

Within Job's response to Zophar, we find something of a transition. Thus far, Job has been on the defensive, but beginning with chapter 12, Job is on the offensive. There's a sense in which, Job turns the tables on his friends. It's as Job is fed-up. And so, he doesn't merely respond to Zophar, but to all three friends.

It's as if, beginning with chapter 12 (through chapter 14), the dam breaks, and Job speaks very plainly. He speaks directly to his friends in 12—13:19 and then to God in 13:20—14:22. In chapter 12 he does three things: he confronts his friends (vv1-6); he exhorts his friends (vv7-12); he teaches his friends (vv13-25).

- I. Job Confronts His Friends (vv1-6)
- II. Job Exhorts His Friends (vv7-12)
- III. Job Teaches His Friends (vv13-25)

- I. Job Confronts His Friends (vv1-6)

1. In these first six verses, Job confronts his friends—he confronts them about their pride (vv1-3) and actions (vv4-6).
2. (1) Their pride (vv1-3), v2—"No doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you!"—this obviously is sarcasm.
3. It provides insight on how Job viewed his friends—he viewed them as thinking highly of themselves.
4. V3—"But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you. Indeed, who does not know such things as these?"
5. By "such things as these" he refers to the previous teaching of his friends, and especially, Zophar in the previous chapter.
6. If you recall back in 11:7-12 Zophar mentioned that God and His ways is incomprehensible (beyond us).
7. His ways among men is too mysterious for us to grasp—this is especially what Job means by "such things as these."
8. I suggest this for two reasons: first, this is the main point Job makes in this chapter (from v4 onward); second, this is what he expressly says in 13:1-2—"Behold, my eye has seen all this, my ear has heard and understood it. What you know, I also know; I am not inferior to you."
9. I personally don't think Job is being proud! I think he's simply being honest. He knows as much as they do.
10. He understands that God is all-wise, knowing, and powerful—he knows God can deal with His people as He sees fit.
11. In fact, throughout this chapter sees things rather clearly, and in fact, much clearer than his three friends.
12. It's for this reason, throughout this chapter (and the first half of 13), Job assumes the rule of instructor (corrector and rebuker).
13. (2) Their actions (vv4-6), v4—"I am one mocked by his friends, who called on God, and He answered him, the just and blameless who is ridiculed."
14. Job refers to himself as just and blameless—someone mocked and ridiculed by his supposed friends.
15. The Hebrew words rendered "mock" and "ridicule" are the same and fundamentally means "to laugh at."
16. ESV—"I am a laughingstock to my friends; I, who called to God and he answered me, a just and blameless man, am a laughingstock."

17. It doesn't mean they actually thought he was funny—but they made light of his predicament or situation.
18. V5 is very difficult to interpret—it basically continues to describe Job, this time as "despised" or "scorned."
19. The basic meaning is—a person who's in the midst of affliction (whose feet slip), is despised by those who are at ease.
20. In other words—Job's friends not only mocked and ridiculed him, but they also looked down upon him for his afflictions.
21. The wording of the KJV is helpful—"He that is ready to slip with *his* feet *is as* a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease."
22. The idea is this—Job was considered as a useless lamp for those whose feet are firm and not slipping.
23. Job's feet were slipping (who was struggling under his afflictions), while his friends were at ease (secure).
24. John Calvin—"I am despised by you because I am on the verge of falling. Because you see I am on the edge of the grave, that is why you are rejecting me this way."
25. There's a textural variant, so your NASB and ESV have a different word which means "calamity" or "disaster."
26. Thus, the meaning would be—"Calamity or disaster is despised (treated as a little thing), by those at ease."
27. Verse 6 is a contrast to vv4-5—having spoken of the suffering of the just (vv4-5), he now speaks of the prosperity of the unjust.
28. V6—"The tents of robbers prosper, and those who provoke God are secure"—that is, they are unconcerned.
29. In vv4-5 we learn the just and blameless are ridiculed whereas the wicked are secure in their prosperity.
30. Remember the main point—Job's friends believed, God blesses the righteous and afflicts the wicked.
31. But Job actually uses himself to disprove this belief—he is righteous and yet he is suffering at their hand.
32. Furthermore—"The tents (houses) of robbers prosper" even though they provoke God by remaining secure.
33. Thus, the end of v6 is a summary—"in what God provides by His hand"—God is the one behind this.
34. I know that some of your translations render the end of v6 very differently than the NKJV—but keep in mind the hand of God is the entire point of this passage (as we will see when we get to vv9-10).
35. Lesson 1—Self-defense is not always unlawful or inappropriate—Job defends himself from false accusations.
36. Job was being unjustly criticized or accused by his friends; how does he respond? First, he listens to them—he takes to heart what they say – he searches his heart – he compares what they say with the truth.
37. Second, he corrects them—that is, he maintains the truth—"I have understanding...I am just and blameless."
38. They claimed he was ignorant, he corrects them, they claimed he was a sinner, and he corrects them again.
39. Lesson 2—Those who call upon God are often mocked and scorned—v4 present a profound contrast.

