

CHAPTER 21

INTRODUCTION TO JOB 21

This chapter contains Job's reply to Zophar's preceding discourse, in which, after a preface exciting attention to what he was about to say, (^{<1820>}Job 21:1-6); he describes by various instances the prosperity of wicked men, even of the most impious and atheistical, and which continues with them as long as they live, contrary to what Zophar had asserted in (^{<1816>}Job 20:5), (^{<1820>}Job 21:7-15); as for himself, he disapproved of such wicked men as much as any, and owns that destruction comes upon them sooner or later, and on their posterity also, (^{<1821>}Job 21:16-21); but as God is a God of knowledge, and needs no instruction from any, and is a sovereign Being, he deals with men in different ways; some die in great ease, and peace, and prosperity, and others in bitterness and distress, but both are alike brought to the dust, (^{<1822>}Job 21:22-26); and whereas he was aware of their censures of him, and their objections to what he had said, he allows that the wicked are reserved to the day of destruction, which is future, and in the mean while lie in the grave, where all must follow; yet they are not repaid or rewarded in this life, that remains to be done in another world, (^{<1827>}Job 21:27-33); and concludes, that their consolation with respect to him was vain, and falsehood was in their answers, (^{<1824>}Job 21:34).

Ver. 1. *But Job answered and said.*] In reply to what Zophar had asserted, concerning the prosperity of the wicked being only for a short time, (^{<1816>}Job 20:5); the contrary to which he most clearly proves, and that in many instances their prosperity continues as long as they live; that they die in it, and it is enjoyed by their posterity after them.

Ver. 2. *Hear diligently my speech,* etc.] The following oration or discourse he was about to deliver concerning the prosperity of wicked men; to which he desires their closest attention, that they might the better understand the force of his reasoning, the evidences and proof of facts he should give; whereby, if their minds were open to conviction, they would clearly see their mistake, and that truth lay on his side:

and let this be your consolations; or “this shall be your consolations”^{f799}; meaning, either that they would receive instruction and benefit by his discourse, which would yield them pleasure and comfort; and to an ingenuous mind, to be convinced of an error, to have mistakes rectified, and to get knowledge of the truth, it is a real satisfaction, and affords pleasure; or else, that whereas their end in paying him a visit was to comfort him, and they had taken methods, as they thought, in order to it, but in Job’s opinion to very little purpose, yea, they were, as he says, miserable comforters; now he observes, that if they would but be silent, and attentively listen to what he had to say, that would be in the room of all comforts they could give unto him; it would be a consolation to him, and be reckoned by him, instead of all they could give, or could propose to him, if he might have but this favour, to be heard with candour, diligence, and attention.

Ver. 3. *Suffer me that I may speak*, etc.] To go on with his discourse, without any interruption, until he had finished it; as he before craves their attention, here he entreats their patience to hear him out, as well as to give him leave to begin; they might by their gestures seem as if they were breaking up and departing; or they raised a tumultuous clamour, to hinder his proceeding to reply; or he might fear, that if he was allowed to speak, they would break in upon him before he had done, as they had already; or “bear me”, as several of the Jewish commentators explain the phrase; though what he was going to say might sit heavy upon their minds, and be very burdensome, grating, and uneasy to them; yet he entreats they would endure it patiently, until he had made an end of speaking:

and after that I have spoken, mock on; as they had already, (~~Job~~ Job 12:4 17:2); they had mocked not at his troubles and afflictions, but at his words and arguments in vindication of his innocence; and now all he entreats of them is, that they would admit him to speak once more, and to finish his discourse; and then if they thought fit, or if they could, to go on with their scoffs and derisions of him; if he could but obtain this favour, he should be easy, he should not regard their mockings, but bear them patiently; and he seems to intimate, that he thought he should be able to say such things to them, that would spoil their mocking, and prevent it for the future; so the Greek version renders it, “thou shalt not laugh”; and the words being singular have led many to think, that Zophar, who spoke last, is particularly intended, though it may respect everyone of his friends.

Ver. 4. *As for me, [is] my complaint to man?* etc.] Job had been complaining, and still was, and continued to do so after this, but not to them, his friends, nor any other man; his complaint was made to God, and of him he thought he was hardly dealt with by him, he could not tell for what; he had desired to know the reason why he contended with him in such a manner, but could get no satisfaction; when his friends came first to visit him, they said nothing to him, nor he to them; and when he did speak, it was not to them, but to God, of whom he complains; and expostulates with him why he had ever been born, or had not died as soon as born, and not have lived to have seen such unhappy days, and endured so much affliction and trouble:

and if [it were so]; that he had made his complaint to man, since it would have been in vain, and to no purpose, he should have got no relief, nor obtained any satisfaction:

why should not my spirit be troubled? or “shortened”^{f800}; or, as the Targum, be straitened; for as comfort and joy enlarge the heart, trouble contracts and straitens it; or is “my prayer” or^{f801} “petition to men?” it was not, though he was reduced so low, and was in such a distressed condition; he had asked nothing of men, not of these his friends, neither to give him of their substance, nor to help him out of the hands of his enemies, (^{<K162>}Job 6:21,23); he had poured out his complaint before God, and had directed his prayer to the God of his life; he had desired to speak to none but the Almighty, and to reason only with him; he had petitioned him to take cognizance of his case, and to admit of a hearing of it before him, and to have it determined by him; he had complained of wrongs and injuries done him, and begged to be redressed and righted, but got no answer; God did not think fit to answer him, but hid himself from him, and continued so to do: “and if”, if this be the case, as it really was, “why should not my spirit be troubled?” is there not reason for it? Some think Job’s meaning is, is “my disputation”, as the Vulgate Latin version, or is my discourse concerning human things, things within the compass of human knowledge and reasoning? or, to be attained to by the force of that, without divine revelation? no, it is concerning divine things; concerning the mysteries of Providence, with respect to good and bad men; concerning the living Redeemer, his incarnation, resurrection, etc. and faith in him; concerning the general resurrection, the final judgment, and a future state of happiness: or does my complaint, petition, or discourse, savour of that which is human, and is intermixed with human frailty? if it be so, it should be borne

with, it should be considered I am but a man, and liable to err; and especially great allowances should be made in my present circumstances, being trader such sore afflictions; and it may be reasonably thought, that though the spirit may be willing to behave in a better manner, the flesh is weak, and much must be imputed unto that; and it will not seem so extravagant to indulge a troubled spirit so severely exercised; persons under afflictions generally think they do well to be troubled, and that there is reason enough for it, and ought to be borne with, and not to be reproached and rallied on that account.

