Introduction:
This is the fifth chapter [of six] in Job’s 4th and final discourse, which continues through the end of chapter 31 and concludes with “the words of Job are ended”. In this chapter Job describes his current situation and his general disillusionment with God. Compare with chapter 17.

In this chapter Job describes several of the physical details of his skin disease; skeletal pain {v:17}, restlessness {v.27}, blackened skin {v.30}, peeling skin {v.30} and fever {v30}.

Before he finishes Job will defend his innocence one last time in chapter 31. However, despite Job’s protestations that what has happened to him is unjust and his recounting of his righteousness, Job finally “gets it” after the Lord speaks and he repents of his pride.

In this chapter Job makes several allusions to military warfare. In the next chapter Job:

- Defends his character by giving specific examples of his righteousness {Job 31}

vv. 1-8 Job Describes His Current Status
[1 “But now they mock at me, men younger than I, whose fathers I disdained to put with the dogs of my flock. 2 Indeed, what profit is the strength of their hands to me? Their vigor has perished. 3 They are gaunt from want and famine, fleeing late to the wilderness, desolate and waste, 4 who pluck mallow by the bushes, and broom tree roots for their food. 5 They were driven out from among men, they shouted at them as at a thief. 6 They had to live in the clefts of the valleys, in caves of the earth and the rocks. 7 Among the bushes they brayed, under the nettles they nestled. 8 They were sons of fools, yes, sons of vile men; they were scourged from the land.”]

[But now they mock at me, men younger than I] After Job reviews the past he comes back to his present circumstances. Job’s a living example of “popularity is fickle”.

In the last chapter {Job 29:8} Job said that when the adolescent boys saw him they hid. But now men that are younger than Job, and presumably less wise, mock him! This is the same word that Job used in Job 29:24 to mention the fact that he would not mock those he gave counsel to.

The Hebrew word literally means “to laugh” with the implication of “to toy with” or “make fun of”. Have you ever been in a similar situation? Think of how this made Job feel.

[I disdained to put with the dogs of my flock] Note that their fathers evidently were so vile and depraved men that Job says he wouldn’t even put them together with his sheep dogs! Now their children make fun of Job and taunt him.

The attributes of the fathers, good or bad, are usually magnified in their children. Job therefore describes their character as that of hoodlums who were of no use to him whatever. They had no physical strength, they were thin from lack of food. Why? Because they were forced to flee into the “wilderness” {v.5}.

It is important to note that this is not describing the same areas where people go camping. The Hebrew word refers to a land devoid of water, with no trees and very little shrubbery, a wasteland of desolation. Think of the Dead Sea area in Israel.
Thus, they ended up residing in a place corresponding to their character.

There they rummaged for food and ate things that no normal person would such as the roots of the juniper shrub [broom tree ¹] whose roots tasted bitter.

[They were driven out from among men] Why were they in the wilderness? Because even the ancient society during Job’s time had a sense of decency and morality. These men were not indulged nor were their destructive and evil actions tolerated.

The inhabitants drove them out of town with a noisy outcry, as if they were thieves. Thus, they were forced to live in the desolate areas away from civilization; where their immoral influence would not threaten the law and order of the community.

They were relegated to live in the foreboding chasms [lit. “feared”; word occurs only here] of valleys and in the crevices [lit. “holes and hallows”] of the earth and rocks.

[Among the bushes they brayed] As they lived among the scrub brush they brayed like wild donkeys, probably a reference to their hunger [although some see here a reference to crude language and silly horse-play].

I can’t help but picture the scene in the animated film, Pinocchio, where Lampwick and Pinocchio find themselves on “Pleasure Island”, where there are no rules, “no school and no cops”, and boys can do whatever they want—only to realize too late that they were turning into wild donkeys!

[under the nettles they nestled] The word rendered “nettles” here means “prickly”; a reference to thorny weeds and bushes. The word rendered “nested” means to scrape out; i.e., with the intention of preparing a place to stay, probably to sleep.

[They were sons of fools] This means they were the children of mentally and morally corrupt and defective fathers. Note; “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’ ” [Ps. 14:1; 53:1].

[yes, sons of vile men] Literally, “yes, sons of no-name”, which means they were sons of fathers who were of no good reputation, that is, without honor and respect and therefore, worthless and nameless.

