

## Introduction

This actually brings to a close the first round of exchanges between Job and his friends. Eliphaz first spoke in chapters 4-5, Bildad in chapter 8, and Zophar in chapter 11, after each of which Job responded. Job's responses have been increasing in size, and this trend will continue with the next round where his friends' speeches become shorter and shorter while Job's become longer and more detailed. There are really three sermons woven together to combine into Job's attempt to doctrinally correct the errors of his friends, so we'll give proper attention to each one.

That which is offered by Job in this opening discourse is a fundamental lesson of the working of God's wisdom which not only affirms that Job knows what his friends know, but that it's essentially what everyone already knows, even in the natural world. This is used to make a clear case to Job's friends that they have not only made things worse, but they need to embrace silence going forward so as to not multiply the damage further. In the midst of trials and testing, few things are more distracting and distressing than having to respond to those who clearly do not know what is actually taking place, but blindly and aggressively operate as if they do.

<sup>1</sup>Then Job responded,

<sup>2</sup>"Truly then you are the people,  
And with you wisdom will die!

<sup>3</sup>But I have intelligence as well  
as you; I am not inferior to  
you.

And who does not know such  
things as these?

<sup>4</sup>I am a joke to my friends,  
The one who called on God and  
He answered him;

The just and blameless man is a  
joke.

<sup>5</sup>He who is at ease holds  
calamity in contempt,  
As prepared for those whose  
feet slip.

<sup>6</sup>The tents of the destroyers  
prosper,  
And those who provoke God are  
secure,  
Whom God brings into their  
power.

## Read 12:1-6 – The Superiority of God's Wisdom

**Q: Who are the three overall types of people Job references in this opening? What are characteristics assigned to each?**

1. Job's friends – They claim to have God's wisdom but do not and therefore are incapable of providing real support.
  - a. (v.2) "...you are the people and with you wisdom will die!"
  - b. (v.3) "And who does not know such things as these?"
2. Job himself – Job's true spiritual state continues to go unnoticed so he is left alone to respond to God.
  - a. (v.3) "...I have intelligence as well as you..."
  - b. (v.3) "...I am not inferior to you."
  - c. (v.4) "I am a joke to my friends..."
  - d. (v.4) "The one who called on God..."
  - e. (v.4) "The just and blameless man..."
3. Other antagonists – They claim to have their own wisdom but do not and are likewise disqualified as having something to properly contribute.
  - a. (v.5) "He who is at ease..."
  - b. (v.5) "He who...holds calamity in contempt..."

- c. (v.5) "...those whose feet slip."
- d. (v.6) "The tents of the destroyers prosper..."
- e. (v.6) "...those who provoke God are secure..."

**Point:** Job's friends are spiritually ineffective where their comfort of Job is concerned, the antagonists are spiritually ineffective because they do not even attempt to live according to God's Word and ways, and Job is seen by all as spiritually ineffective because of their own shortfalls and cannot see the righteous and wise man for who he truly is.

**Q: What does "whom God brings into their power" in v.6 mean?**

A: Many translators hold various views because this final verse is essentially a Hebrew idiom which ultimately tries to convey that those who worship idols ("the tents of the destroyers") are deceived by those false gods ("those who provoked God are [that is, they falsely think they are] secure", and therefore God gives them over to them, the meaning of "God brings into their power". It is a difficult passage to translate so as to convey the original Hebrew meaning into something understandable in English.

**Point:** In other words, Job's friends think Job is deceived and therefore do not see it in themselves even through they purport to worship the same God as Job, but the antagonists are equally deceived by their false gods in their assessment of Job. It is an interesting Hebrew idiom which attempts to teach that deception under any circumstance is still deception, whether claiming to follow the true God or a false substitute.

**Application:** Job begins by making a very poetic case that the source of the **wisdom** everyone claims to be bringing before Job, because it is not actually God's **wisdom**, is no **wisdom** at all.

**Read 12:7-12**

**Q: What are the things of nature which Job uses in v.7-10?**

A: "Beasts" (life on land), "birds" (life in the air), "the earth" (the entire natural world), and "fish" (life in the sea). It's a poetic way of describing "all creation".

**Q: And what actions are assigned to each by Job?**

A: "...let them teach you" (v.7), "let them tell you" (v.7), "let it teach you" (v.8), and "let...declare to you" (v.8) In other words, we should at least know the fundamentals inherent in the natural world.

