

Job Replies To Zophar

Chapter Twenty-One

Job 21:1-3

“Then Job answered and said: “Keep listening to my words, and let this be your comfort. Bear with me, and I will speak, and after I have spoken, I mock on.”

Job's Replies To Zophar

- In Job's second and last reply to Zophar he attempts to destroy the arguments that Zophar, Eliphaz, and Bildad have been saying: God consistently blesses the righteous and destroys the unrighteous.
- Job made a point-by-point position that the wicked do prosper and are not immediately brought down by God in this present world.
- It is one of the unique places in the Book of Job where he addresses only his friends and does not pray to God.
- "In short, Job's argument is this: if the wicked are not recompensed, neither are the righteous. That is the simple meaning of his suffering: there is no meaning to it at all." - Cline, David

Listen Carefully

- Job instructs his friends to “keep listening” to the words he is about to speak.
- Job tells his friends that if they would take the time and listen they would find comfort in his words.
- Job knew they wouldn’t listen to his words because he said to them after he was done they could, “mock on”.
- “Mock” literally means to “treat with contempt”. This can be with either words or sarcastic imitation.

The Mockers In Scripture

- The Book of Proverbs divides people into four categories for instruction:
 1. The Wise: These are the people who fear or respect the Lord and His Word.
 2. The Simple: These are the people who are impressionable, are gullible, and are lacking in discernment but heed correction and can be taught.
 3. The Fool: These are the people who fail to see the cause and effect relationship, who do stupid behaviors and say stupid things but can be instructed with great effort.
 4. The Mockers: These are the people who laugh and make fun of anything and everything and cannot be instructed. They mock God and His ways. They can if allowed lead the simple and the fool astray.

- Jeremiah says of the mocker: “Behold, they say to me, ‘Where is the word of the LORD? Let it come!’”-**Jeremiah 17:15**
- “Fools mock at the guilt offering, but the upright enjoy acceptance.-**Proverbs 14:9**
- “When a scoffer is punished, the simple becomes wise; when a wise man is instructed, he gains knowledge.”-**Proverbs 21:11**
- “A scoffer does not like to be reproved; he will not go to the wise.”-**Proverbs 15:12**
- “Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury. Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you.”-**Proverbs 9:7-8**

Job 21:4-16

“As for me, is my complaint against man? Why should I not be impatient? Look at me and be appalled, and lay your hand over your mouth. When I remember, I am dismayed, and shuddering seizes my flesh. Why do the wicked live, reach old age, and grow mighty in power? Their offspring are established in their presence, and their descendants before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, and no rod of God is upon them.”

“Their bull breeds without fail; their cow calves and does not miscarry. They send out their little boys like a flock, and their children dance. They sing to the tambourine and the lyre and rejoice to the sound of the pipe. They spend their days in prosperity, and in peace they go down to Sheol. They say to God, ‘Depart from us! We do not desire the knowledge of your ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit do we get if we pray to him?’ Behold, is not their prosperity in their hand? The counsel of the wicked is far from me.”

The Wicked Person Does Prosper

- Job began his argument asking a question: “...is my complaint against man?”-(Vs. 4)
- The rhetorical answer is “no” because his frustration was with God Who blesses the wicked person.
- “His crisis was fundamentally spiritual in nature, much more than being a medical crisis, an economic crisis, a social crisis, or a family crisis. His struggle was against God, and he wondered where God was in the midst of this very dark time.”-Guzik, David

- Job challenged his friends at the core of their worldview by pointing out to them that if it was possible for a wicked man to be blessed then it would stand to reason that it was also possible for a righteous man not be blessed.
- Zophar had said that the wicked die young (20:11) Job said that the wicked lived to a ripe old age.
- “Of some creatures we used to say, that they have nine lives; of some wicked men it may be thought so, they do evil a hundred times, and yet their days are prolonged. Manasseh reigned longest of any king in Judah. Pope John XXII (that monster and mortalist) lived longest of any pope, and died richest. God gives wealth, health, and long life to many wicked.”- Trapp, John

- Bildad said that the wicked do not have children to remember them (18:19-21) Job said: “Their offspring are established in their presence, and their descendants before their eyes.”-Vs.8.
- Job is seemingly contrasting the wicked to his own situation in the world.
 - Job is the man whose “offspring” is not “established”
 - Job is the man whose “house” is “not safe” living in “fear”.

- Job is the man who is receiving the “rod of God”.-(vs.9)
- Job is the man whose livestock had perished.-(vs.10)
- Job is the man whose family had perished and his children no longer danced.-(vs.11)
- The wicked person has had none of these things that has happened to Job happen to them, and yet the wicked want nothing to do with God and say to Him, **“depart from us”**.- (vs.14)
- The wicked person has no desire to know God, to serve God, or to pray to God but they have prosperity, health, and family heritage. Job wanted to know God, to serve God, and to pray to God but had lost his wealth, health, and family. This hard for Job to reconcile in his mind.

God Gives Wealth To The Wicked

- Job says in vs. 16, the prosperity of the wicked is “**in their hand**”.
- “A difficult verse. According to one view the first clause of the verse is closely joined with the preceding account of the sinner’s prosperity: Job means to say that sinners do not create their own fortune; it comes from God.”-Gibson, Edward
- Everything that man has comes from God.

- “You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.”-**Deuteronomy 8:18**
- “The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts.”-**1 Samuel 2:7**
- Job demonstrated his righteousness by recognizing that although God prospers the wicked he wanted nothing to do with the “**counsel of the wicked**”.