The New English Translation renders this as “sons of senseless and nameless people”. They had no respectable parentage.

Those that were now laughing and making fun of Job were worthless, “good-for-nothings”, who had been forced to live among the desolate places in a dry and thirsty land.

[they were scourged from the land] Or “they were driven out of the land with whips”. In other words, they did not go willingly but had to be driven out by force.

Why does Job go into all this detail in describing these younger men who are now having a good laugh at the expense of his circumstances?

Job, after having enjoyed “the respect of the most respectable” for so long, now suffered “the contempt of the most contemptible” and wanted his friends to appreciate the stark contrast and irony of his situation.

¹ A species of broom-spartium junceum.
Because Job wanted everyone to know that in the midst of all his misery and anguish he was being harassed by a group of wicked outcasts, “lowlifes”, which served only to further his aggravation.

**Application:** A family name that is known for honesty, integrity and righteousness is worth protecting and propagating. In our post-modern world, which no longer believes in absolute truth, this is no longer fashionable, but in God’s eyes it is still very important.

Biblically, names are very important and the legacy of a family name lives on for generations. Christian parents especially should live their lives in such a way that their children would want to emulate them and thus carry on the family’s good reputation.

This is no less important in the spiritual realm, to leave a godly heritage is more precious than fine gold or precious stones. It leads to pure joy, delight and satisfaction. Note the apostle John’s message to his spiritual offspring:

“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”—3 John 1:3

**vv. 9-15** Job continues to describe his current status

[9 “And now I am their taunting song: Yes, I am their byword. 10 They abhor me, they keep far from me; they do not hesitate to spit in my face. 11 Because He has loosed my bowstring and afflicted me, they have cast off restraint before me. 12 At my right hand the rabble arises; they push away my feet and they raise against me their ways of destruction. 13 They break up my path, they promote my calamity; they have no helper. 14 They come as broad breakers; under the ruinous storm they roll along. 15 Terrors are turned upon me; they pursue my honor as the wind and my prosperity has passed like a cloud.”]

Job has literally gone from “riches to rags”. Now, instead of being respected by both the old and the young, the rich and the poor, Job has become a laughing stock of those who held Job in contempt. They probably had been waiting for a chance to “put Job in his place” and that day has arrived.

[And now I am their taunting song] The phrase “taunting song” is literally “instrumental music”. These “younger men”, the sons of vile and wicked fathers, who had been driven to desolate areas, actually take the time to compose songs and set the words to musical instruments.

Job had become an object of their contempt and their ridicule seems to have known no bounds. They were making fun of him, laughing him to scorn using musical instruments! These could have been the lyre, tambourine and/or the drum.

They probably also came up with some clever and catchy ditties that were repeated over-and-over. Perhaps Job couldn’t get the words of these songs out of his head!

[Yes, I am their byword] The Hebrew word rendered “byword” here refers to a discussion or opinion. Job has become the “talk around the water cooler”, “the talk of the town”.

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3 Compare *Job 17:6*. 

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*Klaus G. Schiessel
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But not everyone was amused. Earlier Job had said, “But He has made me a satire of the people”; but he also said, “upright men are astonished at this” {Job 17:6, 8}. Godly people couldn’t believe how badly Job was being ridiculed.

[They abhor me] These evil men detest and loathe Job and regard him as abominable.

[they keep far from me] Although these wicked young men mock Job they want nothing to do with him and don’t want others to think they are associated with him—a man of honor!

[they do not hesitate to spit in my face] Or “spit in my presence”. This is a sign of great disrespect, which shows the greatest contempt for Job.

[Because He has loosed my bowstring and afflicted me] As in Job 29:20, the bowstring is a reference to strength and the power to protect oneself from an adversary.

The affliction came in the form of the great disrespect that Job was now receiving.

Job lays this affliction at God’s “doorstep”. Since Job believed it was God who caused his all his loss and suffering, it was He Who had stripped Job of the ability to defend himself and also exposed him to all this ridicule and mocking. And by such a cowardly group of wicked men.

Since his “bowstring” was “loosed” these individuals thought they could get away with insulting and mocking Job without impunity—they had no fear of any negative consequences and were unrestrained in their verbal insults against Job. They had absolutely no respect for his wisdom or moral worth.

