

Session 9

*Job's Initial Response to Zophar*

*Job 12*

Scriptures

<i>Job 12:1-2</i>	<i>Job 12:6-8</i>	<i>Job 12:16</i>	<i>Job 12:23</i>
<i>Matthew 6:7</i>	<i>Job 12:9</i>	<i>Job 12:17</i>	<i>Job 12:24</i>
<i>Isaiah 29:14</i>	<i>Job 12:10</i>	<i>I Corinthians 3:19</i>	<i>Daniel 4:34-36</i>
<i>Job 12:3</i>	<i>Isaiah 45:1</i>	<i>Job 12:18</i>	<i>Job 12:25</i>
<i>II Timothy 3:12</i>	<i>Isaiah 45:2</i>	<i>Job 12:19</i>	<i>Deuteronomy 28:28</i>
<i>Job 12:4</i>	<i>Isaiah 45:3</i>	<i>Job 12:20</i>	<i>Job 13:1-2</i>
<i>II Peter 3:3</i>	<i>Job 12:11-13</i>	<i>Job 12:21</i>	
<i>Proverbs 14:9</i>	<i>Job 12:14</i>	<i>Job 12:22</i>	
<i>Job 12:5</i>	<i>Job 12:15</i>	<i>Psalms 21:11</i>	

*Job 12:1-2 And Job answered and said,  
2 No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you.*

Job said in sarcasm what his three friends believed to be true—that their wisdom was rare and that wisdom would die with them.

Job thus rebukes his friends, who had far higher opinions of themselves than was merited by the superficial wisdom they brought forth.

They all had spoken at great length, but they did not help Job at all. It is also common with both the heathen and the hypocrite, that they foolishly think that the more they speak the greater chance they will be heard by the Lord.

*Matthew 6:7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*

An abundance of words, though, does not cause the Lord to answer prayer, nor can it help to convince the guilty of sin.

*Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, Matt. 6:7*  
*Their much speaking.*—This thought was the root-evil of the worship of the heathen or the Pharisee. It gave to prayer a quantitative mechanical force, increased in proportion to the number of prayers offered. If fifty failed, a hundred might succeed.

If the Holy Spirit does not prompt reproof, then the guaranteed error in human correction, will prohibit any true change in the sinner's heart.

The Lord has also declared that all the wisdom of this world, characterized by human thought, reason, and opinion, shall together be brought to naught.

*Isaiah 29:14 Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.*

***Job 12:3 But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these?***

Job's friends thought themselves superior in knowledge primarily because their own lives had not been touched by tragedy.

Many a man may live his life unaffected by Satan, unaware that the real reason why he has not been singled out for devilish attack, is simply because he poses no real threat to Satan.

Because Job sought genuine and sincere fellowship with the Lord and revered His holy name, Satan sought his destruction.

Hence, it was both Job's fear and faith in God, which prompted the devil's jealousy, and for this he sought his demise.

***II Timothy 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.***

Consider as well that when believers join themselves to God, they are no longer innocent bystanders in the war between the Lord and Satan. To possess a fear and loyalty toward the Lord, will undoubtedly, arise indignation in Satan.

***Job 12:4 I am as one mocked of his neighbour, who calleth upon God, and he answereth him: the just upright man is laughed to scorn.***

Just as Job was mocked by those around him, God's Word reveals that there will be an increase of mockers in the last days.

***II Peter 3:3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts.***

Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem mocked Nehemiah and his building of the wall of Jerusalem (Neh. 2:19). Jeremiah was mocked when he preached for the Lord (Jer. 20:7). The apostles were mocked for drinking new wine when they were supernaturally filled with the Lord's Holy Spirit (Acts 2:13).

Throughout Jesus' journey to the cross, Herod, the religious leaders, and the soldiers, all mocked the Savior (Luke 23:11-23).

Hence, it is often the case with sinners to mock those who possess true faith, even as they foolishly mock their own sins against God.

Fools also in mocking sin, bring both shame and judgment upon themselves.

***Proverbs 14:9 Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour.***

*Benson Commentary, Prov. 14:9*

*. . . Sin deludes, or makes a mock of, fools, or sinners; that is, exposes them to shame and contempt . . .*

***Job 12:5 He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.***

This verse on the surface can be perceived as difficult to understand. The *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary* helps in its interpretation.

As the torch is to the wanderer, so Job to his friends. Once they gladly used his aid in their need; now they in prosperity mock him in his need.

Because Job's friends were safe and at ease, they could mock his words.

Sadly, he who is not afflicted by adversity can easily think himself superior to those who are.