40. There's Job who calls upon God who hears him, and then there's his friends who laugh at him and mock him.
41. Lesson 3—The closer someone is the more their mockery and scorn hurts—"I am one mocked by his friends."
42. The Hebrew word rendered "friends" (NKJV) or "neighbor" (KJV) simply means "close companion."
43. The point being—Job's pain was intensified, because his friends not only failed to help but they laughed.
44. For our enemies to laugh at our calamity is one thing, but for our friends to do so, is altogether something else.
45. Without doubt, the greatest example of this is our Savior, who was betrayed by a very close companion (Judas)
46. Ps.55:12-14—"For it is not an enemy who reproaches me; then I could bear it. But it was you, a man my equal, my companion and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in the throng."
47. Lesson 4—The houses of evil people often prosper and provide false assurance—people equate outward prosperity with God's favor.
48. This doesn't deny there are at times a connection between outward prosperity and inward piety (but it's oftentimes not true).
49. Otherwise, those who are the healthiest and wealthiest are the most pious, and the sickest and poorest are the greatest sinners.
50. Ps.73:12-14—"Behold, these are the ungodly, who are always at ease; they increase in riches. Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning."

II. Job Exhorts His Friends (vv7-12)

1. In verses 7-12 Job exhorts his friends to learn about God from creation (vv7-9) and from experience (vv10-12).
2. Having asserted that God deals with man as He sees fit, Job then sends his friends to two instructors (creation and experience).
3. (1) Learn from creation (vv7-10)—he sends them to the beasts, birds, earth, and fish to learn an important lesson.
4. The essence of the lesson is found in v9—"Who among all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this."
5. Thus, the question becomes—What does Job mean by "this"—"Who among all these (beasts, birds, earth, and fish) does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this."
6. Done what? Well I think the answer lies in v10—"in whose hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind."
7. Creation tells you God created it, sustains it, and governs it—this is what the beasts, birds, earth, and fish teach us.
8. Furthermore, the beasts, birds, and fish also teach us that God doesn't deal equally or exactly with everything.
9. Some beasts, birds, and fish thrive others starve—what makes the difference—does this mean those that starve deserved it?
10. Of course not—even creation itself teaches us that God deals with His creation sovereignly and mysteriously.
11. (2) Learn from experience (vv11-12), v11—"Does not the ear test words and the mouth taste its food?"

12. That is, don't you discern words by testing them and food by tasting it—this is how you learn what is right.
13. So too, this is how you learn wisdom—you discern things—you test and taste them with the ears and mouth of your soul.
14. V12—"Wisdom is with aged men, and with length of days, understanding"—this is a generally true fact.
15. Because aged men have lived longer days, they have discerned truth and have obtained more wisdom.
16. They've heard more words, tasted more food, and ordinarily, obtained or acquired more wisdom and understanding.
17. Obs.1—Creation teaches us about God—there's a sense in which this entire world one great big classroom.
18. Ps.29:9—"The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth, and strips the forest bare; and in His temple everyone says, 'Glory'!"
19. Rom.1:20—"For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse."
20. Obs.2—True wisdom is obtained—wisdom is obtained and increased in three ways (prayer, counsel, and experience)
21. (a) Prayer, Jas.1:5—"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him."
22. (b) Counsel, Prov.13:20—"He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed (we need to walk with older people)."
23. (c) Experience, Heb.5:13-14—"For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

III. Job Teaches His Friends (vv13-25)

1. Beginning with v13, Job assumes the role of instructor himself, and teaches his friends two important lessons.
2. But before I come to these lessons, let me attempt first of all, to suggest how these verses relate to the previous.
3. In vv1-6 Job underscores one fact—God deals with mankind in a sovereign and all-wise way as He sees fit.
4. In vv7-8 Job sends his friends to creation to learn this lesson—God created, sustains, and governs His creation.
5. In vv13-25 Job teaches his friends about God's nature and ways among creation to prove his overall point.
6. God does as He wills in heaven and earth—His ways are mysterious and beyond us—they are incomprehensible.
7. (1) He teaches them about the being of God (v13)—"With Him are wisdom and strength, He has counsel and understanding."
8. This is in contrast to v12—while wisdom and understanding is with aged men, it's truly and perfectly with the Ancient of Days.
9. Job says four things are with God or possessed by God—this means, these belong to God natively and infinitely.
10. Put another way, these are things God possesses by nature in full, and can never increase or grow in them.