[they have cast off restraint before me] That is, they have no inhibition in mocking Job and heaping insults and accusations against him. The dread they once had of Job was completely gone!

[At my right hand the rabble arises] The right hand is the place of honor and therefore the attacks of Job’s adversaries take on more significance—their mocking insults were directed at the very core of Job’s character.

The Hebrew word rendered "rabble" occurs only here in the Hebrew Scriptures. It comes from a Hebrew word which means, "to sprout, germinate, or blossom"; thus it would be referring to "offspring" and would probably be applied to wild animals.

Thus, this is a reference to their character and possibly also to the fact that these “younger men” {v.1} were siblings.

[they push away my feet] Instead of moving out-of-the-way for Job, they push his feet out of the path⁴ he desires to go. They make it hard for Job to endure his troubles and actually make things worse.

[they raise against me their ways of destruction] This expression is a reference to a military tactic in which an army attacking a walled city builds ramparts and/or war machines [e.g., catapults, battering rams, flaming arrows] to besiege and break through.

In like manner the rabble raises up against Job in calculated ways aimed to destroy him.

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⁴ Compare Job 29:8.
Application: In a sense, this is a description of what our adversary, the Devil \{1 Pet. 5:8\}, does and the Christian is admonished to “Put on the whole [spiritual] armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles [schemes] of the devil” \{Eph. 6:11\}. And we’re given this exhortation:

“Be sober; be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” — 1 Pet. 5:8-11

[They break up my path] This may also be an allusion to a tactic of warfare in which the enemy destroys roadways, bridges and other means of transportation.

They make it difficult for Job to make any progress in getting relief from his suffering; they frustrate any hope that he has.

[they promote my calamity] The Hebrew word rendered “calamity” comes from a root word that means “to have breath”. They were adding to Job’s already “labored” breathing and encouraging his misery forward.

This is in keeping with what Job has already said about the methods they use in attacking him. They were actively hastening his downfall and did what they could to destroy him—bring him to Sheol.

[they have no helper] In other words, these hoodlums don’t need any help in contributing to Job’s sorrow, pain and anguish and thereby advancing his suffering.

In a slight spin on the saying, “with friends like these who needs enemies?”; Job seems to be saying “with adversaries like these, who needs to help?”

[They come as broad breakers.....] The Hebrew here is simply, “Like a wide breach they came”. This is again an allusion to a military battle where a massive assault is made by the enemy through a large breach made in a wall\[^5\]; corresponding to the allusions of war Job mentions in vv.12-13. The enemy would then pour in, attack everyone before them and overrun the city.

This is how Job describes the unruly and wicked younger men that are making sport of Job and disrespecting him—they pour in upon him as if a city wall was breached.

In Job’s case this “wall” would symbolize the respect he once commanded and the restraint provided by his status and position as a chief leader. Now that was broken down and they seemed to pour in on him like unrestrained mob.

[.....under the ruinous storm they roll along] Continuing the image of an army having besieged a city and broken through the walls, these hoodlums were rolling over him with violent destruction while the stones were still crashing down around them.

Like a tumultuous army they advanced against Job and, as they rolled over him, in their ruinous wake they would have left him desolate and devastated. A horrifying prospect!

\[^5\] Compare Isa. 30:13.
[Terrors are turned upon me] The word rendered “terrors” here refers to the physical effects of fear, i.e., “alarms” were going off and converging on Job’s life.

The actions of the vile young men who came against him would have been a horrifying experience, causing fear and panic, for someone who was used to the utmost respect within his community.

[They pursue my honor as the wind] Based on the Hebrew grammar, the word “they” here, refers to the terrors. Every one of the terrors pursues my honor and dignity [i.e., my noble soul] as the wind. Job is saying that the honor and respect that he once had is now exposed to the fury of an unrelenting windstorm.

[and my prosperity has passed like a cloud] Hebrew word rendered “prosperity” properly means “salvation” or “welfare”. In other words, Job’s safety and protection was like a cloud which dissipates and then vanishes and completely disappears.

vv. 16-19➤ **Job’s Heartache & Despair**

[And now my soul is poured out because of my plight; the days of affliction take hold of me. 17 My bones are pierced in me at night and my gnawing pains take no rest. 18 By great force my garment is disfigured; it binds me about as the collar of my coat. 19 He has cast me into the mire and I have become like dust and ashes.”]