***Job 12:6–8 The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly.***

<sup>7</sup> ***But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee:***

<sup>8</sup> ***Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.***

Job speaks of robbers prospering and strong beasts prevailing upon the earth. He uses realities present in nature to defend the fact that just because men are afflicted, does not mean that they are always sinners.

***Job 12:9 Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the LORD hath wrought this?***

By referencing creation and the creatures in it, Job rightly declares that all is under God's providence, and as such, part of His divine will. Job views his own life as no different than this.

*Benson Commentary, Job 12:9*

*Who knoweth not in all these—Or, by all these brute creatures; that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this—That God, by his power and wisdom, hath created and ordered all that is in them, or that is done by and among them. Job meant in these verses to express his firm opinion that all animate and inanimate nature clearly bore testimony to the creating power and overruling providence of God: see Nehemiah 9:6. This is the only time that we meet with the name Jehovah in all the discourses between Job and his friends. For God in that age was more known by the name of Shaddai, the Almighty.*

***Job 12:10 In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.***

The soul and breath life of every living creature is in God's hands.

No doubt, Job knew what men are woefully ignorant of today, that *the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind* remain in the hands and will of God, and that all life is subject to His divine will.

Reminding us as well that the only soul which shall enter eternity, shall do so, only because of divine will.

If men were truly aware and actually believed this divine truth, that all life is in God's hands, then they would hold a much greater reverential fear for God—that in the hand, power, and decision of God, *is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.*

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 12:10*

*In whose hand is the soul of every living thing—Margin, "Life." The margin is the more correct rendering. The idea is, that all are under the control of God. He gives life, and health, and happiness when he pleases, and when he chooses he takes them away. His sovereignty is manifested, says Job, in the inferior creation, or among the beasts of the field, the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of heaven.*

*And the breath of all mankind*—Margin, “Flesh of man.” The margin is in accordance with the Hebrew. The meaning is, that man is subjected to the same laws as the rest of the creation. God is a sovereign, and the same great principles of administration may be seen in all his works.

Few records reveal God’s sovereignty over the affairs of men more than the revelation given to Isaiah concerning Cyrus, the Persian king who returned the Babylonian Jews to their homeland. When also the Lord anointed even a non-Jew, to carry out His divine will for His people (Ezra 1:1–4).

***Isaiah 45:1 Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut;***

*Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary, Isa. 45:1–4*

Cyrus is called God’s anointed; he was designed and qualified for his great service by the counsel of God. The gates of Babylon which led to the river, were left open the night that Cyrus marched his army into the empty channel. The Lord went before him, giving entrance to the cities he besieged. He gave him also treasures, which had been hidden in secret places. The true God was to Cyrus an unknown God; yet God foreknew him; he called him by his name. The exact fulfilment of this must have shown Cyrus that Jehovah was the only true God, and that it was for the sake of Israel that he prospered. In all the changes of states and kingdoms, God works out the good of his church.

***Isaiah 45:2 I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron:***

Cyrus was the Lord’s anointed, and his task was according to divine will. Thus the prophecy is that God would go before him, and destroy all obstacles that could hinder his success. Ultimately, it was the Lord’s divine power that ensured Cyrus’ victory.

***Isaiah 45:3 And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.***

By the Lord’s blessing His people with hidden treasures, they would be brought to know that He is both with and for them. What a wonderful revelation is hidden in this verse, that by blessings, riches, and spiritual treasures the people of God are brought to know both the reality and generosity of God.

In truth, both blessings and curses are purposed to awaken men to the presence of the Lord, and His spiritual activity in the earth.

*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, Isa. 45:3*

*That thou mayest know*—That from these signal successes, and these favors of heaven, you may learn that Yahweh is the true God. This he would learn because he would see that he owed it to heaven (see the note at Isaiah 45:2); and because the prediction which God had made of his success would convince him that he was the true and only God.

***Job 12:11–13 Doth not the ear try words? and the mouth taste his meat?***

<sup>12</sup> ***With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding.***

<sup>13</sup> ***With him is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding.***

Bildad had spoken of those of the past possessing a level of wisdom; Job does not refute this, but rightfully adds that it is the Lord Who is the true source of it.

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, Job 12:13

*With him is wisdom*—Margin, correctly, “God.” However much wisdom there may seem to be with aged men, yes the true wisdom—that which was supreme and worthy of the name—was to be found in God alone. The object of Job was to lead the thoughts up to God . . . He made all things; he sustains all things; he reverses the condition of people at his pleasure; he sets up whom he pleases, and when he chooses he casts them down. His works are contrary in many respects to what we should anticipate; and the sense of all is, that God was a holy and a righteous sovereign, and that such were the reverses under his administration that we could not argue that he treated all according to their character on earth.

