

Job Chapter 14

Verses 1–22

The Book of Job is filled with references to the brevity of man's life.

This is especially true of chapter 14.

Man "is of few days" (verse 1), "Like a flower" (verse 2), and so on.

His viewpoint is very similar to the Preacher in Ecclesiastes.

(In verses 1-12), Job embraced the fact of God's control over the issues of this life, but challenged their meaning.

Life is short (verses 1-2), all are sinners (verse 4), and days are limited (verse 5), then comes death (verses 7-12).

In light of this, Job asked God for a little grace instead of such intense judgment (verse 3), and a little rest from all the pain (verse 6), and suggested that a tree has more hope than he did (see verse 7).

Job 14:1 "Man [that is] born of a woman [is] of few days, and full of trouble."

In the last verse of chapter 13, Job thought of himself as one of the race of men, and now he speaks of the characteristics of this race.

"Born of a woman":

The offspring of one herself weak and doomed to sorrow (Genesis 3:16), must also be weak and doomed to trouble (compare Job 15:14; 25:4).

It appears to me, that Job was speaking of the flesh of man in this Scripture.

The natural man is born of a woman.

Most all of the natural men of our day, can look forward to about seventy years of life.

Some, by great strength, might even live to be a hundred.

Even if a man lived to be a hundred, his days would be few.

The flesh of man is not made to live forever.

The body wears out from much age, and finally gives way.

Life on this earth is filled with trials and tribulation.

This was the thing that Job was relating here.

Job 14:2 "He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not."

Out of his mother's womb (Job 1:21).

"Like a flower":

Which quickly grows up and makes a fair show, but soon withers, or is cut down.

"As a shadow":

Which being made by the sun, follows its motions, and is in perpetual movement, until at last it vanishes and disappears.

A flower blooms in the springtime, and is cut down in the fall.

Eastern flowers usually last but one day, and they are gone.

Oh, what a brief life.

Shadows do not last very long either.

They change constantly, and then are gone when the sun goes down.

Job 14:3 "And dost thou open thine eyes upon such a one, and bringest me into judgment with thee?"

Either to take thought or care about him.

Or rather, to observe all his ways, that you may find cause of punishment.

He is not a fit match for thee.

It is below thee to contend with him, and to use thy infinite wisdom and power to crush him.

This seems best to suit with the scope and context.

"Bringest me into judgment with thee":

I.e. plead with me by thy judgments, and thereby, in a manner, force me to plead with thee, without granting me those two necessary and favorable conditions, expressed in (Job 13:20-21).

Why would God bother with such short lived, mortal man?

It seemed amazing to Job that God would choose one man out of all humanity to judge.

Job was aware that something was different about his circumstance compared to other men, but he had not decided why this was so.

Job 14:4 "Who can bring a clean [thing] out of an unclean? Not one."

How can man be clean that is born of woman, who is unclean?

This question is reiterated by Bildad (Job 25:4).

We ought perhaps, rather to render: "Oh, that the clean could come forth from the unclean!

But none can."

Men are born in sin.

Perhaps, Job was speaking of the uselessness of trying to become righteous, after beginning in sin.

Job 14:5 "Seeing his days [are] determined, the number of his months [are] with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass;"

Job here returns to the consideration of the shortness of man's life.

"His days are determined":

I.e. they are a limited period, known to and fixed beforehand by God.

They are not like God's days, which "endure throughout all generations" (Psalm 102:24).

"The number of his months are with thee":

"With thee" means "known to thee", "laid up in thy counsels."

"Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass":

"His bounds" are "the limit of his lifetime."

The three clauses are redundant.

One idea pervades them all.

The number of days and years of man's life is only known of God.

He has our days numbered.

Not everyone lives to adulthood, and certainly, not all live to be seventy years old.

Only God knows the length of your life upon this earth.

God lives in one eternal day.

Our lives do not end when our flesh dies.

Our spiritual bodies will rise out of the flesh bodies when the flesh dies.

Job 14:6 "Turn from him, that he may rest, till he shall accomplish, as a hireling, his day."

Withdraw thine afflicting hand from him.

"That he may rest":

That he may have some present comfort and ease.

Or, and let it cease, i.e., the affliction, which is sufficiently implied.