Ver. 5. *Mark me*, etc.] Or “look at me”^{f802}; not at his person, which was no lovely sight to behold, being covered with boils from head to foot, his flesh clothed with worms and clods of dust, his skin broken, yea, scarce any left; however, he was become a mere skeleton, reduced to skin and bone; but at his sorrows, and sufferings, and consider and contemplate them in their minds, and see if there was any sorrow like his, or anyone that suffered as he did, and in such pitiful circumstances; or that they would have a regard to his words, and well weigh what he had said, or was about to say, concerning his own case, or concerning the providences of God with respect to good and bad men, and especially the latter:

and be astonished; at what had befallen him, at his afflictions, being an innocent man, and not chargeable with any crime for which it could be thought that these came upon him; and at the different methods of Providence towards good men and bad men, the one being afflicted, and the other in prosperous circumstances, (see ~~1878~~ Job 17:8);

and lay [your] hand upon [your] mouth; and be silent, since such dispensations of Providence are unsearchable, and past finding out; and, as they are not to be accounted for, are not to be spoken against: and it would have been well if Job had taken the same advice himself, and had been still, and owned and acknowledged the sovereignty of God, and not opened his mouth in the manner he had done, and cursed the of his birth, and complained of hard treatment at the hand of God perhaps his sense may be, that he would have his friends be silent, and forbear drawing the characters of men from the outward dealings of God with them. This phrase is used of silence in (~~1890~~ Job 29:9 40:4); thus Harpocrates, the god of silence with the Heathens, is always pictured with his hand to his mouth.

Ver. 6. *Even when I remember*, etc.] Either the iniquities of his youth he was made to possess; or his former state of outward happiness and

prosperity he had enjoyed, and reviewed his present miserable case and condition, and called to mind the evil tidings brought him thick and fast of the loss of his substance, servants, and children, which were so terrible and shocking; or when he reflected on the instances of Providence he was about to relate in the following verses:

I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold on my flesh; which is sometimes the case of good men, both with respect to the judgments of God upon the wicked, and with respect to what befalls, or is coming upon, the people of God, (~~3901D~~ Psalm 119:120 ~~3916G~~ Habakkuk 3:16); and even the different treatment of good and bad men in this life, as that the one should be severely afflicted and distressed, and the other be in such prosperous and happy circumstances, is not only a sore temptation to them, but shocks their minds, and makes them shudder and stagger at it, and gives them great pain and uneasiness, (~~1971D~~ Psalm 73:2,3,12-14,16 ~~2421E~~ Jeremiah 12:1,2).

Ver. 7. *Wherefore do the wicked live,* etc.] Which question is put either to God himself, as not knowing how to account for it, or to reconcile it to his divine perfections; that he, a holy, just, and righteous Being, should suffer such wretches to live upon his earth, who had been, and still were, continually sinning against him, transgressing his law, and trampling under foot his power and authority; when he, a man that feared the Lord, as God himself had borne witness of him, laboured under such heavy affliction, that he seemed rather to die than live: or else it is put to his friends, to whom he appeals for the truth of it, as Zophar had to him, about the short time of the prosperity of the wicked, (~~8004~~ Job 10:4,5); and desires them to try how they could make such undeniable facts comport with their own principles, that wicked men are always and only afflicted to any great degree, and not holy and good men; but if so, it is asked, why do they “live”, even live at all? why is not their breath stopped at once, that breathe out nothing but sin and wickedness? or why are they “lively?” as Mr. Broughton renders the word; that is, brisk, cheerful, and jocund, live merrily, having an abundance of this world’s good things; call upon themselves to eat, drink, and be merry, and indulge themselves in all the gratifications of sensual pleasures and delights; live at ease, in peace and outward comfort, and are not in trouble as other men, having nothing to disturb, disquiet, and distress them; nay, not only live comfortably, but live long: while a righteous man perishes or dies in his righteousness, the wicked man prolongs his life in his wickedness, (~~20715~~ Ecclesiastes 7:15), as it follows:

become old; live to a considerable old age, as Ishmael did, to whom he may have respect, as well as to some others within his knowledge; or are “durable”^{f803}, not only in age, as the sinner is supposed to die, and sometimes does die an hundred years old, or more, but in wealth and riches, in outward prosperity; for though spiritual riches are only durable riches, in opposition to temporal ones, yet these sometimes endure with a wicked man, and he endures with them as long as he lives, as may be seen in the instances of wicked rich men in (^{<2126>}Luke 12:16-20 16:19,22); with which agrees what follows:

yea, are mighty in power? are in great authority among men, being kings, princes, civil magistrates, (see ^{<1875>}Psalm 37:35); are advanced to great dignity and honour, as the twelve princes that sprung from Ishmael, and the race of kings and dukes that came from Esau. Mr. Broughton renders it, “be mighty in riches”, greatly increase in them; and so the Targum, possess substance or riches.

Ver. 8. *Their seed is established in their sight with them*, etc.] Which is to be understood not of seed sown in the earth, and of the permanence and increase of that, but of their children; to have a numerous progeny, was reckoned a great temporal blessing, and to have them settled happily and comfortably in the world was an additional one; and what contributed still more to their felicity was, that they were well settled during their life, or they yet living, and with their eyes beholding their prosperous and stable condition; and also “with them”; near them, in the same neighbourhood, or at no great distance from them; or even in like circumstances with them, equally as well settled and as prosperous as themselves, as this phrase is sometimes used, (see ^{<1946>}Psalm 106:6);

and their offspring before their eyes; their children’s children, as the Targum, and so the Vulgate Latin version; so that prosperity attends not only wicked men and their children, but also their grandchildren, and they live to see these grown up and settled in the world, and in thriving circumstances; all which must give them pleasure, and be matter of honour and glory to them, (^{<2176>}Proverbs 17:6). Now this is diametrically opposite to Zophar’s notion of the short continuance of the prosperity of wicked men, and of the low and miserable condition of their children, (^{<1315>}Job 20:5,10,21,26,28).

Ver. 9. *Their houses [are] safe from fear*, etc.] Of enemies besetting them, entering into them, and pillaging and plundering them; of thieves and

robbers breaking into them, and carrying off their substance: or “their houses [are] peace”^{f804}; their families live in peace among themselves, or enjoy all prosperity, which the word peace frequently signifies; they have peace and prosperity within doors and are free “from fear”, or devoid of fear, from anything without;

neither [is] the rod of God upon them; neither his rod of chastisement, which is upon his own people, and with which he scourges every son, though in love for their good, and which was now upon Job, (~~808~~ Job 9:34); nor any sore judgment, as famine, plague, sword, or any other; no, not even the common afflictions and troubles that men are exercised with.

Ver. 10. *Their bull gendereth, and faileth not*, etc.] As the wicked man’s prosperity is described before by the increase and comfortable settlement of his children and grandchildren, and by the peace and safety of all within doors; here it is further set forth by the increase of his cattle in the fields, one part being put for the whole, his oxen and asses, his camels and sheep, things in which the riches of men chiefly lay in those times and countries; and he was reckoned an happy man when these brought forth abundantly; (see ~~843~~ Psalm 144:13-15);

their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf; both male and female succeed in propagating their species, and so in increasing the wealth of their owner; this is sometimes promised as a temporal blessing, (~~0236~~ Exodus 23:26).

