

Job Chapter 11

In Verses 1-20 we see Zophar's first speech to Job. He joins his suffering friend in desiring an audience with God, but for the opposite reason, so that "God would speak" clearly to Job about the depth of his "iniquity" and his need to repent.

Zophar the Naamathite now stepped in to interrogate Job. He was quite close to his friends and chose to pound Job with the same law of retaliation. Job must repent, he said, not understanding the reality. He was indignant at Job's protests of innocence (see Job chapter 20 for Zophar's other speech).

Verses 1-3: Zophar is full of reproof and condemnation. He clearly assumes that Job is guilty, calling him a talker, a liar and a mocker. Job's friends took his claims of integrity to the extreme, as if he was saying he was sinless, and then attacked him for it.

Job 11:1 "Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said,"

The third of Job's friends, that came to visit him (see Job 2:11), and who perhaps might be the youngest, since his turn was to speak last. And he appears to have less modesty and prudence, and more fire and heat in him; than his other friends. Though he might be the more irritated by observing, that their arguments were baffled by Job, and had no manner of effect on him, to cause him to recede from his first sentiments and conduct.

Verses 2-3: "A man full of talk be justified": The allegations against Job moved to a new level. Not only was Job guilty and unrepentant, he was also an empty talker. In fact, Job's long-winded defense of his innocence and God's apparent injustice was sin worthy of rebuke, in Zophar's mind.

Job 11:2 "Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should a man full of talk be justified?"

Truly, sometimes it should not. Silence is the best confutation of impertinence, and puts the greatest contempt upon it. Zophar means, do you think to carry your case by your long, tedious discourses, consisting of empty words, without weight or reason?

"And should a man full of talk be justified?" Shall we, by our silence, seem to approve of your errors? Or, shall we think thy cause the better because you use more words than we do?

Zophar, Job's third friend, had supposedly come to comfort Job in his sorrows. He was not a comfort. He began this scalding reprimand of his friend Job by saying that he spoke a multitude of words. A multitude of words in Scripture is spoken of as folly, or even sin. He was speaking to Job, as if he was a foolish sinner. He was saying that all of the talk that Job had done would not justify him.

Job 11:3 "Should thy lies make men hold their peace? and when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?"

That is, your false opinions and assertions, both concerning yourself and your own innocence, concerning the counsels and ways of God.

"Make men hold their peace?" As if your arguments were unanswerable. And when you mock both God and us, and our friendly and faithful counsels.

"Shall no man make thee ashamed?" By discovering your errors and follies.

Zophar was the worst of the three friends. He was accusing Job of lying and even of mocking God.

Job 11:4 "For thou hast said, My doctrine [is] pure, and I am clean in thine eyes."

"Clean in thine eyes": Job never claimed sinlessness; in fact, he acknowledges that he had sinned (Job 7:21; 13:26). But he still maintained his innocence of any great transgression or attitude of unrepentance, affirming his sincerity and integrity as a man of faith and obedience to God. This claim infuriated Zophar, and he wished God Himself would confirm the accusations of Job's friends (verse 5).

He had condemned Job in his heart already. He was speaking of Job's statement that his doctrine was pure. Job knew that he was clean in the eyes of the LORD. We know that he was too, because that was what God told Satan about Job.

Verses 5-6: Pastor and scholar Andrew W. Blackwood wrote about this passage, "Such a remark might have considerable value if spoken while looking into the mirror. But from a man who is not suffering, to a man who is suffering, this remark is cruel and utterly without any value at all."

Job 11:5 "But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee;"

Plead with thee according to thy desire: he would soon put thee to silence. We are commonly ready, with great assurance, to interest God in our quarrels. But they are not always in the right who are most forward to appeal to his judgment, and prejudge it against their antagonists.

Job 11:6 "And that he would show thee the secrets of wisdom, that [they are] double to that which is! Know therefore that God exacteth of thee [less] than thine iniquity [deserveth]."

"Secrets of wisdom": Job would have been much wiser if he had only known the unknowable secret of God; in this case the scene in heaven between God and Satan would have clarified everything. But Job couldn't know the secret wisdom of God (verses 7-9). Zophar should have applied his point to himself. If God's wisdom was so deep, high, long and broad, how was it that he could understand it and have all the answers? Like his friends, Zophar thought he understood

God and reverted to the same law of retaliation, the sowing and reaping principle, to again indict Job. He implied that Job was wicked (verses 10-11), and thought he was wise, though actually he was out of control as if he were a "wild donkey" (verse 12).

