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## Job 21

(2019)

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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

## Job 21.

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### Topics.

- Look at me and be appalled, shuddering seizes my flesh.
- Why do the wicked prosper and live in peace?
- Is not the prosperity of the wicked in the hand of the wicked?
- Let the wicked see their destruction and drink the Almighty's wrath.
- Will any teach God knowledge; He judges those who are on high?
- The evil man is spared in calamity and rescued in the day of wrath.
- How will you comfort me with empty nothings and falsehoods?

**FOR INFORMATION:** concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

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**INTRODUCTION:** the book of Job is considered both a theological and a literary masterpiece it is an honest discussion of why God allows good people to suffer. The test of Job's faith, allowed by God in response to a challenge from Satan, reveals God's sovereignty and the supremacy of divine wisdom over human wisdom (personified by Job's four friends). Believing that God is good despite the apparent evidence to the contrary, Job rested in faith alone. In the depths of agony, he could still proclaim, "I know that my Redeemer lives" (Job 19:25).

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In the end God silenced all discussion against the truth that He alone is wise (Job chpts. 38-41). Yet he vindicated Job's trust in him (chpt. 42), proving that genuine faith cannot be destroyed. The unknown author was probably an Israelite writing sometime between 2000 and 500 B.C.

**HELPFUL FACTS:** before reading Job it is helpful to understand when Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and Elihu are speaking they are not speaking, "thus sayeth the LORD", they are simply giving their opinions on how they personally perceive things to be. Amongst their conversations there is truth and wisdom, but it must be kept in mind not everything they are saying is true or even wise, in fact God rebukes Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar and tells them they have spoken foolishness, but Job has spoken what is right (Job 42:7-9). The book of Job is not about doctrinal truth, but human suffering and the questions regarding God that arise during a person's calamity and pain.

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### JOB SPEAKS

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#### JOB 21:1-6

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#### Look at Me and Be Appalled, Shuddering Seizes My Flesh.

- **Job 21:1-6:** Then Job answered (Zophar) and said: <sup>2</sup>"Keep listening to my words, and let this be your comfort. <sup>3</sup>Bear with me, and I will speak, and after I have spoken, mock on. <sup>4</sup>As for me, is my complaint against man? Why should I not be impatient? (Why should not my spirit be troubled? In KJV) <sup>5</sup>Look at me and be appalled, and lay your hand over your mouth. <sup>6</sup>When I remember I am dismayed, and shuddering seizes my flesh.

**Is my complaint against man?** (v4) the word complaint in this verse comes from the Hebrew word (*siyach*) and means to ponder and meditate, to speak, talk, communicate, discuss, complain or pray silently or aloud. In the context of this verse it is used in the sense of Job presenting his arguments, reasoning's, and reflections before God. Job's statement, "Is my complaint to man?" means "No it is not to man that I am making my complaint, I am not seeking your sympathy nor I do I expect relief from you, or from any men; but only from God concerning His ways and why it is that His justice concerning me appears to be so unjust. Job's principal difficulty was not so much with what Zophar, Eliphaz and Bildad, had said, that gave him trouble as to what God had done to him was. Though the comments and rebukes of his three friends were hurtful it was far more trying to him to be treated as though he was the great sinner that his three friends had accused him of being. It was the mysteriousness of God's dealings with him that he could not understand and that perplexed and troubled him. Job in previous chapters expressed the wish to be permitted to speak his case to God, and hear his verdict and judgment upon it.

- I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue my case with God, I have prepared my case; I know that I shall be in the right. (Job 13:3) (Job 13:18).

Job wished to have the matter brought before God, and not before man. He knew man had no answers for him and therefore wished to refer to the Almighty and ask Him why He has so afflicted him, as if he were the wicked sinner and guilty hypocrite that Zophar, Eliphaz and Bildad had alleged him to be. Job was confused and bewildered he could not understand why God contended with him in such a manner.

**Why should I not be impatient, (why should not my spirit be troubled? In KJV)** (v4) the word troubled comes from the Hebrew word (*qatsar*) and means to cut down, to be greatly discouraged, grieved, trouble and vexed and carries the idea of being full of loathing and deep mourning. Job's question, why should my spirit not be troubled carries the following idea: since I have brought my case and difficulty in understanding God's mysterious dealings with me before Him, why, should my spirit not be distressed." If I now manifest in my spirit some level of anxiety and distress who can blame me when I have laid my life honestly before the Almighty concerning His puzzling dealings with me and wait His verdict. Especially since He instead of answering me hid Himself and continues to allow me to suffer in my afflictions and leave me without understanding and therefore my spirit continues to be troubled since I am not only left suffering, but also in confusion and there seems to me to be no reason for it.

**Look at me and be appalled:** (v5) Zophar, Eliphaz and Bildad should have been moved with deep sorrow and compassion as they looked upon Job's afflictions and the condition of his body and from a spirit of empathy not only been willing to let him speak freely, but also willing to listen patiently to what he had to say in his anxiety to find out why God had treated him so, rather than immediately assume he was a great sinner and overwhelm him with even greater anguish of spirit by accusing him of being a wicked man instead of giving him comfort.