Ver. 11. *They send forth their little ones like a flock*, etc.] Of sheep, which are creatures very increasing, and become very numerous, (~~813~~ Psalm 144:13); to which a large increase of families may be compared, (~~9471~~ Psalm 107:41), for this is not to be interpreted of their kine sending or bringing forth such numbers as to be like a flock of sheep; but of the families of wicked men being increased in like manner; and the sending them forth to be understood either of the birth of their children being sent out or proceeding from them as plants out of the earth, or branches from a tree; or of their being sent out not to school to be instructed in useful learning, but into the streets to play, and pipe, and dance; and it may denote, as their number, so their being left to themselves, and being at liberty to do as they please, being under no restriction, nor any care taken of their education; at least in such a manner as to have a tendency to make them sober, virtuous, and useful in life:

and their children dance; either in a natural way, skip and frisk, and play like calves and lambs, and so are very diverting to their parents, as well as shows them to be in good health; which adds to their parents happiness and pleasure: or in an artificial way, being taught to dance; and it should be observed, it is “their” children, the children of the wicked, and not of the godly, that are thus brought up; so Abraham did not train up his children, nor Job his; no instance can be given of the children of good men being trained up in this manner, or of their dancing in an irreligious way; however, this proves in what a jovial way, and in what outward prosperity and pleasure, wicked men and their families live; which is the thing Job has in view, and is endeavouring to prove and establish.

Ver. 12. *They take the timbrel and harp*, etc.] Not the children, but the parents of them; these took these instruments of music into their hands, and played upon them while their children danced; thus merrily they spent their time: or, as Jarchi and Aben Ezra, they lift up the voice with the tabret and harp; that is, while they played on these with their hands, they sung songs with their mouths; they used both vocal and instrumental music together, to make the greater harmony, and give the greater pleasure, like those in (^{<3005>}Amos 6:5,6);

and rejoice at the sound of the organ; a musical instrument, very pleasant and entertaining, from whence it has its name in the Hebrew tongue; but of what form it was cannot be with certainty said; that which we now so call is of later invention, and unknown in those times: probably Job may have respect to Jubal, the inventor of this sort of music, and others of the posterity of Cain before the flood, who practised it, and were delighted in it; in which they were imitated and followed by wicked men after it, and in Job’s time, (^{<0021>}Genesis 4:21).

Ver. 13. *They spend their days in wealth*, etc.] Or “in good” ^{f805}; not in the performance of good works, or in the exercise of that which is spiritually good; or in seeking after spiritual good things, or eternal happiness; but in earthly good, in the enjoyment of the temporal good things of this life, and which to enjoy in a moderate and becoming manner is not criminal, but commendable; but these men, and such as they, seek no other good but worldly good; their language is, “who will show us any good?” (^{<5006>}Psalm 4:6); any outward good; the way to get it, how to come at it, and be put in the possession of it: such place all their happiness in such sort of good, and spend all their time either in getting it, or in enjoying it, and in nothing else;

not in spiritual exercises, in prayer, or praise, in their own houses, in private; nor in an attendance on the worship of God in public; it denotes also their continuance in prosperity unto the end of their days; for there is a various reading; we follow the Keri or margin, but the “Cetib”, or writing, is, “they become old” ^{f806}; in wealth, or good things, and which is followed by many; they live all their days in the midst of wealth and riches, and die in such circumstances, contrary to what Zophar had asserted in (^{<805>}Job 20:5);

and in a moment go down to the grave; the house appointed for all living, man’s long home, into which he is said to go down, because let down and interred in the earth; hither wicked men must come, after all their wealth, riches, prosperity, and pleasure; and hither they descend “in a moment”; suddenly, no previous change being made in their outward circumstances; and without any presage or forenotice of it, without any lingering disease and sickness leading on to it, there being no bands in their death, nothing to hinder and restrain from dying; but they drop at once into the grave, without sickness or pain: or “in rest”, or “quietly” ^{f807}; being wholly at ease and quiet, as in (^{<802>}Job 21:23); not only free from acute pains and grievous distempers, as burning fevers, and violent tortures, and racks of the stone, and other distressing disorders; but without any distress of mind, ignorant of their state and condition, and unconcerned about it; as they are at ease from their youth, and settled on their lees, they remain so, and go out of the world in like manner; and as sheep are laid in the grave, die senseless and stupid, having no thought in their last moments what will become of them in another world: some render it, “they go down to hell” ^{f808}; the state and place of the wicked after death; which, though true, seems not so agreeable to Job’s scope and design, which is not to describe the punishment of the wicked, but their easy circumstances in life and in death; and so the Jewish commentators generally understand it. Aben Ezra’s note is,

“in a moment, without afflictions;”

Jarchi,

“quietly, without chastisements;”

and Bar Tzemach,

“without evil diseases;”

having nothing to distress them in body or mind, when many a good man lies long on a bed of languishing, tortured with diseases, chastened with sore pain, and his life gradually draws near to the grave, and to the destroyers.

Ver. 14. *Therefore they say unto God*, etc.] While in health and life, amidst all their outward prosperity, and because of it; for worldly riches have this tendency, to make men proud and insolent, and not only to behave ill to their fellow creatures, and to slight and despise them; but even to forsake God, and lightly esteem their Creator and benefactor; yea, even to kick against him, and oppose him, to set their mouths against him, and speak very contemptuously and blasphemously of him, as in the following words; which though not expressly uttered and pronounced, which yet may have been by some, however are conceived in the mind, and inwardly spoken; and by their lives and conversations outwardly declared and abundantly proclaimed:

depart from us; not as to his general presence, which cannot be, and without which they would not be able to subsist; God is everywhere, and near to everyone, and all live, and move, and have their being, in him; nor as to his spiritual presence, which wicked men know nothing of, and are unconcerned about; but they do not choose to have him so near them as that their minds should be conversant about him; they do not care to have him in their thoughts, they are desirous if possible of banishing him out of their minds; they would live without thinking of God, or thinking that there is a God in the world, for such a thought makes them uneasy; they do not love to have their consciences awakened by him, so as to check and accuse for what they do; they had rather have them cauterized or seared, as with a red hot iron, and be past feeling, that they may go on in their sinful courses without control: this is the just character of a worldling, who is afraid he shall be a loser by God and religion, should he attend thereunto; and therefore, as the Gergesenes for a like reason desired Christ to depart out of their coasts, so such desire God to depart from them, (~~4188~~ Matthew 8:28-34); and of the epicure, whose God is his belly, and that only; and most righteously will it be said to such at the last day, “depart from me”; this will be a just retaliation:

for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways; the ways which God prescribes, directs, and enjoins men to walk in, even the ways of his commandments; these are unknown to men, until shown and taught them;

but wicked men do not desire to be instructed in them; they have no pleasure and delight neither in them, nor in the knowledge of them; they fancy there is no pleasure to be had in them, and they think they have got into a much more pleasant way, which they have chosen, and their souls delight in; though destruction and misery are in it, and it leads into it: they wilfully affect ignorance of the ways of God; they do not care to come to the light, lest their deeds should be reprov'd, their consciences be made uneasy, and they not able to go on so peaceably and quietly in their own ways.