Others: And let him cease, i.e., to live, or take away my life.

But that seems not to agree with the following clause of this verse, nor with the succeeding verses.

"Till he shall accomplish, as a hireling, his day":

Give him some respite till he finish his course, and come to the period of his life which thou hast allotted to him.

As a man appoints a set time to a mercenary servant.

Job was asking God to give rest to the weary body that was enduring until it died.

This turning from him was speaking of a pause in constantly searching man out.

Job was speaking of himself.

Job 14:7 "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease."

But man, though a far nobler creature, is in a much worse condition, and when once he loses this present and worldly life, he never recovers it.

Therefore, show some pity to him, and give him some comfort while he lives.

A tree can spring up from its roots, even after it is cut down.

Sometimes, the tree that comes up from the root, will be even stronger than the tree that was cut down.

Job 14:8 "Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground;"

Man may claim a peaceful life, since, when separated from it by death, he never returns to it.

This does not deny a future life, but a return to the present condition of life.

Job plainly hopes for a future state (Job 7:2; 14:13).

Still, it is but a vague and trembling hope, not assurance; excepting the one bright glimpse (in Job 19:25).

The Gospel revelation was needed to change fears, hopes, and glimpses into clear and definite certainties.

Job 14:9 "[Yet] through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant."

As soon as it smells it, or perceives it, is sensible of it, or partakes of its efficacy.

Denoting both how speedily, and how easily, at once as it were, it buds forth through the virtue either of rain water that descends upon it, or river water by which it is planted, or by any means conveyed unto it.

Particularly this is true of the willow, which delights in watery places; and, when it is in the circumstances before described, will by the benefit of water bud out again, even when its stock has been seemingly dead.

"And bring forth boughs like a plant":

As if it was a new plant, or just planted.

So the Vulgate Latin version, as "when it was first planted"; or as a plant that sends forth many branches.

The design of this simile is to show that man's case is worse than that of trees, which when cut down sprout out again, and are in the place where they were before.

But man, when he is cut down by death, rises up no more in the same place.

He is seen no more in it, and the place that knew him knows him no more.

Where he falls he lies until the general resurrection.

This is speaking of the roots appearing to be dead, and coming back to life, when water gets to the roots.

Job 14:10 "But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where [is] he?"

His body by degrees rotting away; or is cut off, as this word is used (Exodus 17:13; Isa. 14:12).

"Where is he?"

I.e. he is nowhere; or he is not, to wit, in this world, as that phrase is commonly used (see Job 3:16; 7:8, 21).

Job was speaking of the flesh of man, as if it was what man really was.

The flesh of man does die, and does not live again.

The flesh which was made of dust returns to the dust of the earth.

The ghost that man gives up, is the spirit that rises from that body to live either in heaven or hell.

Job 14:11 "[As] the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up:"

The words may be rendered either without the "as", and denote dissimilitude.

And the sense is, that the waters go from the sea and return again, as with the tide.

"And the flood decayeth and drieth up":

And yet is supplied again with water: "but man lieth down, and riseth not again" (Job 14:12).

Or else with the "as", and express likeness; as the waters when they fail from the sea, or get out of lakes, and into another channel, never return more.

And as a flood, occasioned by the waters of a river overflowing its banks, never return into it any more.

So man, when he dies, never returns to this world any more.

The flood always goes away and leaves the clay of the earth.

The river that dries up does the same.

This was Job saying that he had dried up, and was returning to the clay of the earth.

Job 14:12 "So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens [be] no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep."

Or "and", or "but man lieth down"; in the grave when he dies, as on a bed, and takes his rest from all his labors, toil and troubles, and lies asleep, and continues so till the resurrection morning.

And riseth not":

From off his bed, or comes not out of his grave into this world, to the place where he was, and to be engaged in the affairs of life as he was before, and never by his own power.

And whenever he will rise, it will be by the power of God, and this not till the last day, when Christ shall appear in person to judge the world.

Notice, "till the heavens be no more".

The body of man lies in the grave decaying away to return to the dust it came from.

Job was not denying that there would be a resurrection, but was speaking of the immediate death awaiting him.

In verses 13-17, Job asked to die and remain in the grave until God's anger was over, then be raised to life again when God called him back (verses 13-15).