Job now speaks again of his physical agony in very expressive terms.

[And now my soul is poured out because of my plight] Compare Ps. 22:14, a prophecy of the suffering Messiah; “I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it has melted within Me.”

Also, Ps. 42:4; a Psalm of distress and yearning for God; “When I remember these things I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise”.

A modern expression is to say that “one is dissolved in grief”.

The language is derived from the fact that the soul overcome with grief seems to lose all firmness or consistence. A sense of direction and hope is lost. Even today in the Middle East a fearful person is described as “one who has a watery heart” or “one whose heart melts away like water”.

[the days of affliction take hold of me] Job is saying that he has suffered for so long [probably for months, see Job 7:3; 29:2] that his affliction has completely seized control his life. His “quality of life” was virtually nonexistent.

[My bones are pierced in me at night.....] Bones form the innermost structure of the human body from which the ligaments and muscles are attached. Therefore they are associated with both a the measure of physical strength [e.g., Job 20:11] and also as the source of severe pain when they are not healthy [e.g., Ps 6:2; 22:14; 31:10; 32:3; 38:3; Prov. 14:30; Job 33:19].

In Job’s case, he had shooting or piercing pains in the night, which would have disturbed and prevented his sleep, aggravating his suffering. The idea is that he was afflicted with pain day and night. This is actually a symptom of the skin disease that Job may have had.

6 Refer to notes on Job 3:1-10 and Job 17:10-16 for more details.
[…..and my gnawing pains take no rest] The word rendered “sinews” in some translations literally means “gnawers”, and hence, refers to the teeth. Thus, continuing the image of bones which are pierced—by being bitten.

The Vulgate\(^7\) renders it, “they who devour me do not slumber”.

The Septuagint\(^8\), renders it as “my sinews, or arteries”.

Schleusner and Luther, translate it as, “They who gnaw me”.

Thus, Job is referring to the violent pain resulting from being bitten to the bone by sharp teeth, among the extreme pains to which the body is subject. If you’ve ever had an injury which pierced you to the bone you’ll know what this feels like.

Job’s description of his suffering is similar to that of the Messiah as He suffers for our sins:

“I am poured out like water and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me.”—\(\text{Ps. 22:13}\)

The idea seems to be that every part of Job’s body was diseased and filled with pain.

[\text{By great force my garment is disfigured…[NKJV]}] The Hebrew grammar in this verse is somewhat difficult to properly render into English. The Septuagint renders this as; “\text{With great force He took hold of my garment}”.

However, it should be noted that it is common in Middle Eastern poetry to compare pain, sickness, anxiety, etc., to clothing.

The phrase rendered “by the great force”, means, literally, “by the multitude of strength” and may refer to (a) the strength of disease, or (b) the strength of God, or (c) the force with which his garment girded him; or perhaps a combination of all three.

The word rendered “is changed”, properly means “to seek, to search after”. However, in the form used here it would mean, “to let oneself be sought”; “to hide oneself”; “to disguise one’s self” \(\text{e.g., 1 Kings 20:38}\).

The KJV renders it as; “\text{By the great force of my disease is my garment changed}”; the NIV as “\text{In his great power [God] becomes like clothing to me}”; the NAS as “\text{By a great force my garment is distorted}” and the ESV as “\text{With great force my garment is disfigured}” [the same as the NKJV].

It is important to note that the words “\text{of my disease}” are not in the Hebrew.

According to this, it would mean that the appearance of Job’s clothes was so spoiled by the staining and corruption of his disease \(\text{e.g., see Job 2:7-8; 7:5; 9:31; 19:20}\); that is, the secretion of fluids from his open sores, as such, it made his garments unrecognizable \(\text{Job 9:31}\). Thus, as a consequence of the decaying nature of his skin disease, his garment had become so stained and discolored it changed from being white and clean to dark and filthy.

However, it is interesting to note that some commentators have understood Job’s statement as figurative referring to his skin as a garment, and indicating that it was so diseased that he could scarcely be recognized as a man.

\(^7\) The Latin translation of the Old Testament.