Ver. 15. *What [is] the Almighty, that we should serve him?* etc.] “Who is he”^{f809}? as some render it; or what is there in him, in his nature, in his excellencies and perfections, that should oblige us to serve him? One would think the attribute of “Almighty”, they own and acknowledge, is sufficient to engage to it, since he is the lawgiver that is able to save and to destroy, even to destroy with an everlasting destruction, both body and soul in hell, who obey him not; but fulness of riches, power, and authority, swell the mind with pride, and put men on asking such questions, and running such lengths as these; (see ^{<BIB>}Exodus 5:2 ^{<BIB>}Proverbs 30:9). The question is full of atheism, and suggests there was nothing in God excellent or worthy of any regard, or on account of which he should be served and worshipped; as if he was a mere idol, which is nothing in the world; and that he was indeed nothing in it, neither did good nor evil, nor concerned himself with the affairs of men; had forsaken the earth, and took no notice of what was doing in it; at least, the question supposes that such think themselves under no obligations to serve him, and shows them to be sons of Belial, without a yoke; that they neither are nor can be subject to the law of God without his grace; they are not willing God should reign over them, nor to be obedient to his commands and ordinances; but are for freeing themselves from all obligations to him, and choose to serve various lusts and pleasures; be the vassals of sin and Satan, rather than be the worshippers of God:

and what profit should we have if we pray unto him? Prayer is one part of the service of God, and may be here put for the whole: this, as all the rest, is very disagreeable to a natural man, who, as he is biased entirely by profit and gain, thinks there is nothing to be got by religious exercises; he observing, that the worshippers of God, as to external things, fare worse than those who do not pray unto him, or do not serve and worship him; (see ^{<BIB>}Malachi 3:14); though there is much profit, and many things, and

those most excellent and valuable, got by prayer; for whatsoever good men ask in prayer, believing, they receive, (^{400P}Matthew 7:7 21:22). The Targum is

“if we pray in his Word,”

in the name of the essential Word, the Son of God; whereas to ask or pray in his name is the only way of succeeding; and such, who do ask in faith in his name, have what they ask for, (^{414S}John 14:15 16:23,24).

Ver. 16. *Lo, their good [is] not in their hand*, etc.] Though it is in their possession for the present, it is not in the power of their hands to keep, nor to carry it with them when they die; God, that gave it, can take it away when he pleases; and therefore it might be profitable to them to serve him and pray unto him: or “their good [is] not by their hand”; they do not obtain their happiness by their works, as in the Tigurine version; and to the same sense Mr. Broughton,

“lo, their wealth cometh not by their own power;”

it is not got by their own industry, diligence, care, and labour; by their own wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and cunning; for riches are not always to men of understanding, but come from God, who gives them to whom he pleases, and can take them away again if he thinks fit; and therefore men are dependent upon him for what they have, and should be thankful to him, and serve him, and pray for the continuance of good things to them. Jarchi reads the words by way of interrogation and admiration, lo! is “not their good in their hand?” verily it is, especially in their own opinion; their hands are full of it; they want nothing of God; they see no need of praying to him; hence the above words, which Job expresses his disapprobation of:

the counsel of the wicked is far from me; the counsels of their hearts; the thoughts of their mind; the words of their mouth; the above impious sayings were such as were detested and abhorred by him; their sense and judgment of things, their choice from deliberate consultation with themselves, preferring temporal good to spiritual good, and earthly things to heavenly ones, outward wealth and riches to the knowledge, service, and worship of God, and communion with him; these were what he disliked; their course of life, which was according to this world, and Satan the god of it, their company and conversation, were such as he carefully shunned and avoided; he chose not to come into their assembly, or to have any fellowship with them; to walk in the counsel of the ungodly, or stand in

the way of sinners, these things were an abomination to him; (see ~~BOOK~~ Psalm 1:1). This Job says to exculpate himself, and wipe off any calumny that might be cast upon him, as if by what he had said, concerning the outward prosperity of the wicked, that he was a patron and defender of them, and an advocate for them.

Ver. 17. *How oft is the candle of the wicked put out?* etc.] Job here returns, as Jarchi observes, to his former account of the constant and continued prosperity of wicked men; and puts questions tending to prove the same. Bildad had said, that the light and candle of the wicked would be put out, (~~BOOK~~ Job 18:5,6). Job, referring to this, asks how often this is the case; meaning, by the candle of the wicked, not his soul or spirit, which cannot be put out, or become extinct, as to be no more; nor the light of nature in his soul, though that may be put out in a great measure, and he be given up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart; but either his natural life, which, like a candle, burns for a while, and then becomes extinct, or rather his outward prosperity and happiness: if the question relates to the former, to the natural life of wicked men, it is not whether they die, that is no question; all die, good and bad; but whether they die in common sooner than others, or whether the instances of the brevity of the life of wicked men were frequent, or but seldom; or, is this always the case? it is not, it is rare, and not common; they live as long as other men, and oftentimes longer; they live and become old, as Job before observes; they prolong their days in their wickedness; or, if this refers to the latter, the prosperity of the wicked, the question is, is that for the most part a short lived prosperity? it is not, it is but rarely so; wicked men generally spend all their days in wealth, as before observed; so Ramban interprets “how oft”, that is, how seldom; and to the same sense Mr. Broughton,

“not so often is the candle of the wicked put out;”

and [how oft] cometh their destruction upon them? not eternal, but temporal destruction, calamities and distresses; these are threatened them, but they are not executed on them immediately; and therefore their hearts are set in them to do evil: generally speaking, they have their good things here; they are filled with hidden treasure, which they enjoy while they live, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes; they are not destroyed on every side, as Job was; their substance, their cattle, their servants, their children, and their own health. Job asks how often this is their case, as had

been his; and his sense is, and what experience testifies, it is but rarely the, case of wicked men; he seems to refer to what is said, (^{<1812>}Job 18:12).

[God] distributeth sorrows in his anger; or rather, “how oft doth he distribute sorrows in his anger?” but seldom; he is angry with the wicked every day, and reserves wrath for them, and many sorrows shall be to them, but not for the present; those are future, and even such as of a woman in travail, as the word used signifies, and which shall come upon them suddenly and certainly, and there will be no avoiding them; (see ^{<1810>}Psalm 32:10 ^{<1813>}Hosea 13:13 ^{<1818>}1 Thessalonians 5:3); but does God frequently distribute or portion out sorrows to them now? he does not; they have their portion of good things in this life; does he usually give them sorrow of heart, his curse unto them? he does not; it is very seldom he does; they are not in trouble, nor plagued as other men; they are not men of sorrows and acquainted with griefs; they are generally strangers to them, and live merrily all their days, (^{<1812>}Job 21:12); respect seems to be had to the conclusion of Zophar’s speech, (^{<1819>}Job 20:29).