**The core of the argument:** the primary question in dispute between Zophar, Eliphaz and Bildad and Job is summed up in the following two questions:

1. Is a believer's outward prosperity and life of good health and ease proof of true faith?
2. Is the ruin of a believer's outward prosperity and life of good health and ease proof of some hidden and secret sin being in their life and proof of them being a hypocrite?

Zophar, Eliphaz and Bildad believed that the righteous prosper and live a life of blessing and that only those who deny God and the wicked live a

life of misery and ruin. This principle was the underlying foundation of all their debates. Job disagreed with their belief and responds to their mistaken opinions and reasoning with common sense and logic proving that the foundational premise they built their arguments upon was flawed. Even though Job feels Zophar was mocking him he tells him that he can take comfort from what he is about to say, because his complaint is not against man, but with God. He then goes on to rightly say that Zophar instead of mocking him should have been shocked when he looked at him and at least have had some feeling of compassion toward him. Job himself remembers when he used to be healthy and life was good and now when he looks at his condition it demoralises distressed and saddens him and he wonders why it does not affect Zophar in the same way.

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## **JOB 21:7-15**

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### **Why do the Wicked Prosper and Live in Peace?**

- **Job 21:7-15:** Why do the wicked live, reach old age, and grow mighty in power? <sup>8</sup>Their offspring are established in their presence, and their descendants before their eyes. <sup>9</sup>Their houses are safe from fear, and no rod of God is upon them. <sup>10</sup>Their bull breeds without fail; their cow calves and does not miscarry. <sup>11</sup>They send out their little boys like a flock, and their children dance. <sup>12</sup>They sing to the tambourine and the lyre and rejoice to the sound of the pipe. <sup>13</sup>They spend their days in prosperity, and in peace they go down to Sheol. <sup>14</sup>They say to God, 'Depart from us! We do not desire the knowledge of your ways. <sup>15</sup>What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit do we get if we pray to him?'

In the previous chapter Zophar spoke of all the perils that will fall upon the wicked. He said:

- They will get no enjoyment from the profit of their trading.
- The fullness of their sufficiency and their abundance will only bring them distress and misery.
- God will fill their mind and heart with His overflowing burning anger and rain wrath into their body. (Job 20:18-23).

Job in this chapter counter acts what Zophar has said concerning those who say to God, depart from us we do not desire the knowledge of your ways nor do we desire to serve and pray to the Almighty what profit is there in that for us? (Job 21:14-15). Job points out to Zophar those who deny God:

- Do grow mighty in power and reach old age (v7).
- Their offspring and descendants are established in their presence (v8).
- Their houses are safe from fear and no wrath of God comes upon them (v9).
- Their bulls, cows and calves do breed without fail and do not miscarry (v10).
- Their wives do give birth to sons and their children are happy (v11).
- Do, sing to musical instruments and rejoice (v12).
- Do spend their days in prosperity and in peace before they go down to Sheol (v13).

By these statements Job's contradicts what Zophar has said in the previous chapter concerning the wicked and those who deny God. He not

only tells him that the wicked do grow mighty and live to an old age, but also says that when they do die, they die in peace and that their children are happy prosper and live in ease. Perhaps this reality confuses those who feel this should not be so, but consider the following in Psalm ninety-four it is written:

- Rise up, O judge of the earth; repay to the proud what they deserve! O LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall they exult? (Psalm 94:2-3).

This is truly the heartfelt cry of all the faithful when they see the innocent suffering at the hands of murders, terrorist, rapist and those who abuse children etc. At this present time God's judgment is delayed since we are living in a time of God's grace so that those who maybe saved will be saved. It could be said that we are living in the long day of death and the long day of grace until that glorious day when Christ returns in glory to gather the faithful to himself and judge the wicked. The underlying message of some religious teachings today is still built on the same foundational principle as Zophar, Eliphaz and Bildad had which is that the righteous prosper and flourish while the wicked suffer and lack, but these words of the Psalmist (there are many others) show that real life is not as black and white or as simple as that. Clearly many of the wicked were exalted and prospering at the time that this Psalm was being written, but even today a person would have to be blind not to see that at this present time many of those who deny God and others who oppress the poor and use, deception and violence for their own selfish gain are also prospering.

**NOTE:** Job's statement, "In peace the wicked go down to Sheol (v13) is a true statement in that most who never seek God, never give Him any thought, never read the Bible, never fellowship with other Christians and live as they please still believe they are going to heaven. Added to this their family and friends (who have no desire to know Christ) who bury them believe the same way. I myself have attended such funerals and never been to one yet where those attending have believed that the deceased has perished forever to the darkness of the grave.

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## **JOB 21:16-18**

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### **Is not the Prosperity of the Wicked in the Hand of the Wicked?**

- **Job 21:16-18:** Behold, is not their prosperity in their hand? The counsel of the wicked is far from me. <sup>17</sup>"How often is it that the lamp (candle in KJV) of the wicked is put out? That their calamity comes upon them? That God distributes pains in his anger? <sup>18</sup>That they are like straw before the wind, and like chaff that the storm carries away?