***Job 12:14 Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening.***

That which the Lord tears down, if He so desires, can never be raised to life again. This is true of cities and souls. Biblical examples confirming this truth include the destruction of the ancient cities Babylon (Isa. 13:19–20), Edom (Jer. 49:16–17), and Tyre (Ezek. 26:3–14), and their never being built up again. What the Lord *breaketh down, it cannot be built up again*.

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, Job 12:14

*He shutteth up a man*—He can shut up a man in such difficulties and straits that he cannot extricate himself . . . “he shuts up a man in the grave (בַּקְבוּרָתָא) and it cannot be opened.”

***Job 12:15 Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up: also he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth.***

God's power over the earth is clearly demonstrated by His control over the water above it, whereby He can either make a land to prosper, to feed and nurture the earth's inhabitants, or if necessary, withhold rain to ruin them.

*Pulpit Commentary*, Job 12:15

*Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up.* God, at his pleasure, causes great droughts, which are among the worst calamities that can happen. He withholds the blessed rain from heaven (Deuteronomy 11:17; 1 Kings 8:35; 1 Kings 17:1), and the springs shrink, and the rivers dry up, and a fruitful land is turned into a desert, and famine stalks through the land, and men perish by thousands. Also he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth; i.e. he causes floods and inundations. Once upon a time he overwhelmed the whole earth, and destroyed almost the entire race of mankind, by a deluge of an extraordinary character, which so fixed itself in the human consciousness, that traces of it are to be found in the traditions of almost all the various races of men. But, beside this great occasion, he also in ten thousand other cases, causes, by means of floods, tremendous ruin and devastation, sweeping away crops and cattle, and even villages and cities, sometimes even “overturning the earth,” causing lakes to burst, rivers to change their course, vast tracts of land to be permanently submerged, and the contour of coasts to be altered.

***Job 12:16 With him is strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver are his.***

Though God did not create deceivers, He does maintain control over the extent of their influence.

Hence, though the Lord has no connection to those who deceive, still He has set bounds regarding the degree they can operate. In a similar manner, the Lord had set boundaries on Satan, regarding the affliction and harm allowed to be directed towards Job (Job 1:12).

Even the devil is not given *carte blanche* in order to enforce his full will in regards to man.

*Benson Commentary, Job 12:16*

*The deceived and the deceiver are his*—Wholly subject to his disposal. He governs the deceiver, and sets bounds to his deceits, how far they shall extend: he also overrules all this to his own glory, and the accomplishment of his righteous designs of trying the good and punishing wicked men, by giving them up to believe lies. Yet God is not the author of any error or sin, but only the wise and holy governor of it.

***Job 12:17 He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools.***

Human counselors are no match for divine providence. Hence, the perceived wise in the earth can be led to destruction, as easily as they can be revealed as fools.

***I Corinthians 3:19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.***

***Job 12:18 He looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle.***

Though kings may bind themselves together to form confederacies and seek to increase their power in the earth through unity, the Lord can bind them and place them in bonds, just as they have produced the captivity of others.

So also, just as easily as kings and rulers can bind men, so can God free them. This is evidenced in the supernatural acts of Peter being freed from prison (Acts 12:5–11), and the Jews' miraculous exodus from Egypt (Exod. 12:30–32).

***Job 12:19 He leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty.***

*Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, Job 12:19*

*princes*—rather, “priests,” as the Hebrew is rendered (Ps 99:6). Even the sacred ministers of religion are not exempt from reverses and captivity.

Just as the Lord maintains power over nations and their leaders, so does He hold the same power over those in religion. Therefore the priest can be as easily led away to captivity, as can the ruler.

Hence, whether it is world authority, or religious authority, each can be spoiled and overthrown, if in accordance with divine will.

***Job 12:20 He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged.***

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 12:20*

*He removeth away the speech of the trusty*—Margin, “lip of the faithful.” “He takes away the lip,” that is, he takes away the power of giving safe counsel or good advice. The “trusty” or “faithful” here refer to those of age and experience, and on whose counsel men are accustomed to rely. The meaning here is, that their most sagacious anticipations are disappointed, their wisest schemes are foiled. They fail—in their calculations of the [course] of events, and the arrangements of Providence are such that they could not anticipate what was to occur.

*The understanding of the aged*—To whom the young were accustomed to look up with deference and respect. The meaning here is, that they who were accustomed to give wise and sound advice, if left by God, give vain and foolish counsels.

***Job 12:21 He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty.***

No worldly prince or ruler can prevent the Lord from taking away his natural strength and/or earthly position.

