suffering for every soul of man because of the fall, yet for the believer there is the knowledge that the quantity of suffering does not correspond with the quantity of our sin and that there is significance in the warfare against sin in a believer’s suffering as there was for the Lord Jesus Christ, “ye have not resisted unto blood, striving against sin” (Hebrews 12.4); it also is the book that establishes for all subsequent generations the truth concerning the resurrection of the body and everlasting life.