The word candle in comes from the Hebrew word (*niyr*) it can refer to a lamp a candle or a light since it means to glisten. Figuratively it carries the idea of vitality and energy and refers to the spirit and life of the body. It should be mentioned here that the wicked in these verses is not limited to murders, robbers, rapist and the violent, but also embraces those who deliberately and consciously deny God. Job continues to contradict what Zophar said, saying that the wicked do have control of their prosperity and success, and that calamity and ruin does not always come upon them like the wind comes upon straw and crushes it, but instead many do live to old age.

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## **JOB 21:19-21**

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### **Let the Wicked see Destruction and Drink the Almighty's Wrath.**

- **Job 21:19-21:** You (Zophar) say, 'God stores up their iniquity for their children.' Let him (God) pay it out to them, that they may know it. <sup>20</sup>Let their own eyes see their destruction, and let them drink of the wrath of the Almighty. <sup>21</sup>For what do they care for their houses after them, when the number of their months is cut off?

In the previous chapter Zophar said that God stores up the iniquity of the wicked for their children, Job in these verses is saying what is the point of punishing the wicked after they are dead they don't care about the ruin of their houses and destruction of all that they had established once they are in the grave. It would be far better if God immediately afflicted the wicked while they were alive and brought them to ruin so that so they would know they are being punished.

**A personal note:** I feel I am on safe ground in saying that it is certain that this thought is not limited to Job only. I suspect many upon seeing brutality and cruelty inflicted upon the innocent have wished God would send a bolt of lightning from heaven and strike the one with the murderous and violent heart dead, but God's judgment at this present time is being delayed until Christ returns in glory to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth.

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## **JOB 21:22-26**

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### **Will any Teach God, He Judges those Who are On High?**

- **Job 21:22-26:** Will any teach God knowledge, seeing that he judges those who are on high? <sup>23</sup>One dies in his full vigor, being wholly at ease and secure, <sup>24</sup>his pails full of milk and the marrow of his bones moist. <sup>25</sup>Another dies in bitterness of soul, never having tasted of prosperity. <sup>26</sup>They lie down alike in the dust, and the worms cover them.

Job is basically saying that Zophar's reasoning regarding the wicked is flawed because no-one can work out God's knowledge for the following two reasons:

1. Some men and women who are full of life, full of vigour, healthy and totally at ease and secure with a business that is prospering have their life taken before they reach old age while others in the same circumstances do live a long life.
2. Others who are full of bitterness and never known what it is like to have money also die before they reach old age while others in the same circumstances do live a long life.

These two facts shine a brilliant spotlight upon the truth that no one can put God in a box or work out His ways upon earth since the life of the rich and poor, the healthy and the sick, the fit and the unfit can be taken at anytime. No one no matter what their status in life can guarantee they will live a life free of troubles and hardships and to a ripe old age. The statement, "God judges those who are on high," (v22) refers to the prophets and the priests.

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## **JOB 21:27-31**

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### **Evil Men are Spared in Calamity and Rescued in Day of Wrath.**

- **Job 21:27-31:** "Behold, I (Job) know your (Zophar) thoughts and your schemes to wrong me. <sup>28</sup>For you say, 'Where is the house of the prince? Where is the tent in which the wicked lived?' <sup>29</sup>Have you not asked those who travel the roads, and do you not accept their testimony <sup>30</sup>that the evil man is spared in the day of calamity, that he is rescued in the day of wrath? <sup>31</sup>Who declares his (the wicked man) way to his face, and who repays him for what he has done?"

Zophar in these verses is using clever speech to imply that Job is a wicked man. He does this by saying, "Where is the house of the prince? Where is the tent in which the wicked lived?" The house of the prince refers to the house of Job while the tent of the wicked refers to their house, by linking these two together Zophar is implying that the reason Job's possessions

and all that he had established have come to ruin is because he was a wicked man. Job not being a stupid man perceives this and knows that Zophar is trying to prove that everything he has said is wrong so he basically says, "If you won't believe me go into the street and ask the common folk and even they will tell you that not all the wicked and those who deny God are taken by calamity, grief and afflictions as I am."

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## JOB 21:32-34

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### **How will you Comfort Me with Empty Nothings and Falsehoods.**

- **Job 21:32-34:** When he (the wicked person) is carried to the grave, watch is kept over his tomb. <sup>33</sup>The clods of the valley are sweet to him; all mankind follows after him, and those who go before him are innumerable. <sup>34</sup>How then will you (Zophar) comfort me with empty nothings? There is nothing left of your answers but falsehood."

Job tells Zophar when the wicked die, there are people to carry them to the grave and bring flowers to their tomb. What's more all of humanity will die this way, so if this is the case of the righteous and the wicked, the rich and the poor alike Zophar's reasoning regarding those who deny God is false.

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## FOOTNOTE

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Always keep in mind that Job is not speaking, "thus saith the LORD," but giving his own personal opinion concerning suffering and because it is his own viewpoint it should be remembered that even though much of what he says maybe true it does not always mean that his reasoning and suppositions are always according to the word of the LORD.

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*

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