If he were dead, God wouldn't be watching every step, counting every sin (verse 16); it would all be hidden (verse 17).

Here was the hope of resurrection for those who trusted God.

Job had hope that if he died, he would live again (verse 14).

Verses 13-14

Sheol is the Old Testament term for the place of the departed dead.

Job longs for death as a release from the trials of earth.

His question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" is answered (19:25-26; see notes on 19:23-27).

There are several questions raised in this book.

They all express man's desire to know who he is, why he was born, and where he is going.

Job 14:13 "O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time, and remember me!"

In some secret and safe place, under the shadow of thy wings and favor, that I may have some support and comfort from thee.

"Until thy wrath be past":

While I am oppressed with such grievous and various calamities; which he calls God's wrath.

Because they were, or seemed to be, the effects of his wrath.

"A set time":

To wit, to my sufferings, as thou hast done to my life (Job 14:5).

"Remember me":

I.e. wherein thou wilt remember me, to wit, in mercy, or so as to deliver me.

For it is well known that God is frequently said to forget those whom he suffers to continue in misery, and to remember those whom he delivers out of it.

Job would rather die and have his body lie in the grave, so that he would be hidden, until the anger of God was passed.

He knew that God would not forget him, and let him stay there forever.

Job 14:14 "If a man die, shall he live [again]? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."

Although Job speaks here about the finality of death in this age, Jesus taught that anyone who dies in this age will indeed "live again" in the next, either dwelling in the presence of Almighty God (John 11:23-26; 1 Cor. 15:3-57), or in the suffering and torment of hell (Rev. 20:13-15).

Life is never finished at the grave for the Christian, the grave is where real life begins.

The answer to this is of course yes.

It was as if Job was wanting the answer to that to be no.

He wanted to depart to get out of his pain and suffering.

He was looking to that time when he would be changed.

His body of flesh would give way to his spiritual body.

Job 14:15 "Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands."

First, at death, thou shalt call my body to the grave and my soul to thyself, and I will cheerfully answer, "here I am".

Gracious souls readily answer death's summons, and appear to his writ.

Their spirits are not forcibly required of them, as was that of the rich man (Luke 12:20), but willingly resigned by them.

And the earthly tabernacle not violently pulled down, but voluntarily laid down.

Second at the resurrection thou shalt call me out of the grave by the voice of the archangel, and I will answer and come at thy call.

"Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands":

A love for the soul, which thou hast made.

And new, made by thy grace; and for the body, which is also the work of thy hands, and to which thou wilt have a desire, having prepared glory for it in a world of glory.

Job was the "work of thine hands" here.

Job knew that he was God's creation.

He knew that God would call him, and he would answer.

Job 14:16 "For now thou numberest my steps: dost thou not watch over my sin?"

Figures expressing the keen scrutiny with which God watches man's life in order to detect his false steps and observe his every sin (compare Job 13:27).

God knew each step that Job had made.

He also knew if Job had sinned.

Mankind has no secrets from God.

God knows even the things that are done in secret.

Job 14:17 "My transgression [is] sealed up in a bag, and thou sewest up mine iniquity."

As writings or other choice things, that they may be safely kept, and all of them brought forth upon occasion.

And not one of them forgotten or lost (Compare Deut. 32:44; Job 37:7; Hosea 13:12).

"Thou sewest up mine iniquity":

I.e. thou keeps all my sins in your memory, and fastens the guilt of them upon my conscience.

Or, thou adds to my sin, one sin to another; the follies of my youth (Job 13:26), or to those of my younger years.

Or, thou adds to my punishment, i.e. thou punishes me more than mine iniquities deserve, all things considered.

For this sinful thought seems sometimes to have risen in Job's mind, as may be gathered from different parts of this book.

Which therefore Zophar decries and disproves (Job 11:6).

This was as if God had a bag that he put each sin into and sealed them up, so they could not escape.

Verses 18-22

The Christian response to suffering should be neither denial nor fatalistic surrender.

Jesus offers people hope beyond the immediacy of their pain.

The promise of eternal life prevents present anguish from having the last word.

Job returned to his complaint before God, and reverted to a hopeless mood, speaking about death as inevitable (verses 18-20), and causing separation (verse 21).

