

Introduction

Whereas the substance of chapter 13 is Job's struggle to personally confront God, in this chapter Job addresses the experience of people in general. All the wisdom literature touches on the theme that life is brief: Job in 7:6, Bildad in 8:9, Moses in Psalm 90:10, David in 1 Chronicles 29:15, Qoheleth in Ecclesiastes 6:12, Solomon in Proverbs 10:27b, Isaiah in 40:7, and James in 4:14. Without the hope that the fuller perspective of the New Testament provides, such a passage as this is dreary, dismal, and depressing. But it nonetheless authentically captures the theology of the time in the perception of how God works, which the book of Job ultimately corrects for all parties involved.

Read verses 1-6

¹“Man, who is born of woman,
Is short-lived and full of turmoil.
²Like a flower he comes forth
and withers.
He also flees like a shadow and
does not remain.
³You also open Your eyes on
him
And bring him into judgment
with Yourself.
⁴Who can make the clean out of
the unclean?
No one!
⁵Since his days are determined,
The number of his months is
with You;
And his limits You have set so
that he cannot pass.
⁶Turn Your gaze from him that
he may rest,
Until he fulfills his day like a
hired man.

Q: What is the basic gist of what Job is saying in these verses?

A: Everyone is born into a life that is not just troubled but having an all too short lifespan.

Q: Is being “born of woman” some kind of insult to the female members of mankind?

A: It is a reminder of the Fall of Adam and Eve and the fact that sin is inherited by all so that everyone is “short-lived and full of turmoil”.

Q: To what is v.2 referring?

A: The flower and shadow are metaphors for the brevity of a person's lifespan.

Q: But how does verse 3 make this condition even more acute from man's perspective?

A: There is the inevitability of God's judgment for everything that takes place in this brief time period.

Q: What is the point of bringing up the issue of “clean” and “unclean” in v.4?

A: This refers to v.1 in that everyone is born “unclean” and are incapable of becoming “clean” in God's eyes without His working in them. This is something referred to again in the book of Job.

What is man, that he should be pure,
Or he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?
Job.15:14

How then can a man be just with God?
Or how can he be clean who is born of woman?
Job 25:4

Q: How does verse 5 narrow the focus of Job's opening statement of a person's lifespan being "short-lived"?

A: Job now specifically assigns this condition to God's will, stating that God has "set limits" which no one can exceed, and even quantifies them as "days" and "months" to dramatically emphasize the brevity of the limits set by God.

Q: In v.6, why does Job refer to "a hired man"?

A: In 7:1 Job spoke of the hard days of work of the hireling, a workman who is paid at the end of his day's work. The hireling has only the short evening after his labor to enjoy himself. At that time, he can take pleasure from what he has earned and from his rest. This summarizes Job's observation concerning life in general as experienced by everyone.

Application: Everyone inherits **sin** and has but a brief **lifespan** in which to deal with it, and during which we are always in God's **gaze** knowing that it will ultimately culminate in His **judgment**.

Read verses 7-12

Q: What is the main contrast between v.7-9 and 10-12?

A: "...When it {a tree} is cut down, it will sprout again..." (v.1) versus "...Man expires, and where is he?" (v.10) There are things in nature which will recover from death whereas such are fatal where man's life is concerned.

Q: How might the tree compare to the flower of the previous section?

A: The metaphors are getting much larger, plus a tree is much more durable and longer lasting than the fragility and short life of flowers.

Q: How do the stump and roots of a tree in v.8 parallel the death of man?

A: Both are found in the ground.

Q: How does Job define man's state in death?

A: "Sleep". (v.12) It clearly implies there is another purpose of God yet to come as the initial stage of death is likened to sleep.

Q: Does Job say man will never rise up from the dead?

A: In v.12 he stipulates, "Until the heavens are no longer".

Point: It is interesting that even without knowing the end of the book of Revelation when heaven and earth become one, Scripture from the very beginning is consistent in every detail.

Application: **Death** is not man's end but awaits what will **finally** come about from **God**.