\(^8\) The Greek translation of the Old Testament.
Again, for the eighth time, he mentioned God's great power\(^9\) {Cp. Job 9:4; 10:16; 12:13; 24:22; 26:12, 14; 27:1}. But he does so in a negative sense: Job felt God had grabbed him by force and afflicted him.

\([…it binds me about as the collar of my coat.]\) The coat here is a tunic or under-garment, which usually had a collar. Thus the garment was made like a shirt but gathered around the neck. Job is saying that his disease fitted close to him, and was gathered close around him.

\([He has cast me into the mire…]\) Job claims that God\(^10\) has thrown him back into the clay that, as a man, he originally came from. Note that Job is validating the creation account of mankind.

\([…and I have become like dust and ashes]\) Job means either in appearance, that he looked haggard and emaciated, ashen in color, or the open sores of his skin disease made him actually look like he was nothing more than a heap of dust and ash. I could also be referring to Job’s belief that he was regarded as being as worthless as the ash heap of the garbage dump\(^11\).

Ironically Job’s statement here anticipates his later words about “repenting in dust and ashes” {see Job 42:6}.

**vv. 20-23** \- **JOB’S DISILLUSIONMENT WITH GOD**

[20 “I cry out to You, but You do not answer me; I stand up, and You regard me. 21 But You have become cruel to me; with the strength of Your hand You oppose me. 22 You lift me up to the wind and cause me to ride on it; You spoil my success. 23 For I know that You will bring me to death and to the house appointed for all living.”]

In this passage Job describes his anguish in that he felt like God had turned against him, was attacking him {Job 16:12} and was tossing him about as if in violent windstorm {v.22}—a tornado perhaps? Which is actually what Job had said God does to the wicked {Job 27:21}.

In addition to his social rejection {vv.1-15} and physical pain {vv.6-19}, Job now verbalizes his feeling of being forsaken and abandoned by God. Job feels like his cries to God are being ignored {cp., Job 19:7; 31:35} even though God sees him {cp., Job 7:19-20; 10:14; 13:27; 31:4}. Again, note a similarity to Jesus’ cry on the cross {Matt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34}.

\[I cry out to You, but You do not answer me\] Job feels like his prayers are going only as high as the ceiling. He has been constantly crying out to God but he has gotten no answers.

This was a common complaint which Job had often made, that with all his standing (a) he could not get the attention of God; (b) his prayers were being not regarded by God, and (c) he could not adequately present his case before him; {cp., Job 13:3, 19; Job 27:9}.

\[I stand up and You regard me (not)\] Standing was a common posture of prayer {e.g., 1 Ki. 8:14, 55; Neh. 9:2; Heb. 11:21}. Although the Hebrew word “not” is not in this verse, the context seems to require it. Thus, the implication is that when Job stood up to pray, God only looked at him without responding.

\(^9\) It should be noted that in the book Job the name of God is often implied where the speaker/writer seems to avoid it, perhaps in order that it may not be needlessly repeated.

\(^10\) In the book Job the name of God is often understood where the speaker/writer seems to avoid it, perhaps in order that it may not be needlessly repeated.

\(^11\) Rosenmuller supposes it means, “I am more like a mass of inanimate matter than a living man.”
The meaning is that when Job stood up to pray God did not regard his prayer.

[But You have become cruel to me...] The Septuagint renders it, “unmerciful to me”. The English words “violent”, “fierce”, “severe” or “harsh”, would all express the idea here.

The word rendered “cruel” in the NKJV occurs in the Old Testament in the following places and translated in the indicated manner. It is rendered “cruel” in Deut. 32:33; Job 30:21; Prov. 5:9; 11:17; 12:10; 17:11; 27:4; Isa. 13:9; Jer. 6:23; 50:42; 30:14; and “fierce” in Job 41:10.

This accusation, applied to God, seems to be harsh and irreverent, especially to those who have an abiding and personal relationship with the Father through faith in Jesus Christ {Matt. 11:28-30; Jn. 1:12-13; Rom. 8:15-17; Gal. 4:6-7; Heb. 4:15-16; 1 Jn. 5:14-15} and have been sealed with the Holy Spirit {2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30}. But Job is only verbalizing what he is feeling based on the severity of his suffering, and although a callous statement, is nevertheless understandable {cp. Job 7:20-21; 19:7-12}. Job has again been “betrayed” by his anguish and frustration into using language which should not and cannot be a model for Christians.