He was painfully sad to think of it (verse 22).

Job 14:18 "And surely the mountain falling cometh to nought, and the rock is removed out of his place."

Rather:

But compare Job 13:3-4.

The “mountain falling” is the mountain from which great forces detach pieces, as man is subjected to the shattering strokes of God.

The second clause shows this to be the meaning.

Job was comparing his loss of everything he had, including his children, with the sudden collapse of a mountain.

When a volcano erupts, sometimes half of the mountain comes off at the top.

Rocks are thrown sometimes for miles away from where they had been.

Just as this calamity of the mountain had been sudden, Job's loss was sudden.

Job 14:19 "The waters wear the stones: thou wastest away the things which grow [out] of the dust of the earth; and thou destroyest the hope of man."

The turbulent waters wear away the stones of the brook by their constant action.

"Thou wastest away":

Rather, the floods thereof (i.e. of the waters), do wash away the soil of the earth.

"And thou destroyest":

I.e. so thou destroyest.

The “hope” of man which God destroys is not the specific hope of a renewed life (Job 14:7).

This idea is dismissed; but more general, the hope of life.

The never ending washing of water over rocks can finally cut a hole into them.

The never ending pain of Job's had cut a hole into his heart.

He was full of despair and hopelessness.

Job 14:20 "Thou prevailest for ever against him, and he passeth: thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away."

When once thou take away this life, it is gone forever.

For he speaks not here of man's future and eternal life in another world.

"He passeth":

I.e. he dies, or is about to die.

Man's death is oft called a passage, or a going, to intimate that it is not an annihilation, but only a translation of him into another place and state.

His countenance; either,

(1) His visage, which by death and its harbingers is quite transformed in color and shape, as we see by daily experience. Or;

(2) The face and state of his affairs, as to worldly riches, and pleasures, and honors, all which he leaves behind him.

"Sendest him away":

To his long home by death.

Job would feel like fighting back, if he had known this was an attack from Satan.

He knew it was useless to fight God.

Job thought God was sending this endless oppression, and he was aware he would not be able to endure for long.

Job 14:21 "His sons come to honor, and he knoweth [it] not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth [it] not of them."

The meaning seems to be, "If his sons come to honor, it is of no advantage to him.

In the remote and wholly separate region of Sheol he will not be aware of it."

"And they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them":

Equally, in the opposite case, if his sons are brought low, he is ignorant of it, and unaffected by their fate.

After a man is dead, his family can come to honor him, but he would not even know they were there.

Job 14:22 "But his flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn."

This is man's condition; he is miserable both when he dies, because he dies without hope of returning to life, as he had discoursed before.

And (as he now adds), while he lives, while his flesh is upon him, and his soul within him.

While the soul is clothed with or united to the body, he feels sharp pain in his body, and bitter grief in his soul.

Seeing therefore the state of man upon earth is so vain and unhappy every way, LORD, give me some comfort to sweeten my life, or take away my life from me.

A man in such great pain as Job is here, was sorrowful of soul.

Job Chapter 14 Questions

1. Man that is born of woman is of _____, and full of trouble.
2. What was Job speaking of in this verse?
3. What is the normal life expectancy today?
4. The flesh of man is not made to live _____.
5. What is man compared to in verse 2?
6. How long do Eastern flowers generally last?
7. How is a shadow like the flower?
8. What was amazing to Job about God's relationship with man?
9. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?
10. The number of days and years of a man's life are known only of _____.
11. What happens when our flesh dies?
12. In verse 6, what was Job asking for?
13. How can a tree live again, after it is cut down?
14. What is the ghost that man gives up at the death of his flesh?
15. What is left when the flood goes away?
16. What does the author want you to notice in verse 12?
17. Even though Job died and was in the grave, what did he know God would do?
18. If a man die, shall he live again?
19. His body of flesh will give way to his _____ body.
20. Who was the "work of thine hands" in verse 15?

21. What was meant by transgressions sealed up in a bag?
22. How is one way a mountain falls suddenly?
23. What was Job comparing to the mountain falling suddenly?
24. The never-ending washing of water over rock will do what to it?
25. This never-ending pain of Job was doing what to him?