7"For there is hope for a tree,
When it is cut down, that it will
sprout again,
And its shoots will not fail.
8Though its roots grow old in
the ground
And its stump dies in the dry
soil,
9At the scent of water it will
flourish
And put forth sprigs like a plant.
10But man dies and lies
prostrate.
Man expires, and where is he?
11As water evaporates from the
sea,
And a river becomes parched
and dried up,
12So man lies down and does not
rise.
Until the heavens are no longer,
He will not awake nor be
aroused out of his sleep.

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¹³Oh that You would hide me in Sheol,
That You would conceal me until Your wrath returns to You,
That You would set a limit for me and remember me!
¹⁴If a man dies, will he live again?
All the days of my struggle I will wait
Until my change comes.
¹⁵You will call, and I will answer You;
You will long for the work of Your hands.
¹⁶For now You number my steps,
You do not observe my sin.
¹⁷My transgression is sealed up in a bag,
And You wrap up my iniquity.

Read verses 13-17

Q: How does Job seem to think of what takes place in death versus what he is currently going through in life?

A: Job seems to see death as an escape from this present life.

Q: Does Job promote the idea of “annihilationism”— the concept that death means merely to cease to exist and wink into nothingness?

A: No, Job is clearly acknowledging that there is still a work to come from God.

Q: In Job’s case, what might be familiar about his desires when it comes to both death and life?

A: In both, he is waiting for God to act. The difference in death, however, is that he believes he would be able to wait without the pain and suffering currently permeating this life.

Q: Are v.16-17 referring to this present life or the next?

A: The English “for now” is best understood as something like, “Now that You have hidden me in Sheol”.

Q: Job has previously complained that in this life, God has paid inordinate attention to Job’s every move. Why would it be better in Sheol that, “You number my steps”?

A: This carefully crafted Hebrew idiom actually means that God has a kind regard for his every movement. Job sees in death the transition from some kind of judgment to grace.

Q: Rather than physical healing or restoration from suffering, what are the three even greater spiritual benefits Job looks forward to in v.16-17?

1. “You do not observe my **sin**”. “Sin” is failing to live up to the standard of God’s Word and ways.
2. “My **transgression** is sealed up in a bag”. “Transgression” is rebellion against God’s Word and ways.
3. “You wrap up my **iniquity**”. “Iniquity” is the willful twisting of God’s Word and ways to suit one’s self.

Application: For the righteous and upright, the **spiritual** outcome is the proper answer to all that was experienced in **life**.

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18“But the falling mountain
crumbles away,
And the rock moves from its
place;
19Water wears away stones,
Its torrents wash away the dust
of the earth;
So You destroy man’s hope.
20You forever overpower him
and he departs;
You change his appearance and
send him away.
21His sons achieve honor, but he
does not know it;
Or they become insignificant,
but he does not perceive it.
22But his body pains him,
And he mourns only for
himself.”

Read verses 18-22

Q: How is this section actually related to the previous section?

A: Whereas the previous section was about the believer’s experience in death, this is an explanation of why a sufferer in this life so desires to transition to the next life. [Note: Yes, in modern literature we would probably reverse the order.]

Q: How do we know that Job is here speaking of God working in the life of an unbeliever?

A: By the statement in v.22, “...he mourns only for himself.”

Observation: While at times Job definitely laments what has been happening to him, he has also consistently been more concerned for his relationship with God than either personal possessions or health. Whereas his friends mourn for what they believe is Job’s suffering for disregarding God’s Word and ways, Job has first and foremost examined his relationship and standing with God.

Application: God will take **extreme** measures with the unrighteous in order to destroy **hope** in this life in favor of **hope** in Him.

Overall Application

- Do you really think God does not see everything you do? Do you think there is even the smallest sin which He overlooks?
- How prepared are you if the Lord should take you from this life this very night? What comes to mind that you know needs to be addressed?
- How confident are you that there is no outstanding sin, transgression or iniquity?
- Is your hope residing entirely on Him?