[...with the strength of Your hand You oppose me] Literally, “with the power”. It is by God’s mighty outstretched hand that marvelous things are accomplished by Him. See for example Deut. 26:8; Ps. 136:12; Jer. 32:17, 21; Ezek. 20:33-34.

The hand provides the means by which we perform work and accomplish tasks thus, anything which God does is represented figuratively to His hand. I is with His hand that Job now accuses God of laying in wait to oppose him.

The word rendered “oppose” means to “lie in wait for someone”; “to lay snares”; “to set a trap”. See Job 16:9, where the same word occurs, and where it is rendered “who hates me”, but where it would be better rendered “he pursues”, or “persecutes me”. Job is saying that God had become his adversary or arrayed Himself against him. There was a severity in God’s dealings with him as if he had become God’s enemy.

[You lift me up to the wind and cause me to ride on it] Job is saying that it is as it were God had lifted him up [i.e., as stubble] is by a mighty wind and was being driven mercilessly along. The act of riding upon the wind or the whirlwind is common in Middle Eastern literature as it is in the Old Testament. Note:

“Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord has gone forth in fury—a violent whirlwind! It will fall violently on the head of the wicked….Behold, the whirlwind of the Lord goes forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind; it will fall violently on the head of the wicked.”—Jer. 23:19; 30:23

“They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind.”—Hos. 8:5

Job is comparing his calamity to a windstorm that God had sent which had swept his life away and had driven him about as a worthless object. It was as terrifying as if Job had been lifted into the clouds in a tornado!

[You spoil my success] The word rendered “spoil”,” means “to melt”, “to flow down”, or “to cause to melt” {e.g.; Isa. 64:7}. It is applied to a host or army that appears to melt away {e.g.; 1 Sam 14:16}. It is also applied to one who seems to melt away with fear and terror {Ex. 15:15; Josh. 2:9, 24}.
The word rendered “success” or “substance” has been very variously interpreted. It comes from and unused Hebrew root probably meaning to substantiate; support; or (by implication), enterprise; ability, help, deliverance; purpose, an undertaking, (intellectual) counsel, understanding [see Job 5:12; 6:13; 11:6].

Job seems to be saying that God had caused any vindication of his integrity to melt away; with the terror associated with that. He was like one caught up in a whirlwind, and driven along with the storm, and who, in such circumstances, would be never be restored.

[For I know that You will bring me to death…] Job once again expresses his utter despair and hopelessness. At this point the pain and suffering of his disease appears to have been so overwhelming, that Job believes they must terminate in death.

The phrase “to death” means to the house of the dead, or to the place where the dead are—“the house appointed for all living” [see next part of this verse].

Occasionally Job seems to have had an assurance that his calamities would end [e.g., Job 19:23-27] and that God would once again show Himself to be his friend, but at other times he utters the language of anguish and despair; as he does here.

Such would commonly be the case for a righteous man afflicted as he was and plagued with alternate hopes and fears. These alternate feelings of hope and despair are not really contradictions—they follow a pattern of alternate stages of frustration and faith in accordance with Job’s experience of suffering. And our own sufferings for that matter.

[…]and to the house appointed for all living] That house or home is “appointed” for all living”. In Job’s time, long before Christ’s resurrection, that place was the grave or Sheol. Death is like an appointment which no one will miss: “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment……” {Heb 9:27}.

It is not a matter of chance that we all die, but it is because of the sin of the first man, Adam, that death eventually comes upon all; “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you shall return” {Gen. 3:19}. However, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” {1 Cor. 15:22-23}.

vv. 24-31 JOB’S HUMILIATION & HEARTBREAK
[24 “Surely He would not stretch out His hand against a heap of ruins, if they cry out when He destroys it. 25 Have I not wept for him who was in trouble? Has not my soul grieved for the poor? 26 But when I looked for good, evil came to me; and when I waited for light, then came darkness. 27 My heart is in turmoil and cannot rest; days of affliction confront me. 28 I go about mourning, but not in the sun; I stand up in the assembly and cry out for help. 29 I am a brother of jackals and a companion of ostriches. 30 My skin grows black and falls from me; my bones burn with fever. 31 My harp is turned to mourning and my flute to the voice of those who weep.”]