Ver. 18. *They are as stubble before the wind*, etc.] Or how oft “are they as stubble?” etc. or how oft does God do the above things, “so that they are”, or “become, as stubble before the wind” ^{f810},

and as chaff that the storm carrieth, or “steals away” ^{f811}? hastily, suddenly, at an unawares like a thief: wicked men are comparable to stubble and chaff; for the vanity of their minds, their emptiness of all good things; for their lightness, the levity and inconstancy of their hearts, their principles and practices; for their uselessness and unprofitableness to God and men, to themselves and their fellow creatures; for their being fit fuel for everlasting burnings, their end like these being to be burned; and whose destruction is inevitable and irresistible, and can no more be withstood and prevented than stubble and chaff can stand before a strong wind and a stormy tempest: but is this their common case now? are they usually tossed to and fro with the wind of adversity, and the storms of desolating judgments? are they not, on the other hand, seen in great power, and spreading themselves like a green bay tree; taking root, increasing in outward prosperity, and bringing forth the fruit of it? (see ^{<1875>}Psalm 37:35 ^{<1812>}Jeremiah 12:2).

Ver. 19. *God layeth up his iniquity for his children*, etc.] This is a prevention of an objection which Job foresaw his friends would make, and therefore takes it up and answers to it; you will say, that, be it so, that the

wicked are for the most part prosperous, and their prosperity continues; God does not punish them now for their sins in their own persons, yet he will punish them in their children, for whom he reserves the punishment of their iniquity: this way go many of the Jewish commentators^{f812}, in which they are followed by many Christian interpreters^{f813}; and, as it seems, very rightly; now this Job grants, that so it is, God takes notice of the iniquities of men, and lays them up in his mind, and puts them down in the book of his remembrance; he reserves the punishment of their iniquities for their children, iniquity being often put for the punishment of it; this is laid up among his stores of vengeance, and is treasured up against the day of wrath; and when they have filled up the measure of their father's sins by their own transgressions, the deserved punishment shall be inflicted, according to (^{<2015>}Exodus 20:5); but this will not clear the case, nor support the notions and sentiments of Job's friends, who had all along given out, that wicked men are punished themselves as well as their children; and that, if they are at any time in prosperous circumstances, it is only for a little while; and therefore agreeably to such notions God should take other methods with them, not punish their children only, but themselves, as Job argues in answer to the objection in (^{<2018>}Job 21:18,19):

he rewarded him, and he shall know [it]; or "he should reward him, and he should know it"^{f814}; and so the word "should" is to be put instead of "shall" in (^{<2020>}Job 21:20), which directs to the true sense of these clauses: and the meaning of Job is, that according to the sentiments of his friends, God should reward a wicked man while he lives in his own body, and not in his posterity only; he should render to them a just recompence of reward of their evil works, the demerit of their sins; and in such a manner, that they should know it, be sensible of it, and feel it themselves, and perceive the evil of sin in the punishment of it; (see ^{<2007>}Hosea 9:7).

Ver. 20. *His eyes shall see his destruction*, etc.] Or "should see his destruction"^{f815}; calamities coming upon himself and upon his children; or otherwise it will not affect him: but when a man has a personal experience of affliction as punishments of his sin, or with his own eyes sees his children in distressed circumstances on his account, this must sensibly affect him, and be a sore punishment to him; as it was to Zedekiah to have his children slain before his eyes, (^{<2020>}Jeremiah 52:10);

and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty; or "he should drink"^{f816} of it now, according to the principles of Job's friends, even he in person, and

not his posterity only; the wrath of God is on account of sin, and dreadful to bear: if the wrath of a temporal king is as the roaring of a lion, what must be the wrath of the Almighty God, the King of kings, and Lord of lords? this is frequently in Scripture compared to a cup, and is called a cup of trembling, of wrath and fury: and of which all the wicked of the earth shall drink sooner or later, (^{<1978>}Psalm 75:8); but this they should do now, according to the notions of Job's friends, whereas they do not; waters of a full cup, though not in wrath indeed, are wrung out to the people of God, and, as they apprehend, in wrath, when the wicked drink wine in bowls, and the cup of their prosperity overflows.

Ver. 21. *For what pleasure [hath] he in his house after him,* etc.] As, on the one hand, the prosperity of his children after his decease gives him no pleasure and delight, so, on the other hand, the calamities and distresses of his family for his sins and theirs give him no pain or uneasiness; he knows nothing that befalls them, and it is no part of his concern; and let what will befall them, he cares not for it; he feels it not, he is not sensible of it; and therefore to object that signifies nothing; (see ^{<1812>}Job 14:21); or, "what business has he with his house after death?" the affairs ^{f817} of his family do not at all concern him, one way or another; he is not affected with them; he can neither consider their happiness as a blessing nor their calamities as a punishment to him:

when the number of his months is cut off in the midst? the years, the months, and the days of the lives of men, are numbered and determined by the Lord, (^{<1845>}Job 14:5); which, when finished, the thread of life is cut off in the midst, from the rest of the months, which a man or his friends might have expected he would have lived; or rather, "when his number of the months is fully up" ^{f818}; when the calculation of them is complete, and the full number of them is perfected; the sense is, what cares a wicked man for what befalls his family after his death, when he has lived out the full term of life in great outward happiness and prosperity; has lived to be full of days, of months, and years, to a full age, even to an age that may be truly called old age?

Ver. 22. *Shall [any] teach God knowledge?* etc.] Who is a God of knowledge, and knows all things, that teaches men knowledge; will any one take upon him to teach him the path of judgment, and the way of understanding, how he shall govern the world, and dispose of men and things in it? (see ^{<2413>}Isaiah 40:13,14). Will anyone be so bold and

audacious as to pretend to direct and instruct him whom he shall afflict, and whom not, and when he shall do it, and in what manner? should not these things be left to him, who does all things after the counsel of his own will? shall his dealings with men in an outward way of providence be the criterions of the characters and estates of men, as if love and hatred were to be known by those things, and therefore God must be taught what he should do in order to fix them?

seeing he judgeth those that are high; not the high heavens, as the Targum, nor the angels in them, though he has judged them that sinned, and cast them down to hell; but the high ones on earth, kings, princes, and civil magistrates, such as are in high places, and are lifted up with pride above others: God is above them; he is higher than the highest, and judges them; he is the Judge of all the earth, that will do right, the Governor of the universe, and who overrules all things for his own glory and the good of his creatures; and therefore none should pretend to direct him what is fit and proper to be done by him, who is a Sovereign, and distinguishes men in his providence, in life, and at death, as follows; but their characters, as good or bad men, are not to be determined thereby.