As terrible as the attack of Satan had been on Job, Zophar felt that it was not enough for the sins of Job. Zophar wanted God to speak out loud and condemn Job, where they could all hear it. In God is all Wisdom and Truth. Zophar was saying to Job, that he had no wisdom. He thought if Job had been wise, he would have repented of his sins by now.

Job 11:7 "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?"

Literally, can you attain to the searching out of God? Can you suppose, that is, that whatever your wisdom, learning, subtlety, sagacity, power of insight, you will be able to search out and fully know the character, attributes, modes of thought and actions of the Most High? No. In one sense, all men do well to profess themselves "Agnostics". Not that they can know nothing of God, but that they can never know him fully and never exhaust the knowledge of him. As the apostle says, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God"! "how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor?" (Rom. 11:33-34).

"Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Rather. Can you attain to the perfection of the Almighty? Understand, i.e., his inconceivable perfectness.

He was asking Job if he thought that he really could know God? He was saying that the wisdom and knowledge of Job would not help him to know God. He was telling Job, that in no way could he measure up to the expectations of the Almighty God. Zophar was a tormenter, not a comforter.

Job 11:8 "[It is] as high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than hell; what canst thou know?"

Literally, the heights of the heavens; what can you do? But the meaning is probably that expressed in the Authorized Version. God's perfectness is unattainable by man's thought, as the heights of the heavens are by his feet. Deeper than hell; literally, than Sheol, or the receptacle of the dead (see comment on Job 10:21). Paul speaks of the "deep things," or rather, "the depths" of God (see 1 Cor. 2:10).

"What canst thou know? How small a part of the Divine nature can any man thoroughly comprehend and know!

Job 11:9 "The measure thereof [is] longer than the earth, and broader than the sea."

Length is generally ascribed to the earth, and width to the sea. The ends of the earth are used for a great distance, and the sea is called the great and wide sea (see Psalm 72:1). But God and his perfections, particularly his wisdom and understanding, are infinite (Psalm 147:5). And will

admit of no dimensions; as his love, so his wisdom, has a height which cannot be reached, a depth that cannot be fathomed, and a length and breadth immeasurable (see Eph. 3:18). From hence it appears that God is omniscient, omnipresent, and incomprehensible; and since he is to be found in Christ, and in him only, it is in vain for us to seek for him elsewhere. Next the sovereignty of God is spoken of.

This was speaking of the perfection of the Almighty filling the earth and the seas. The following Scripture says it best.

Verses 10-12: In his rhetorical question in 9:12, Job had compared his own cries to the braying of a wild donkey (6:5). Here, Zophar echoes his question but draws the opposite conclusion and accuses Job of being foolish and “empty-headed” (Psalms 10:14: 39:5).

Job 11:10 "If he cut off, and shut up, or gather together, then who can hinder him?"

Namely, a person or family.

"And shut up": In prison, or in the hands of an enemy, or in the net of affliction and trouble (Psalm 66:11).

"Or gather together": Make our condition straight and narrow, as some interpret it. Or, gather together as tares to the fire, or gather to himself man's breath and spirit (Job 34:14).

"Then who can hinder him? From doing what he pleases with his creatures? Who can either block the sentence, or oppose the execution? Who can control his power or arraign his wisdom and justice? If he, who made all out of nothing, thinks fit to reduce all to nothing; if he that separated between light and darkness, dry land and sea at first, is pleased to gather them together again. If he that made, think proper to unmake, who can turn him; alter his mind, or stay his hand, or impede or impeach his proceedings?

The answer of course, was no one, not even Satan. We must keep remembering that God gave Satan permission to do this to Job. This was in no way a punishment on Job for sins. This was a proving to Satan and to the on-looking angels that Job was truly a righteous man, and that nothing Satan could do to him would change that.

Job 11:11 "For he knoweth vain men: he seeth wickedness also; will he not then consider [it]?"

Though men know but little of God, and therefore are very unfit judges of his counsels and actions, yet God knows man exactly. He knows that every man in the world is guilty of much vanity and folly, and therefore sees sufficient reason for his severity against the best men.

"He seeth wickedness also": He perceives the wickedness of evil men, though it be covered with the veil of religion.

"Will he not then consider it?" Shall he only see it as an idle spectator, and not observe it as a judge to punish it?

The worst of this was that Zophar was accusing Job of being vain in his own conceit. He was saying that Job had been pretending to be a Godly man, but was not faithful to God in his heart.