**Q: What is the rhetorical question which all of these instinctively affirm as the right answer?**

1. They all know "the hand of the LORD has done" these things to Job. (v.9)
2. They all know that in God's "hand is the life of every living thing". (v.9)

<sup>7</sup>But now ask the beasts, and let them teach you;  
And the birds of the heavens,  
and let them tell you.

<sup>8</sup>Or speak to the earth, and let it teach you;  
And let the fish of the sea declare to you.

<sup>9</sup>Who among all these does not know

That the hand of the LORD has done this,

<sup>10</sup>In whose hand is the life of every living thing,  
And the breath of all mankind?

<sup>11</sup>Does not the ear test words,  
As the palate tastes its food?

<sup>12</sup>Wisdom is with aged men,  
With long life is understanding.

**Job 12:1-13:5 • End of Round 1, The Fundamentals, Page 2 of 8**

**Point:** Job's point is that it is only man, who is supposed to be the most intelligent being in all of nature, ironically fails to grasp the simple truth which every other creature embraces.

**Q: How does v.11 describe a different ability possessed by man over everything else in creation?**

A: Man has the ability to “test words”, to assess and confirm the truth, whereas the creatures of the natural world do not, and yet they accept the truth better than mankind.

**Q: Why would Eliphaz and Bildad wholeheartedly agree with what is stated in v.12?**

A: Because it is essentially what they have and will state.

“Please inquire of past generations,  
And consider the things searched out by their fathers.  
For we are only of yesterday and know nothing,  
Because our days on earth are as a shadow.  
Will they not teach you and tell you,  
And bring forth words from their minds?  
Job 8:8-10 (Bildad)

“Both the gray-haired and the aged are among us,  
Older than your father.  
Job 15:10 (Eliphaz)

**Application:** Job observes that the basic wisdom of the **natural world** is missing from man whose wisdom is supposed to be **superior** and even attained in the course of their already **long life**.

## Read 12:13-15

**Q: What is the main difference between the lists of things in v.5-6 vs. 13-15?**

A: In the opening verses it is a list of actions God has taken in the physical world, but this is then followed with a list of actions God has taken with various types of individuals.

**Point:** This is to establish that God is sovereign over both creation and all men within it, even though mankind holds a special place of understanding above all creation.

**Q: According to v.13, what is everything that follows actually a result or expression of?**

1. **“Wisdom”** – The biblical definition centers on an approach to thinking combined with an attitude concerning life’s experiences, including not only subjects of general interest but of basic morality. It can be best thought of as experience in the application of the Word and ways of the Lord.
2. **“Might”** – The underlying Hebrew term promotes a primary image of the strength and vitality of a successful warrior in the course of warfare. The wisdom of his strategy has leveraged his abilities for victory.

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<sup>13</sup>“With Him are wisdom and  
might;  
To Him belong counsel and  
understanding.  
<sup>14</sup>Behold, He tears down, and it  
cannot be rebuilt;  
He imprisons a man, and there  
can be no release.  
<sup>15</sup>Behold, He restrains the  
waters, and they dry up;  
And He sends them out, and  
they inundate the earth.

3. **“Counsel”** – This is often found in the Old Testament when referring to *“the counsel of the LORD”* as something which eternally stands in contradiction to the wisdom and thoughts of both individual man and nations collectively. It can be thought of as God’s personal advice to trust in His decrees, since once pronounced, are incapable of not coming true.
4. **“Understanding”** – Rather than merely collecting data or possessing a high IQ, the divine insight and God-given meaning of things comes about by the character of someone who consistently puts His Word and ways into practice and comes to see how God is actually working.

**Application:** *These qualities of wisdom dovetail in their multiplied effect when they are sought from God on His terms. We will be a successful spiritual warrior (“**might**”) when we trust in God’s decrees and promises (“**counsel**”), and by putting His Word and ways into practice attain not just practical “**wisdom**”, but a deeper “**understanding**” for all things, both mundane and exotic.*

### Read 12:16-21

**Q:** *What are examples of the consequences for those who lack these four qualities which can only come from a faithful relationship with God alone?*