Ver. 23. *One dieth in his full strength*, etc.] Man is born a weak feeble creature, and it is by degrees, and through various stages of infancy, childhood, and youth, that he arrives to his full strength in manhood; and, when he does, sometimes so it is, that his strength is not weakened in the course of his life by a train of disorders and diseases, as it is in some; but death seizes and carries him off in the prime of his days, and in the fulness of his strength; for no strength of man, even the greatest, is a security against death: thousands die before they come to their full strength, and multitudes after it begins to decay; and when it is almost wasted, through the force of distempers, or the infirmities of old age, and others, as here, when their strength is in its highest rigour and utmost perfection, and all as God pleases: the words may be rendered “in the strength of his integrity”, or “of his perfection”^{f819}; in the Targum and Ben Gersom, and so Mr. Broughton, “in his very perfection”; and the word is sometimes used, in a moral and spiritual sense, of the integrity of a man’s heart, and the uprightness of his ways and walk, and of the perfection of his state Godward; (see ~~BOOK~~ Job 1:1 2:4 4:6); and such a man who is upright in heart and conversation, who is truly gracious, sincerely a good man, and perfect through the complete righteousness of Christ, he dies such, his integrity continues with him to the last; and his graces being brought to maturity, he

comes to his grave like a shock of corn in its season, and is found in the perfect righteousness of his living Redeemer: but it seems best to take the words in a natural and literal sense, as before; or to interpret them of the fulness of outward felicity, which some men arrive unto, and die in the midst of, when they have got to the highest degree of honour and grandeur, and attained to the greatest degree of wealth and riches, it could well be supposed they would; and then, when in the perfection of it, have been taken away by death; both these senses may stand together: it follows,

being wholly at ease and quiet; in easy circumstances, having an affluence of all good things, and nothing to disturb them, nor are in trouble as others, or plagued as they be; having all that heart can wish, or more, and without any pains of body, at least any long and continued ones; while others are attended with them, days, and months, and years, before their death, (~~1839~~ Job 33:19); whereas these go down to the grave in a moment, feeling little or no pain, and are quiet and easy in their minds, thoughtless of a future state, and unconcerned how it will be with them in another world; having no sight nor sense of sin, of the evil nature and just demerit of it, feel not the weight and burden of it in their consciences; have no concern or grief of mind for sins of omission or commission, no godly sorrow for it, or repentance of it, nor any fears of wrath and ruin, hell and damnation; but as they are at ease from their youth, with respect to those things, so they live and so they die, secure, stupid, and senseless. Some interpret this of good men ^{f820}; and it is not to be wondered at that a man that dies in his integrity, in the perfection of grace, holiness, and righteousness, should be at ease and quiet; who has an interest in the God of peace, whose peace is made by the blood of Christ, his Peacemaker, and who has a conscience peace arising from a comfortable view of the peace speaking blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of the Mediator; who knows his state is safe, being interested in everlasting love, in an unchangeable covenant in God, as his covenant God, in Jesus his living Redeemer; and knows where he is going, to heaven, to happiness and glory, to be with God, with Christ, with holy angels and glorified saints: but the former sense seems best, of a man dying in easy circumstances, without pain of body, or distress of mind, whether we understand it of a good man or bad man, though the latter is rather meant.

Ver. 24. *His breasts are full of milk*, etc.] As this is not literally true of men, some versions read the words otherwise; his bowels or intestines are full of fat, as the Vulgate Latin and Septuagint; and others, his sides or ribs

are full of fat, as the Syriac and Arabic; the words for “side” and “fat” being near in sound to those here used; and so it describes a man fit and plump, and fleshy, when death lays hold upon him, and not wasted with consumptions and pining sickness, as in the case of some, (~~1330L~~ Job 33:21); the word for breasts is observed by some ^{f821} to signify, in the Arabic language, “vessels”, in which liquors are contained, and in the Misnic language such as they put oil in, out of which oil is squeezed; and so are thought here to intend such vessels as are milked into; and therefore render it by milk pails; so Mr. Broughton, “his pails are full of milk” ^{f822}; which may denote the abundance of good things enjoyed by such persons, as rivers of honey and butter; contrary to Zophar’s notion, (~~1307L~~ Job 20:17); and a large increase of oil and wine, and all temporal worldly good; amidst the plenty of which such die:

and his bones are moistened with marrow; not dried up through a broken spirit, or with grief and trouble, and through the decays of old age; but, being full of marrow, are moist, and firm and strong; and so it intimates, that such, at the time when death seizes them, are of an hale, healthful, robust, and strong constitution; (see ~~1373L~~ Psalm 73:4,7).

Ver. 25. *And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul*, etc.] Either another wicked man; for there is a difference among wicked men; some are outwardly happy in life, and in the circumstances of their death, as before described; and others are very unhappy in both; their life is a scene of afflictions which embitter life, and make death eligible; and in the midst of which they die, as well as oftentimes in bitter pains, and terrible agonies of body, as well as in great distress and horror of mind, and black despair, as Judas and others:

and never eateth with pleasure, or “of any good”, or “any good thing” ^{f823}; either he has it not to eat, or what he has is not good, but like husks which swine eat, of which the prodigal would fain have filled his belly, when in extreme poverty, such as those words may describe; or else having what is good, has not an heart to eat of it; and so they describe a miser, living and dying such; (see ~~2102L~~ Ecclesiastes 6:2); or rather the case of a man, who, through distempers and diseases of body, has lost his appetite, and cannot with any pleasure taste of the richest dainties; (see ~~1330L~~ Job 33:20). Some ^{f824} interpret this verse and (~~1302L~~ Job 21:23,24) as what should be the case according to the sentiments of Job’s friends, who objected, that God punished the iniquities of wicked men, not in their own persons, but in their

children; according to which, a wicked man then should die in the perfection of happiness, without weakness or want, in all quietness, ease, peace, and prosperity; and not in poverty and distress: but as (^{<8912>}Job 21:23,24) respect a wicked man, and his case and circumstances at death, agreeably to the whole context; so this relates to those of a good man, whom the Lord often deals bitterly with in life, as he did with Naomi, and was now the case of Job; (see ^{<8912>}Ruth 1:20 ^{<8912>}Job 3:20); and who die in very poor and distressed circumstances; so that nothing is to be concluded from such appearances, with respect to the characters of men, as good or bad, and especially since both are brought into a like condition by death, as follows.

Ver. 26. *They shall lie down alike in the dust*, etc.] Such as have lived and died in great outward prosperity, or in more unhappy circumstances; these are levelled by death, and brought into the same state and condition; are laid on dusty beds, where there is no difference between them, their rest together is in the dust; here they dwell, and here they lie and sleep until they are awaked in the morning of the resurrection:

and the worms shall cover them; these are the companions alike unto them, and sweetly feed on the one as on the other; the earth is their bed, and worms are their covering; even such who used to lie on beds of down, and were covered with coverings of silk, have now the same bed and covering as those who used to lie on beds of straw, and scarce any thing to cover them; worms are spread under them, and are spread upon them; they are both their bed and their covering, (^{<2341>}Isaiah 14:11).