Job 11:12 "For vain man would be wise, though man be born [like] a wild ass's colt."

Man, who since the fall is void of all true wisdom, pretends to be wise, and able to pass a censure upon all God's ways and works.

"Born *like* a wild ass's colt": Ignorant, dull, and stupid, as to divine things, and yet heady and untraceable. Such is man by his birth; this evil is now natural and hereditary, and therefore common to all men. Of consequence it is not strange, if Job partake of the common distemper.

Zophar believed that the troubles which had come to Job was because he was vain and puffed up with pride. Zophar believed they came on Job to cause him to repent.

Verses 13-20: Zophar continues to assume that Job is a sinner but reminds him that God will forgive his sin upon his confession and repentance.

Zophar asserted that God operates on the basis of "You give Me something, and I will give you something." But God does not operate this way. His creation has nothing to give Him that is worth any value (Isa. 64:6).

Verses 13-14: Zophar started out this section speaking directly to Job, "If thou prepare ..." and concluded speaking proverbially, "But the "eyes of the wicked ...". In so doing Zophar avoided directly calling Job wicked, but succeeded with ever greater force by being indirect. In the end, he told Job that his sin would bring about his death.

Job 11:13 "If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands toward him;"

Thy business, O Job, is not to quarrel with thy Maker, or his works. But to address thyself to him by prayer and supplication, sincerely repenting of all your hard speeches, and other sins against God, and seeking him with a pure and upright heart; without which your prayers will be in vain.

"Stretch out thine hands": I.e. pray, which is here described by its usual gesture (as Job 15:25; Psalm 88:9).

"Towards him": I.e. to God, as appears both from the nature of the thing, and from the context.

Job 11:14 "If iniquity [be] in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles."

If you have in your hand, or possession, any goods gotten by injustice or oppression, as it seems they supposed he had. Or, he means more generally, if you allow yourself in any sinful practices, the hand being put for action, whereof it is the instrument.

"Put it far away": Keep yourself at a great distance, not only from such actions, but also from the very occasions and appearances of them.

"Let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles": That is, in thy habitation, either in thyself or in thy family. Whose sins Job was obliged, as far as he could, to prevent or reform, as it seems he had done (Job 1:5). He said, tabernacles, because anciently the habitations of great men consisted of several tents or tabernacles.

He was giving Job advice here. He wanted Job to put his wickedness far from him, so that God would hear his plea for forgiveness.

Job 11:15 "For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear:"

With cheerfulness and holy boldness.

"Without spot": Having a clear and unspotted conscience.

"Yea, thou shalt be steadfast": Shall have a strong and comfortable assurance of God's favor, and shalt be settled, without any fear of losing thy happiness.

After Job had driven his iniquity out of his life, then he could look to heaven and to God for help. He reminded Job that if he was steadfast in the LORD, he had nothing to fear.

Job 11:16 "Because thou shalt forget [thy] misery, [and] remember [it] as waters [that] pass away:"

Thy happiness shall be so great that it shall blot out the remembrance of thy past miseries.

"*And remember it as waters that pass away*": Remember it no more than men remember either a land-flood, which, as it comes, so it goes away suddenly and leaves few or no marks or memorials behind it. Or the waters of a river, which pass by in constant succession.

Zophar believed that if Job would repent, his troubles would go away and he would remember them no more. It would be gone as the water passes away.

Job 11:17 "And [thine] age shall be clearer than the noonday; thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning."

Literally, shall arise above the noonday; i.e. "exceed it in splendor." Instead of the "thick darkness" to which Job is looking forward (Job 10:21-22). He shall bask in a light brighter than that of the sun at noon.

"Thou shalt shine forth": The Hebrew cannot possibly bear this meaning. The uncommon word used is allied with "obscurity", and if a verb should mean "thou shalt be obscure," rather than "thou shalt shine forth." But it is perhaps a substantive, meaning "darkness;" and the translation of the Revised Version is perhaps correct: "Though there be darkness."

"Thou shalt be as the morning": "Thy light," as Professor Lee explains, "shall gradually rise and expand itself far and wide." It shall dispel the darkness, and take its place," shining more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18).

Zophar was saying if Job would do as he had suggested, he would not face the darkness of the grave and hell. He would bask in the Light of the LORD which was greater than the noonday sun. He would be renewed in the LORD.

Job 11:18 "And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope; yea, thou shalt dig [about thee, and] thou shalt take thy rest in safety."