Job 21:17-21

“How often is it that the lamp of the wicked is put out? That their calamity comes upon them? That God distributes pains in his anger? That they are like straw before the wind, and like chaff that the storm carries away? You say, ‘God stores up their iniquity for their children.’ Let him pay it out to them, that they may know it. Let their own eyes see their destruction, and let them drink of the wrath of the Almighty. For what do they care for their houses after them, when the number of their months is cut off?”

The Wrath Of God

- Bildad had maintained that the lamp and the light of the wicked is snuffed out (18:5-6) but Job wanted to know how often the wicked's lamp is put out?
- Job would probably say “not often enough”.
- Zophar had said that the wicked person's children suffered because of the deeds of the father (20:10-11) but Job wanted justice and justice delayed to the wicked person's children gave him no satisfaction.

- “If punishment is delayed, the friends can fall back another step and say that the children will pay for their fathers’ sins (Job 5:4; 20:10). Job considers this to be monstrous, encouraging a further depravity: ‘We can sin; our children will pay!’”-Andersen, Francis
- The idea that God is allowing the wicked person to sin only to repay the children for their father’s sin as Zophar had asserted is annoying and unacceptable to Job as well as a great injustice.
- Job wanted God to punish the wicked person so **“that they may know it”**(vs.19).

- Job wanted the wicked person to, “**...see their destruction, and let them drink of the wrath of the Almighty”**.-Vs.20
- Job was suffering in the here and now and he wanted the wicked to suffer in the here and now but the wicked did not as far as Job could see.
- “The cup of God’s wrath, the cup of trembling, etc., is frequently expressed or referred to in the sacred writings, Deuteronomy 32:33; Isaiah 51:17-22; Jeremiah 25:15; Revelation 14:8. It appears to be a metaphor taken from those cups of poison which certain criminals were obliged to drink.”-Clarke, Adam

Job 21:22-26

“Will any teach God knowledge, seeing that he judges those who are on high? One dies in his full vigor, being wholly at ease and secure, his pails full of milk and the marrow of his bones moist. Another dies in bitterness of soul, never having tasted of prosperity. They lie down alike in the dust, and the worms cover them.”

God Is All-Knowing

- Job asks the question: “**Will any teach God knowledge...?**”
- Job knows that God is all-knowing in His character.
- This is one of the main problems with God and suffering in that if God knows my suffering why does He not intervene and help.
- “God is pleased to do wonderful contradictory things in man’s reason; so that we must needs confess an unsearchableness in his ways... In this work of his, human reason is blinder than a mole.” –Trapp, John

- Hannah prayed: “Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.”-**1 Samuel:2:3**
- “for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.”-**1 John 3:20**
- “O LORD, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.”-**Psalm 139:1-4**

- Also, God being all-knowing complicates the issue of suffering because he does not step in and snuff out the wicked nor bless the righteous.
- In fact, a man may die a full of life in this present world or he may die never knowing the good life in this world but in the end both are dead.
- If there is no life after this present world then this would be a true injustice but we know there is a judgment coming where an all-knowing God will bring justice to the wicked person and his wicked works.

- “All these worldly differences are ended by death, and they lie in the grave without any distinction... So that no man can tell who is good, and who is bad, by any events which befall them in this life.”-Poole, Matthew
- “God would rather have us complain than be indifferent toward him or to handle his truths arrogantly and so reduce them to dead maxims. Job’s anguish over not understanding what God was doing is proof that he was not indifferent or arrogant.”- Smick, Elmer

Job 21:27-34

“Behold, I know your thoughts and your schemes to wrong me. For you say, ‘Where is the house of the prince? Where is the tent in which the wicked lived?’ Have you not asked those who travel the roads, and do you not accept their testimony that the evil man is spared in the day of calamity, that he is rescued in the day of wrath?”

“Who declares his way to his face, and who repays him for what he has done? When he is carried to the grave, watch is kept over his tomb. The clods of the valley are sweet to him; all mankind follows after him, and those who go before him are innumerable. How then will you comfort me with empty nothings? There is nothing left of your answers but falsehood.”

Job Knows His Friends

- Job knows the thoughts of his friends and their schemes to wrong him. He knew that they thought Job was a wicked person deserving of what he was receiving.
- He tells his friends to hear what they are saying on the highways and byways that the evil man is rescued and spared calamity during the day of wrath.
- "If Job's friends inquired of well-traveled people, they would learn that in every part of the world, wicked people seem to escape the calamities that fall on the righteous." - Wiersbe, Warren

Fallacy Exposed

- The fallacy of Job's friends premise that the wicked suffer and the righteous are blessed by God has been exposed by observing the experiences of people in the world.
- “Any objective observer of what was going on at that city dump would have had to admit that Job's arguments made more sense than those of his three friends.”-Constable, Thomas
- Job ends the debate by calling out his friends saying, **“There is nothing left of your answers but falsehood.”**-vs.34

- One of the most difficult yet rewarding principles in the Bible is to, “**walk by faith not by sight.**”-2 **Corinthians 5:7**
- The things in which we see are real to us which makes it hard to walk by faith in the unseen.
- However, we should convince our mind and heart by faith that what see and what we are experiencing are momentary and temporary and the things that are unseen are eternal.
- “**Trust** in the LORD with all your heart, and do not **lean on your own** understanding.”-**Proverbs 3:5**