Job’s three friends had done to Job what no one else would think of doing—they oppressed and mocked him when he was broken and in distress.

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12 Please refer to notes on Sheol in Job 7:9 and corresponding Appendix for a complete and detailed explanation of the relationship between Sheol and Heaven [where Christians go after they die].
Yet Job had sympathized and grieved with other people in their trouble and suffering. Hoping to get similar help from his friends Job got the opposite. Certainly their criticisms and accusations were undeserved!

[Surely He would not stretch out His hand against a heap of ruins…] The Hebrew words rendered “heap of ruins” occurs only here in the Old Testament.

Job is hoping that God would not continue to stretch out His hand and afflict one who is figuratively already a “heap of ruins”. On the significance of “His hand” see notes on v.21.

However, some translate this as “Surely He would not cast away a prayer”. Either way, Job feels neglected and abandoned by God.

[…]if they cry out when He destroys it] Or “when He pierces it”. Job is saying that surely God would not continue to afflict and destroy that which was already a heap of ruins, especially when the person is crying out [i.e., for mercy].

Job 30:24 has been rendered by Umbreit as; “Only if He would not lay his hand upon the heaps of the destroyed! Or must these also cry out in their death?”

According to this interpretation, Job speaks here in bitter irony. He seems to be saying, “I would gladly die; if God would only allow me to be quiet when I am dead”. Job would be willing that the “house” of his body should be destroyed, provided the ruins might rest in peace.

Job now asks two rhetorical questions intended to show that since he has a heart of great compassion for others why has he not gotten the same compassion from others:

[Have I not wept for him who was in trouble?] He has wept for others who were in trouble. Now that he is in trouble, who will weep for him—even God doesn’t appear to do so.

[Has not my soul grieved for the poor?] Job’s soul has grieved for the poor; now that he is poor who will grieve for him?

[But when I looked for good, evil came to me…] Job, being a righteous and blameless man (see Job ), looked for good all the days of his life, but evil or trouble came instead.

[…]and when I waited for light, then came darkness] Similarly, when he waited for light [a symbol of understanding], darkness [a symbol of confusion], came instead.

[My heart is in turmoil and cannot rest;] Literally, “My intestines [bowels] are boiling”. His skin disease and constant stress have taken a toll on his digestive system—it seems as if it’s boiling; i.e., in turmoil, and it doesn’t stop.

[…]days of affliction confront me]. Literally, “Days of depression and misery have anticipated me”; compare Ps 59:10; 88:13; 119:148; 1 Thess. 4:15.

Job’s language conveys the idea that days of affliction come in an unexpected manner, or that they anticipated the fulfillment of man’s plans. In that sense, Job is saying that all his plans and hopes of life seem to have been anticipated and thwarted by overwhelming grief and pain.

[I go about mourning, but not in the sun] Job was constantly going about in mourning for his predicament—apparently it had been going on for months {ref. Job 7:3; 29:2}. 
The Hebrew word rendered “mourning” literally means “to be ashy”; that is, “dark-colored” or “black”. Thus, it is applied to the sun and moon becoming dark in an eclipse, or when covered with clouds (e.g., Jer. 4:28; Joel 2:10; 3:15; Mic. 3:6).

Thus, it is applied to those who go about mourning in “sackcloth and ashes”, garments which become filthy after they’re worn for a while and get dark with the stain of filth and dirt (e.g., Job 5:11; Jer. 14:2).

But Job adds, it’s not because he’s been out in the sun—it’s not because he’s gotten a deep sun-tan. Evidently, the sores of Job’s skin disease had made his skin appear black; perhaps like that of a corpse.

He is going about darkened; probably because his garments have become disfigured {v.18} and his appearance is that of dust and ashes {v.19}.

[I stand up in the assembly and cry out for help.] That is, Job was uttering his cries in the congregation of people, surrounded by the townspeople who were assembled or gathered together.

Perhaps Job is harkening back {e.g., Job 29:1-6} to the time when he stood up to counsel the people and they hung upon every word for advice {Job 29:7-10, 21-25}. But now he stands up only cry out for help [and weep over the calamities which have overtaken him]. Again, Job bemoans his current condition as he contrasts it with his previous status.