Ver. 27. *Behold, I know your thoughts*, etc.] God only truly, really, and in fact, knows the thoughts of men; this is his peculiar prerogative, he only is the searcher of the hearts and the trier of the reins of the children of men. Christ, the eternal Logos, or Word, by his being a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, appears to be truly God. No man knows the things of a man, or the thoughts of his heart, but himself, and such to whomsoever he reveals them; but a wise and understanding man, a careful observer of men and things, may make some shrewd guesses at the thoughts of others, by hints and half words, or sentences expressed by them; by the show of their countenance, which is the index of the mind, and by the gestures and motions of their bodies; by these they may in a good measure judge whether they like or dislike, approve or, disapprove, of what is said to them: and thus Job knew the thoughts of his friends, that

they were different from his, that the sentiments of their minds did not agree with his; and though he had so clearly proved his point, yet he saw by their looks and gestures that what he had said was not satisfactory to them; that they did not think it a sufficient confutation of their arguments, and a full answer to their objections:

and the devices [which] ye wrongfully imagine against me; that he was an hypocrite, a wicked man, guilty of crimes, and which they were devising to produce against him, and charge and load him with, as Eliphaz does in the following chapter; he knew they meant him in all that they had said concerning wicked men, and their afflictions, and what would be their portion at death, and after it; and though they did not name his name, they might as well have done it, since he was the man they struck at in all, particularly it, (^{<8016>}Job 20:5,29).

Ver. 28. *For ye say*, etc.] Or “have said”, or “[I know] that ye say”; or “[that] ye are about to say”^{f825}; it is in your hearts and minds, and just ready to come out of your lips, and what you will say next:

where [is] the house of the prince? of the righteous man, as the Syriac and Arabic versions; or “of the good and liberal man”, as others^{f826}; of such as are of a princely and ingenuous spirit, who are made willing, free, or princes, in the day of the power of the grace of God upon them; and are endowed and upheld with a free and princely spirit; where is the house, or what is the state and condition, of the families of such? are they the same with that of wicked men in the next clause? is there no difference between the one and the other? according to your way of reasoning, Job, there should not be any: or else this is to be understood rather of a wicked and tyrannical prince, who has built himself a stately palace, which he fancied would continue for ever; but where is it now? it lies in ruins; having respect perhaps to some noted prince of those times: or rather either to Job himself, who had been a prince, and the greatest man in all the east, but in what condition were his house and family now? or else to his eldest son, whose house was blown down with a violent wind:

and where [are] the dwelling places of the wicked? of the mighty men before the flood, which are now overthrown by it; or of the king and princes, and nobles, and great men of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the other cities of the plain destroyed by fire and brimstone from heaven; or of Job, his tent or tabernacle, and the several apartments in it; or of the rest of his children and servants, respecting rather, as before observed, the state and

condition of his family, than his material house: these questions are answered by putting others.

Ver. 29. *Have ye not asked them that go by the way?* etc.] Did you not ask every traveller you met with on the road the above question? not which was the way to Job's house, which they knew very well, but in what condition that and his sons were? or what was the case of him and his family? and what was his character? or what was thought of him now since his unhappy circumstances?

and do ye not know their tokens? by which it might be known in what a plight he and his family were, and what were the marks, signs, and characters they gave of him: "have ye not asked?" etc. the sense seems to be this, that if they had not asked, they might and should have asked of travellers the above things relating to himself and family, and then they would not have needed to put the above question about his house and tabernacles; or, if they had inquired of his character of any travellers, they would have given them it, that he was a generous hospitable man, a man truly good, strictly just and upright, and not the wicked man and the hypocrite as they had traduced him; for Job's house had been open to strangers and travellers, and he was well known by them, and they were ready to give him a good character, (see ~~Job~~ Job 31:32); or, if they had inquired of them concerning the stately houses and palaces of wicked men that had lived in times past, whether there were any of them standing; they could have told them they were, and where they were, and given them such signs and tokens, and such proof and evidence of them they could not deny; and indeed, if they had been inquired of about the thing in controversy between Job and his friends, concerning the prosperity of the wicked, and the afflictions of the godly, as they by travelling became acquainted with persons and things, and made their observations on them, they could have easily pointed out instances of wicked men living and dying in prosperous circumstances, and of good men being greatly afflicted and distressed, if not all their days, yet great part of them; and they could have given such plain signs and tokens, and such clear and manifest proofs of those things, as could not have been gainsaid: and this may be understood of travellers in a spiritual sense, and who are the best judges of such a case, and are travellers through the wilderness of this world, and pass through many tribulations in it; and, being bound for another and better country, an heavenly one, are pilgrims, strangers, and sojourners here; have no abiding, but are passing on in the paths of faith, truth, and

holiness, till they come to the heavenly Canaan; if any of those who are yet on the road, and especially if such could be come at who have finished their travels, and the question be put to them, they would all unite in this doctrine, which Abraham, the spiritual traveller, is represented delivering to the rich wicked man in hell; that wicked men have their good things in this life, and good men their evil things, (^{<0165>}Luke 16:25); and particularly would agree in saying what follows.

Ver. 30. *That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction?* etc.] That is, that they are spared, withheld, restrained, as the word ^{f827} signifies, or kept and preserved from many calamities and distresses, which others are exposed unto; and so are reserved, either unto a time of greater destruction in this life or rather to eternal destruction in the world to come; which is the same with the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men, when they will be destroyed soul and body, in hell, with an everlasting destruction, as the just demerit of sin; or of that sinful course of life they live, being the broad way which leads to and issues in destruction, and for which there is a day appointed, when it will take place; and unto that day are the wicked reserved, in the purpose and decree of God, by which they are righteously destined to this day of evil, and by the power and providence of God, even the same chains of darkness, in which the angels are reserved unto the same time, being fitted and prepared for destruction by their own sins and transgressions, (^{<0104>}2 Peter 2:4 ^{<0106>}Jude 1:6): and unto which they are kept, as condemned malefactors are in their cells, unto the day of execution, they being condemned already, though the sentence is not yet executed; in order to which

they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath; the wrath of God, which is very terrible and dreadful, and is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, and is here expressed in the plural number, “wraths” ^{f828}, either as denoting both present and future wrath; or the vehemency of it, it being exceeding fierce and vehement; and the continuance and duration of it, there will be wrath upon wrath, even to the uttermost, and for ever; and for this a day is fixed, against which day wicked men are treasuring up wrath to themselves, and they shall be brought forth at the day of judgment, to have it poured forth upon them. This is the true state of the case with respect to them, that, though sometimes they are involved in general calamities, as the old world, and the men of Sodom and Gomorrah, (^{<0123>}Genesis 7:23 19:24); and sometimes good men are delivered from them, as Noah and Lot were, (^{<0123>}Genesis

7:23 19:29), or are taken away by death from the evil to come; yet for the most part, generally speaking, wicked men escape present calamities and distresses, and are not in trouble as other men, but live in ease and pleasure all their days; nevertheless, wrath and ruin, and everlasting destruction, will be their portion.