1. (v.16) **“...misled and the misleader...”** Notice that this is contrasted with God’s *“strength and sound wisdom”*, which provides the biblical definition to be either deceiving or deceived— that is, those who rely on their own strength and their own wisdom.
2. (v. 17) **“...counselors walk barefoot...”** This is actually a Hebrew idiom which paints a vivid picture in native speakers’ minds of someone made a prisoner and forced to go into captivity “naked and barefoot”. This is what happens when one trusts in man’s counsel rather than God’s.
3. (v.17) **“...makes fools of judges.”** The result of a lifetime of worldly wisdom, which when finally compared to God’s, reveals the actual foolishness of earthly pursuits of justice as man defines it.
4. (v. 18) **“...loosens the bond of kings and binds their loins with a girdle.”** This is a dual working, on the one hand loosening what kings have put in place, and then turning the tables on them personally to place constraints so as to place them in bondage and captivity.
5. (v.19) **“...makes priests walk barefoot...”** Notice the progression to this point of the deceived and deceiver who freely partake in false wisdom, counselors who experience the consequences of not adhering to God’s counsel, on to those appointed as judges who oversee adherence to the world’s way of doing things, to those in political office who attempt to exercise authority that will eventually turn and be divinely used against them, and finally to

<sup>16</sup>With Him are strength and sound wisdom,  
The misled and the misleader belong to Him.  
<sup>17</sup>He makes counselors walk barefoot  
And makes fools of judges.  
<sup>18</sup>He loosens the bond of kings  
And binds their loins with a girdle.  
<sup>19</sup>He makes priests walk barefoot  
And overthrows the secure ones.  
<sup>20</sup>He deprives the trusted ones of speech  
And takes away the discernment of the elders.  
<sup>21</sup>He pours contempt on nobles  
And loosens the belt of the strong.

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the top of the leadership pyramid in Old Testament Israel with priests who fail to carry out their office and duties exclusively according to God's Word and ways. [For a good example, see Judges 17-18 where a single Levite began the chain of events introducing idolatry into Israel.]

6. (v.19) "...**overthrows the secure ones.**" These are people who falsely believe that they are as "secure" as water than can never become dry or like firmly founded and immovable rocks. They operate under the misguided belief that they are so established and solid that they cannot be overthrown.
7. (v.20) "...**deprives the trusted ones of speech...**" Not "trusted" by God, but "trusted" by man to have the right words for any occasion. This comes from another Hebrew idiom which literally means, "removes the lip", and makes the case that no human's oratory can even be presented before a holy God.
8. (v.20) "...**takes away the discernment of the elders.**" In spite of the experiences of their long lives, they cannot tell the difference between that which comes from God, comes from Satan, or is a product of the flesh.
9. (v.21) "...**pours contempt on nobles...**" Those revered by and attempting to attain the world's standards alone find the tables turned on them in the presence of a holy God.
10. (v.21) "...**loosens the belt of the strong.**" Especially strong athletes tighten their belt in order to concentrate and increase their strength even more. This man made attempt to increase one's own strength is completely undone.

***Point:*** Notice that the very thing the last 5 examples place their greatest trust in, that which they would want listed at the top of their resumé as their best and most coveted talent is, in the end, turned back on them. It's a good example of the many different ways that pride can take hold of someone.

*This is best summarized by Paul...*

For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written,

"I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE,  
AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE."

Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

1 Corinthians 1:18-21

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**Application:** Every **authority** figure on every social, cultural and political level who **substitutes** worldly wisdom for God's wisdom will experience Mt. 7:2, "For in the way you **judge**, you will be **judged**; and by your standard of **measure**, it will be **measured** to you."

### Read 12:22-25

<sup>22</sup>He reveals mysteries from the darkness  
And brings the deep darkness into light.  
<sup>23</sup>He makes the nations great, then destroys them;  
He enlarges the nations, then leads them away.  
<sup>24</sup>He deprives of intelligence the chiefs of the earth's people  
And makes them wander in a pathless waste.  
<sup>25</sup>They grope in darkness with no light,  
And He makes them stagger like a drunken man.

**Q: To whom or what has Job changed the emphasis so as to apply the effects of contrasting the world's wisdom to God's?**

A: Rather than strictly speaking about individuals, Job shows God's working among the nations.

**Q: What is the contrast of the first part v.22 and v.25?**

A: "He reveals mysteries from the darkness and brings the deep darkness into light" vs. "They grope in darkness with no light".

**Point:** The wisdom of God's Word is repeatedly portrayed in Scripture as a light or lamp which is the only thing that can penetrate spiritual darkness. Worldly wisdom doesn't even know it is in the dark and yet operates as if it clearly sees. This is why there is often a shocking experience which accompanies our act of giving our life to Christ when, filled with the revelation of the Holy Spirit for the first time, we finally see the Light illuminating the world exactly as God sees it.