From coming into like darkness, difficulties, and distress again, and from every evil and enemy. Nothing shall come nigh to disturb and hurt, nothing to be feared from any quarter, all around: or "shalt be confident". Have a strong faith and full assurance of it, in the love of God, in the living Redeemer, and in the promises which respect the life that now is, and that which is to come.

"Because there is hope": Of the mercy of God, of salvation by Christ, and of eternal glory and happiness, as well as of a continuance of outward prosperity. Faith and hope mutually assist each other. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and hope of better and future things on a good foundation encourages faith and confidence.

"Yea, thou shalt dig about thee": To let in stakes for the pitching and fixing of tents to dwell in, and for more commodious pasturage. Or for wells of water, for the supply both of the family and the flocks. Or rather, for ditches and trenches to secure from thieves and robbers, or for drains to carry off floods of water.

"And thou shalt take thy rest in safety": Lie down on the bed and sleep in the night season in peace and quietness, having nothing to fear. Being well entrenched, and secure from plundering and flooding. And, more especially, being hedged about and protected by the power and providence of God (see Psalm 3:5). The Targum is, "thou shalt prepare a grave, and lie down, and sleep secure."

Zophar was saying something that really would happen to Job after he was restored. It was not something that Zophar really wanted for Job however. He said this to remind Job of the wonders of how it used to be. Job's hope was not in what Zophar had said, or not said, but in the LORD.

Job 11:19 "Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make [thee] afraid; yea, many shall make suit unto thee."

Either lie down on his bed, as before, or by his flocks, and where they lie down, and none should disturb him or them. Not thieves and robbers, such as the Chaldeans and Sabeans had been to him, nor lions, bears, or wolves.

"Yea, many shall make suit unto thee": Make their supplications, present their requests and petitions for relief under necessitous circumstances, or for protection from the injuries and insults of others. As the poor and needy, the widow and fatherless, had done to him in times past, when in his prosperity, and when he was a friend unto them, and the father of them (see Prov. 19:6). Or, "the great ones shall make suit to thee"; to have his favor and friendship, his counsel and advice, his company and conversation. He should be applied unto and courted by men of all sorts, which would be no small honor to him (see Psalm 45:12).

When Job was restored, there would be no warring parties from his neighbors. Instead of stealing from Job, they would be bringing things to him. Again, this was not what Zophar wished for Job, but it was what would happen.

Job 11:20 "But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope [shall be as] the giving up of the ghost."

Or be consumed. Either with grief and fears for their sore calamities; or with long looking for what they shall never attain, as this phrase is taken (Psalm 69:3; Jer. 14:6; Lam. 4:17). And this shall be thy condition; O Job, if thou persist in thine impiety.

"They shall not escape": They shall never obtain deliverance out of their distresses, but shall perish in them.

"As the giving up of the ghost": I.e. shall be as vain and desperate as the hope of life is in a man, when he is at the very point of death. Or, as a puff of breath, which is gone in a moment without all hopes of recovery.

Zophar was speaking this, as if it was the fate of Job. In reality, he was speaking of himself and what would come to him, because he had spoken evil of Job. He was saying that Job had no other hope, but death. He would be needing the prayers of Job to save himself from the fate he just spoke of Job.

Job Chapter 11 Questions

1. Zophar had supposedly come to _____ Job.
2. A multitude of words in Scripture is spoken of as _____.
3. _____ was the worst of three friends.
4. Job said that his doctrine was _____.

5. Job was pure in _____ eyes.
6. As terrible as the attack of Satan on Job had been, Zophar wanted it to be _____.
7. Zophar thought that Job would have _____, if he had any wisdom.
8. In verse 7, Zophar says that Job would never measure up to what?
9. Zophar was a _____, not a comforter.
10. What did the perfection of the Almighty fill?
11. Who can hinder God?
12. We must keep remembering that _____ gave Satan permission to attack Job.
13. What was Zophar accusing Job of in verse 11?
14. In verse 12, what was Zophar saying he believes?
15. Why did he say that Job should put his wickedness far from him?
16. When did Zophar say that Job could look to heaven for help?
17. Zophar says that Job would not face the darkness of hell and the grave, if he would do what?
18. What, that we read in verse 18, really would happen to Job?
19. Did Zophar want this for Job?
20. What was verse 19 speaking of?
21. What would happen to the wicked?
22. Who did Zophar think this wicked was?
23. Who was really the wicked one?
24. Who would have to pray for Zophar to save him?