[I am a brother of jackals and a companion of ostriches.] The Hebrew word rendered “jackals” is tannyn [tan-neen’]; or tannym [tan-neem’] and it is most-often translated “dragon”. The word refers to an “elongated animal”; i.e., “a serpent”, either marine or land. The word can refer to “Leviathan”; a giant sea monster {see Job 41:1}.

The word rendered “ostriches” combines two Hebrew words; “daughters” and “a bird”; either an ostrich or owl.

Job says that his condition has made him a relative of animals, which men are terrified of and repulsed by; and made him a companion [i.e., associate] of the female owls—an elusive night bird.

[My skin grows black and falls from me…] A result of Job’s skin disease which caused his decaying skin to putrefy and turn black {cp. v.28}, a sign of gangrene13, and fall off. Another symptom of his skin disease {refer to notes on Job 3:1-10; 17:10-16}.

[…my bones burn with fever] Job’s skin disease seems to have pervaded his whole body, down to an infection his bones—they “burned” with a fever. If it was “Elephantiasis” or Pemphigus Foliaceus14 these effects would be naturally produced and another symptom of such a disease.

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13 Gangrene [or Gangrenous Necrosis] is a type of necrosis caused by a critically insufficient blood supply [e.g., peripheral vascular disease]. This potentially life-threatening condition may occur after an injury or infection, or in people suffering from any chronic health problem [such as diabetes] affecting blood circulation [such as peripheral artery disease]. Gangrene is a non-communicable disease and does not spread from person to person. There are different types of gangrene with different symptoms, such as dry gangrene, wet gangrene, gas gangrene, internal gangrene and necrotizing fasciitis.

In previous verses Job elaborated on his physical \( \text{vv.27-28, 30} \) and emotional pain \( \text{vv.24-26, 29, 31} \): days of suffering \( \text{v.16} \), inner churning or turmoil \( \text{v.27} \), blackened, peeling skin and bones burning with fever \( \text{v.30} \), crying for relief, wailing like “jackals” with their doleful howls, and like “ostriches” with their weird groans \( \text{cp. Is. 13:21; 34:13; Mic. 1:8} \).

Job’s honor and dignity had been taken away; his friends had abandoned him emotionally; those who had treated him with reverence and awe now stood at a distance or treated him with contempt and mocked him; his health was gone, and his former countenance, which reflected health and vigor, was changed into open, festering sores and darkened skin produced by disease.

\[ \text{My harp is turned to mourning...} \] The harp was an instrument associated with sounds of pleasure.

As a result of all his physical and emotional suffering Job’s joy \( \text{represented by the harp playing music on joyous occasions} \) became mourning and he became grief-stricken.

\[ \text{….and my flute to the voice of those who weep} \] Like the harp the flute, or pipe, from a Hebrew word meaning “to breathe, to blow”; also gave cheerful sounds and was played during joyous celebrations.

He was like the man wailing and weeping at a funeral procession, one who was inconsolable in his grief.

Like the harp, the flute now sounded only notes of sorrow and lamentation.

Allegorically, all that had been joyous to Job was gone. Instead his joy was replaced with pain, grief and anguish.

Such language is usually used to describe life in the aftermath of God’s judgment. See for example \( \text{Jer. 7:34; 16:9; 25:10} \).

Job was probably asking himself, “Will I ever be whole again?”; “Will I ever recover from the horrible condition that I’m in?”; “When, if ever, will God again bless me?”

In the next chapter Job concludes his defense by reaffirming a covenant he made with God regarding sexual purity and rhetorically making eighteen conditional statements designed to vindicate his integrity and prove his innocence.
### Table 30-1. The Major Themes Repeated in Job's Responses

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<th>First Round of Speeches</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme</strong></td>
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<td>Declaration of God's greatness</td>
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<td>Despair with life (or desire to die)</td>
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<td><strong>1st Speech</strong></td>
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<td>Desire for vindication with God</td>
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<th>Third Round of Speeches</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Theme</strong></td>
<td><strong>1st Speech</strong></td>
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<td>Disappointment in his friends</td>
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<td>Despair with life (or desire to die)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Desire for vindication with God</td>
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Bibliography


(4)  *Barnes Notes*.