11. They belong to God in a heightened and unique way, 16—"With Him are strength and prudence. The deceived and the deceiver are His."
12. The deceived and deceiver belong to Him—they are His possession—they are His in the fullest sense.
13. So too, His attributes are His—they belong to Him—He possesses them in the highest and fullest way.
14. To put it more accurately, He doesn't merely possess these things, but He is these things—they are one with His essence.
15. Put more theologically, the attributes of God are not something separate from God—there is not God and then His attributes.
16. God doesn't merely possess wisdom, He is wisdom; He doesn't merely possess strength; He is power.
17. This means—it's impossible for God to increase or diminish in His wisdom, power, counsel, or understanding.
18. Thus, I want to take a few minutes and examine each of these terms (but before I do so let me suggest something).
19. The primary point of Job is to underscore God's wisdom, and there's a sense in which the others relate to that.
20. In fact, as we shall see, all of these words are closely related to wisdom and in some cases, they are synonyms.
21. (a) Wisdom—this refers "to the ability to apply knowledge"—the word literally means "to have skill."
22. God is able to direct the affairs of His creation because He is infinitely and essentially wise or skilled.
23. The word rendered "prudence" (NKJV) in v16 is basically a synonym—it literally means to sound or successful wisdom (victory – NIV).
24. (b) Strength—this word means "might" or "power"—the ability to act in accordance with one's desire.
25. (c) Counsel—this refers to God's eternal plans and purposes—His decrees or counsels—His wise counsel.
26. (d) Understanding—this refers to God's knowledge—the fact that He knows and comprehends everything.
27. Thus, the first two (wisdom and strength) refer to the outworking of the second (counsel and understanding).
28. (2) He teaches them about the ways of God (vv14-25)—these verses describe the ways of God in the world.
29. (a) They are revelatory—by this I mean, the works or ways of God reveal or make known God's character.
30. We behold the wisdom, strength, counsel, understanding, and produce of God throughout His works.
31. Thus, Job contrasts how these attributes are but dimly seen in the rulers and mighty of this evil world.
32. (b) They are pervasive—by this I mean, the ways of God within providence are inclusive and wide-ranging.
33. God sustains and controls everything—He's at work in every place—He works in nature and among men.
34. All creation is in His hand—He governs every event within His world—He governs nations and rulers of nations.

35. In fact, Job focus on the high and mighty—"counselors and judges" (v17); "kings" (v18); "princes and the mighty" (v19); "trusted ones and the elders" (v20); "princes and mighty" (v21); "the chiefs of the people" (v24).
36. (c) They are sovereign—by this I mean, God does as He pleases within every part (area) of His creation.
37. This is seen in the repeated pronoun "He"—v14—"If He breaks a thing down, it cannot be rebuilt; if He imprisons a man, there can be no release" v15—"If He withholds the waters, they dry up; if He sends them out, they overwhelm the earth."
38. V17—"He leads" v18—"He loosens" v19—"He leads" v20—"He deprives" v21—"He pours" v22—"He uncovers."
39. He does all of these things and no one can stop Him—He is actively involved within every aspect of creation.
40. V23—"He makes nations great, and destroys them; He enlarges them, and guides them"—He does this by His wisdom and might.
41. Thus, in closing I want to stand back and from this passage suggest three important lessons about God.
42. Perspective 1—God is the bestower and giver of grace—any wisdom or strength man has, came from God.
43. V12—"Wisdom is with aged men" v13—"With Him are wisdom and strength"—wisdom belongs to both, but very differently (it belongs to man in part by way of donation, and to God in full by way of His essence).
44. Wisdom isn't of the very essence of a man—you can lack wisdom and still be a man—you can be a foolish man (but this is not true of God as wisdom is of His very being – He cannot be God without it).
45. Perspective 2—God is simple and without parts—some of you will know by "simple" is meant the unity or oneness of God.
46. God is not made up of parts—everything that's in God is God—wisdom, power, counsel, and understanding are all with God (they are all in God as God).
47. This means, all that God is, He is equally, simultaneously, and eternally—He is wisdom He is strength.
48. Perspective 3—God is hidden and revealed—some of you will know, this distinction was made famous by Martin Luther (*Bandage of the Will*).
49. Martin Luther—"God in His own nature and majesty is to be left alone; in this regard, we have nothing to do with Him, nor does He wish us to deal with Him. We have to do with Him as clothed and displayed in His Word, by which He presents Himself to us."
50. God as He is in and of Himself is too distant from us, we can only know Him as He has revealed Himself to us.
51. Wisdom and strength belong to God, and in order for us to know this, He has to make it known to us.
52. There are three related ways in which God has made Himself known: (a) in creation; (b) in Scripture; (c) in Christ.
53. Jn.1:18—"No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has revealed Him."
54. There are three important and relevant truths in this verse: first, God is incomprehensible—"No one has seen God at any time."
55. Second, the Son comprehends the Father—"the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father."
56. Third, the Son has come to reveal the Father—"He has revealed Him"—that is, when we see Him we see the Father.