Ultimately, every man is vulnerable to having God's will carried out regarding his life.

The point of these examples is to reiterate the spiritual truth that it is not actually men who rule the world, though they are chess pieces in it, but rather God.

***Job 12:22 He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death.***

In the Book of Esther, Haman is a wonderful example of how the Lord observes what is done in darkness, and responds by completely reversing the deceiver's plan. Haman's plot to destroy Mordecai and the Jews (Esth. 3:6), which he had orchestrated in darkness, with great deceit and cunningness, led to his own disgrace and public hanging (Esth. 7:10).

***Psalms 21:11 For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform.***

*Keil and Delitzsch Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, Job 12:22*

The meaning of Job 12:22 in this connection can only be, that there is nothing so finely spun out that God cannot make it visible. All secret plans of the wicked, all secret sins, and the deeds of the evil-doer though veiled in deep darkness, He bringeth before the tribunal of the world.

***Job 12:23 He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again.***

God increases and enlarges nations as regularly as He destroys them. Whenever then nations, governments, or people rise in influence upon the earth, and control vast amounts of territory, it is because of divine will. Whenever also the same nations are either shrunk, or completely removed from the earth and the annals of history, this also is the work of God.

In truth, a nation and/or people's destiny is solely in the hand of God.

***Job 12:24 He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way.***

Just as God can touch the outside of a man, so can He also either remove, or impart understanding and reason. Nebuchadnezzar, who was king over the Chaldean dynasty of Babylon, learned this lesson when he was restored from his madness, prompting him to spiritually realize through personal experience that the Lord reigns over all, including even the chief rulers of great military powers.

***Daniel 4:34-36 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation:***

<sup>35</sup> ***And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?***

<sup>36</sup> *At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.*

*Job 12:25 They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man.*

During his conversion the apostle Paul was made blind for a season (Acts 9:8–9) in order that he might be humbled and come to know the Lord's power over his life. Both blindness and the recovery of sight are manifestations of the Lord's divine authority over men.

Thus, just as easily as He can bring sight to the blind, so also can the Lord produce blindness in those who possess sight.

One of the Lord's judgments also for continued sin and resistance to divine will, is to smite those who do so, with even greater blindness and instability of mind.

*Deuteronomy 28:28 The LORD shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart.*

*Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary, Deut. 28:28*

Wherever the sinner goes, the curse of God follows; wherever he is, it rests upon him.

*Job 13:1–2 Lo, mine eye hath seen all this, mine ear hath heard and understood it.*

<sup>2</sup> *What ye know, the same do I know also: I am not inferior unto you.*

Job reminds his friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, that whatever they presumed to know of the Lord and His sovereignty over the earth, he was equally aware of it, if not more.

Job's friends had spoken of their understanding of divine providence; to this he proclaims, *I am not inferior unto you.*

*Benson Commentary, Job 12:3*

*But I have an understanding ... I am not inferior to you*—In these things; which he speaks, not in a way of boasting, but for the just vindication both of himself and of that cause of God, which, for the substance of it, he maintained rightly, as God himself attests, Job 42:6. *Who knoweth not such things*—The truth is, neither you nor I have any reason to be puffed up with our knowledge of these things; for the most barbarous nations know that God is infinite in wisdom, and power, and justice.

For the second time Job utters these memorable words, *I am not inferior unto you*, (the first time being in Job 12:3), emphasizing that whatever Job's friends presumed to know of the Lord, Job possessed a similar knowledge of as well.

Hence, there was nothing they spoke regarding God's sovereignty over creation, or His judgment upon sin, that Job was not also acutely aware of himself.

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar had assumed Job ignorant, when in fact they were in no way more knowledgeable of the Lord than him. In reality they had introduced no new wisdom which was not previously known, nor had they convinced Job of any deep sin on his part.

They had spoken with much confidence concerning their friend's sin, and had thought themselves greatly superior to him, when in fact all that they had presumed to know concerning the Lord, Job knew equally as well.

It is because of this spiritual reality that Job was so easily able to refute Eliphaz's, Bildad's, and Zophar's religious accusations. What they had said was a well-traveled road; what Job really needed, was a new spiritual path, presently unknown to him.

*Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, Job 13:1*

All this which either you or I have discoursed concerning the infinite power and wisdom of God, I know, both by seeing it, i.e. by my own observation and experience, and by *hearing* it from my ancestors; so that I did not need your tedious and impertinent discourses concerning those matters.

Because of time constraints, only Job's initial response to Zophar is addressed here. His responses continue in chapters twelve through fourteen, as well as chapter twenty-one.

