

Job

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January 7, 2026
Job 12



Job 12

Vss. 1

- Job responds to Zophar sarcastically saying that surely his wisdom is the wisdom of the people and that when Zophar dies, wisdom will die with him.
- But Job turns the pride of their wisdom around on Zophar and his two friends. First, Job points out the obvious facts that they have missed. Just as today, these men had their minds made up about how the world works and were unwilling to see truth right in front of them. When we meet Job in chapter 1, we are told that he “was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil”, yet Zophar and his friends claim that God always rewards such a life with justice and blessings. Now he is a “just and blameless man (who) is a joke.”
- Second, he points out how hard it is for someone who is riding high to understand the pain of those who are not. It’s easy when things are good to suppose that the good is because of God’s blessings and that those who are going through tough times must be doing so because of some failure of their own. Job wonders why the three cannot respect people who simply are dealing with misfortune, whose “feet have slipped”. The Baptist scholar, John D. W. Watts says that Zophar and the others simply cannot say, “There but for the grace of God go I”, that such a thought is beyond them.
- Third, having pointed out that a good and righteous person can in fact have serious troubles due to no fault of their own, Job points out another obvious flaw in the 3 friend’s view: Thieves and blasphemers often live quite happily and well. People who make God something they can control by their own hands, who make themselves to be greater than God, often live quite nicely and God does not seem to ever punish them.
- The whole point of these 6 verses is to knock fatal holes in the 3 friends world view. Good men like Job can suffer, while obviously evil people can live well.

Vss. 7-12

- Job now turns Zophar’s own logic back on him. He looks to Creation and the truth of God’s handiwork for answers.
- Studying Creation shows that the Lord is responsible for all we can see. The “birds of the heavens...the plants of the earth...the fish of the sea” all testify to the creative power of God and the intimate involvement He has in His creation.

- Job here points to how we owe everything to God, no different to the birds and the fish. Yet he seems to hint that he knows that his own argument has a serious flaw. He implies that he is not really old enough to understand. “Wisdom is with aged men, with long life is understanding.” He seems to be suggesting that his own view is too rigid and simplistic to understand the problem of pain.

Vss. 13-25

- Job concludes the chapter by returning to the idea he threw out in vs. 10, that God is He, “in whose hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind”, an idea that Isaiah sized on and quoted in 41:20. But to Job, God’s wisdom and might do some very strange things. God tears down but does not rebuild. God imprisons a person, but does not release. God causes droughts and then causes floods. Why? Where is the God’s benevolence and justice?
- God keeps the real power of strength and wisdom for Himself, Job says. Human strength and wisdom and authority are all turned upside down. Nothing works as it should and with the same understanding as the birds and the fish, Job ascribes all of it to the work of God in His Creation. Chaos reigns. Verse 22 tells us, “He reveals mysteries from the darkness and brings the deep darkness into light.” Nothing makes sense and it is all too difficult to grasp.
- John D. W. Watts points out the inadequacy of Job’s view of life in Chapter 12: “History and its changes are allowed their place in Job’s picture. The rise and fall of nations illustrates the same arbitrary directions. The work of God is pictured as demonic in its application. There is no moral balance. There is no intelligent direction. In such a picture man’s position is hopeless. He is the plaything in the hand of a paranoid omnipotence.” Job accuses his friends of seeing the world and God wrongly from their comfortable point of view, but here too Job is making the same mistake from his kaleidoscope of pain.
- In our introduction to Job, we said that inadvertently Job points to our desperate need for a Christ. The prophet Jeremiah asked in 12:1, “Why do the evil prosper?”. This question and all that goes with it permeates the Old Testament. It is only looking back and viewing the Old Testament through the lens of Christ, the One who came to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17), that we can ever really understand it and know it.