**Q: What are the actions God takes on behalf of nations which might appear positive?**

1. (v.23) "He makes the nations great..."
2. (v.23) "He enlarges the nations..."

**Point:** God is in control, even when it comes to the rise and fall of nations and empires.

Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities.  
For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

Romans 13:1

**Q: But when they operate according to their own wisdom and without acknowledgment of God, what ultimately comes about by the hand of God?**

1. (v.23) "He...destroys them..."
2. (v.23) "He...leads them away..."
3. (v.24) "He deprives of intelligence..."
4. (v.24) "He...makes them wander in a pathless waste..."

**Point:** It is interesting that even secular historians have repeatedly documented this cycle, albeit attributing the degeneration of a once robust nation or empire to factors other than God Himself, showing how even then the world is in darkness where God's Word and ways are concerned but aware enough to identify the trend.

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**Q: What is their final state?**

A: “They grope in darkness with no light, and He makes them stagger like a drunken man.” (v.25) They are blind but don’t acknowledge or act like they’re blind.

They struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that **they wearied** themselves trying to find the doorway.

Genesis 19:11

‘Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and **you do not know** that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,

Revelation 3:17

**Application:** God’s wisdom is not only visibly at work in **nature**, but always on display in the mankind’s **political** realm. Individuals acting in spite of their spiritual **blindness** is carried out in the same character by entire **nations** and **empires**.

[Note: It’s really difficult to not apply this to what we have already observed not only in nations around the globe, or larger umbrella organizations such as the United Nations, but especially to the accelerating deterioration of our own country.]

**Read 13:1-5**

**Q: How does this section conclude in the same way it began?**

1. “I am not inferior to you” (12:3) vs. “I am not inferior to you” (13:2)
2. “And who does not know such things as these?” (12:3) vs. “What you know I also know”. (13:2)

**Q: How has this actually been the theme running throughout this entire dissertation?**

A: Job has not been espousing advanced topics or the revelation of mysteries pertaining to the application of wisdom, but confirming through the individual vs. nation, and the natural world vs. the political realm, the fundamentals of what we might otherwise term “common sense”.

**Q: What is Job’s desire after his so-called “comforters” attempts explain things to him?**

A: First of all, he would like to forego any further dialog with these humans and take up the matter with God directly (v.3), and at the same time he would just like the “comforters” to shut up. (v.5)

**Q: What have these men, who originally came for the purpose of providing support for Job, actually accomplished instead?**

A: In their zeal to present their own case, they have not only proven themselves “worthless physicians” so as to be ineffective, but have even become agents of damage who “smear with lies”.

**Job 12:1-13:5 • End of Round 1, The Fundamentals, Page 7 of 8**

<sup>1</sup>“Behold, my eye has seen all this,  
My ear has heard and understood it.  
<sup>2</sup>What you know I also know;  
I am not inferior to you.  
<sup>3</sup>But I would speak to the Almighty,  
And I desire to argue with God.  
<sup>4</sup>But you smear with lies;  
You are all worthless physicians.  
<sup>5</sup>O that you would be completely silent,  
And that it would become your wisdom!

**Q: What is the irony of Job's return advice to them?**

A: In a prolonged discourse on the basic fundamentals of wisdom, Job wishes "you would be completely silent, and that it [silence] would become your wisdom". In other words, having no real handle on God's wisdom at all, they should embrace the wisdom of just sitting and listening and learning themselves.

**Q: Does Job's "desire to argue with God" (v.3) reveal a flaw in his character or own wisdom when it comes to God?**

A: The underlying Hebrew term is actually "dabar", the Old Testament word most often translated "word", the Greek equivalent being "logos". It is more accurately understood as wanting to discuss with God His Word, not man's.

**Application:** Round 1 has not just been **ineffective**, but actually incurred additional **damage**. This is what happens when someone speaks for and imposes their **self** rather than seeking to be a **conduit** and **advocate** of that which God deems necessary.

### Overall Application

- Do our personal experiences provide us with the license to automatically respond with them? How might this approach often appear that we're more concerned about injecting our own self and personality into the situation rather than seeking what God deems is necessary?
- What happens when we assume from the outset that the current situation we are trying to address is simply "just another one of 'those'"?
- Would we alter our approach if what is taking place is a divine trial rather than the inevitable consequences for sin? How well do we recognize that which originates from God, from Satan, or from the flesh? How might that change our actions?
- Do we attribute non-responsiveness to someone who spiritually refuses to listen to us when the problem may actually be the proper rejection of our presentation because of being so completely unrelated to the actual issues?