Ver. 31. *Who shall declare his way to his face?* etc.] Jarchi and Aben Ezra think that Job here returns to God, and speaks of him, as in (~~4312~~ Job 21:22); signifying that no man can or ought to presume to charge the ways of God in his providence with inequality or injustice, in sparing the wicked now, and reserving them to wrath and destruction hereafter; since he is a sovereign Being, and does what he pleases, and none can hinder him, nor ought any to say to him, what dost thou? nor does he give an account of his matters to the children of men; but this respects the wicked man, and describes his state and condition in this life, as being possessed of such wealth and riches, and living in such grandeur and splendour, and advanced to such places of honour and glory, as to be above the reproof of men; though his way, his course of life, is a very wicked one, and he ought to be told to his face the evil of his way, and the danger he is exposed to by it, and what will be the sad consequence of it; his relations and friends, his neighbours and acquaintance, should labour to convince him of his evil, and reprove him to his face, and endeavour to reclaim him from it; but how few are there that have courage and faithfulness enough to do this, since they are sure to incur his displeasure and hatred, and run the risk of their lives, as John the Baptist lost his for his faithfulness in reproofing Herod to his face, for taking to him his brother Philip's wife? (~~4148~~ Matthew 14:3,4,10);

and who shall repay him [what] he hath done? bring him to an account for his crimes, and to just punishment for them; who will venture to bring a charge against him, or enter an action at law, bring him before a court of judicature, and prosecute him, and get judgment passed upon him? as such a man is above all reproof for his sins, he is out of the reach of punishment for them; he lives with impunity, none can punish him but God; and being lifted up with his greatness, he neither fears God nor regards man.

Ver. 32. *Yet shall he be brought to the grave,* etc.] Or “and”, “or yea he shall be brought”, etc. ^{f829}; for the meaning is not, that though he is great in life he shall be brought low enough at death; for Job is still describing the grand figure wicked men make, even at death, as well as in life; for he is

not only brought to the grave, as all men are, it being the house appointed for all living, and every man's long home; but the wicked rich man is brought thither in great funeral pomp, in great state, as the rich sinner was buried, (²¹⁸⁰Ecclesiastes 8:10 ²¹⁶²Luke 16:22); or "to the graves"^{f830}, the place where many graves are, the place of the sepulchres of his ancestors; and in the chiefest and choicest of them he is interred, and has an honourable burial; not cast into a ditch, or buried with the burial of an ass, as Jehoiakim was, being cast forth beyond the gates of the city, (²²²⁹Jeremiah 22:19); and shall remain in the tomb; quiet and undisturbed, when it has been the lot of others to have their bones taken out of their grave, and spread before the sun, (see ²⁴⁰⁰Jeremiah 8:1,2); and even some good men, who have had their graves dug up, their bones taken out and burnt, and their ashes scattered about, as was the case of that eminent man, John Wickliff, here in England. The word for "tomb" signifies an "heap"^{f831}, and is sometimes used for an heap of the fruits of the earth; which has led some to think of the place of this man's interment being in the midst of a corn field; but the reason why a grave or tomb is so called is, because a grave, through a body or bodies being laid in it, rises up higher than the common ground; and if it has a tomb erected over it, that is no other than an heap of stones artificially put together; or it may be so called from the heaps of bodies one upon another in a grave, or vault, over which the tomb is, or where every part of the body is gathered and heaped^{f832}; from this sense of the word some have given this interpretation of the passage, that the wicked man shall be brought to his grave, and abide there, after he has heaped up a great deal of wealth and riches in this world; which, though a truth, seems not to be intended here, any more than others taken from the different signification of the word translated "remain". It is observed by some to signify to "hasten"^{f833}, from whence the almond tree, which hastens to put forth its bloom, has its name, (²⁴⁰⁰Jeremiah 1:10-12); and so give this as the sense, that such a man, being of full age, is ripe for death, and, comes to his grave, or heap, like a shock of corn in its season. Others observe, that it signifies to "watch"; and so in the margin of our Bibles the clause is put, "he shall watch in the heap"^{f834}, which is differently interpreted; by some, that he early and carefully provides himself a tomb, as Absalom in his lifetime set up a sepulchral pillar for himself, (¹⁰⁸⁸2 Samuel 18:18); and Shebna the scribe, and Joseph of Arimathea, hewed themselves sepulchres out of the rock, (²²¹⁵Isaiah 22:15,16 ⁴²⁷⁹Matthew 27:59,60); and others think the allusion is either to statues upon tombs, as are still in use in our days, where they are placed as if they were watching over the tombs;

or to bodies embalmed, according to the custom of the eastern countries, especially the Egyptians, which were set up erect in their vaults, and seemed as if they were alive, and there set to watch the places they were in, rather than as if buried there; or, according to others, “he shall be watched”, or “[the keeper] shall watch at”, or “over the tomb”^{f835}, that the body is not disturbed or taken away; but the sense our version gives is best, and most agrees with the context, and the scope of it, and with what follows.

Ver. 33. *The clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him*, etc.] Where he lies interred, alluding to places of interment at the bottom of hills, and mountains, and under rocks, in plains and vales, (see ^{<1318>}Genesis 35:8); and by this strong figure is signified, that the dead wicked man, lying in the clods of the valley in his grave, is in great repose, and in the utmost ease and quiet, feels no pains of body, nor has any uneasiness of mind concerning what befalls his posterity after his death, (^{<1842>}Job 14:21);

and every man shall draw after him, as [there are] innumerable before him; which either respects the pomp at his funeral procession, vast numbers being drawn and gathered together to gaze at it, as is common at grand funerals; and particularly, it may describe the multitude that go before the corpse, as well as those that follow after it; but rather as he is before represented as brought to his grave, and laid there, this clause is added, to denote the universality of death, it being common to all; thousands and ten thousands, even a number which no man can number, have gone before him by death into another world, as every man that comes after him must; and so this may prevent an objection to the grandeur of a wicked man, that after all he dies; but then death is no other than what is common to all men, to the vast multitudes that have gone before, and will be the case of all that come after, to the end of the world.

Ver. 34. *How then comfort ye me in vain*, etc.] This is the conclusion Job draws from the above observations: his friends came to comfort him, and they took methods for it, as they thought, but miserable comforters were they all; what they administered for comfort was in vain, and to no purpose; nor could any be expected from them, on the plan upon which they proceeded; they suggested he was a bad man, because of his afflictions, and they exhorted him to repentance and reformation, and then promised him happiness and prosperity upon it; which could not be expected, as appeared from the face of things in Providence; since,

according to the above instances and proofs, wicked men enjoy prosperity, and good men had usually a great share of adversity:

seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood; all their replies to Job were filled with these intimations and suggestions, that wicked men were only and always afflicted; or if they were at any time in prosperity, it was but for a little while; that good men were seldom or never afflicted, at least as Job was, or but a little afflicted, and for a little while: now Job had proved the contrary to all this, and therefore no consolation could be hoped for from men that held such tenets; comfort only springs from truth, and not falsehood; a man that speaks the truths, or delivers out the truths of God's word, he speaks to comfort and edification; but he that brings nothing but error and falsehood can never be the means and instrument of true solid comfort to any. Job having thus fully proved his point, and confuted the notions of his friends, it might have been thought they would have sat down in silence, and made no further answer; but Eliphaz rises up a third time, and makes a reply, as follows.