***Job: A Study in Suffering…And Faith***

Lesson Eight: Final Speeches of Eliphaz and Bildad/Job’s Replies

(Job 22:1 – 26:14)

***Objective(s):***

1. Be able to describe how Eliphaz characterized his friend Job.

2. Be able to summarize Eliphaz’s counsel to Job.

3. Be able to identify Job’s main point in response to Eliphaz.

1. **Eliphaz’s third speech (22:1-30)**
   1. Eliphaz once again began a discussion of the reason for Job’s suffering (vv. 1-5).
      1. Eliphaz made his point by asking several rhetorical questions.
      2. He seemed to be saying that God had nothing to gain from man; he was not causing Job to suffer for some personal, self-seeking reason.1
      3. Eliphaz implied (v. 4) that God certainly was not afflicting Job because of the piety that Job had been affirming. The only other answer is that he was suffering for his great sinfulness (v. 5).
   2. Having supposedly reasoned out the cause of Job’s suffering, Eliphaz proceeded to itemize Job’s sins (vv. 6-11).
      1. Of course, Eliphaz accused Job of these sins without a shred of proof (see 4:1-4).
      2. He charged Job with a lack of compassion, cruelty and greed.
      3. Eliphaz summarized that it was because of these specific sins that Job was surrounded by trouble and calamity (v. 11).
   3. Eliphaz issued a warning to Job about his general attitude (vv. 12-20).
      1. Verse 12 seems to be the comment of Eliphaz and expresses the opinion of both the righteous and the wicked.
      2. However, the wicked draw a different conclusion than the pious. The wicked assume that God is so far removed from the affairs of men that he doesn’t know/care what they are doing.2
      3. It was this attitude with which Eliphaz charged Job (vv. 13ff).
      4. He then drew Job’s attention to the fact that “wicked men of old” had assumed this attitude (v. 17) and were punished for it (vv. 15-18).
      5. The righteous, according to Eliphaz, delight in the punishment of the wicked (vv. 19-20).
   4. Eliphaz described the blessings which would attend repentance (vv. 21-30).
      1. Having just spoken some of the bluntest and most unfair words of all the friends’ speeches, Eliphaz then “softened” his speech by returning to the theme of the blessings of repentance much as he did in his first speech.
      2. Job should “acquaint himself” with the Almighty and “receive instruc­tion” from him (vv. 21-22).
      3. The Lord would then become Job’s prosperity and he will readily lay aside his material prosperity (vv. 23-26).
      4. Such would be Job's favor with God that if cast down temporarily, God would deliver him. Job would even be able to make intercession on the behalf of sinners, an unknowing prophecy of the role Job would play at the end of the book and for his three friends--of all people (vv. 27-30)!!
2. **Job’s reply (23:1-24:25)**
   1. Job reiterated his desire to meet with God and argue his case (23:1-9).
      1. Although it almost seems as though his “reply” is a soliloquy, it is quite possible that Job’s comments in this section were in response to Eliphaz’s admonition that Job “acquaint” himself with God (cf. 22:21; NKJV). Job would like nothing better (vv. 1-5).
      2. Job expressed his confidence that such a confrontation would result in his deliverance, the vindication of his innocence (vv. 6-7).
      3. However, Job proclaims his inability to “find” God for such a confronta­tion (vv. 8-9).
   2. Job declared his innocence (23:10-12).
      1. Despite his inability to “meet” with God, Job was confident that God knew of his conduct and would eventually proclaim him righteous (v. 10).
      2. In a wonderful description of faithfulness, Job again claimed to be righteous (vv. 11-12).
   3. Job affirmed that he must wait for justice (23:13-17).
      1. He stated that God was not turned from his purposes (v. 13).
      2. His treatment of Job and many other such “puzzles in justice” must run their course (v. 14).
      3. Job spoke of his fear of the Almighty (vv. 15-16).
      4. Verse 17 is difficult. Two possible meanings include:
         1. Citing the marginal reading of the R.V., Gibson offers this explanation:3
            1. *Job means to say that it is not the darkness of his present lot which in itself disturbs him so: but rather the fact that it is God Who brings it upon him.*
         2. Other commentators suggest that the reason for the terror of Job was the mystery of God’s actions; Job can’t understand the reason for his suffering.4
   4. Job cited the inscrutability of God’s workings in the affairs of men (24:1-25).
      1. This section is an attack of the friends’ doctrine that the wicked always suffer and the righteous always prosper.
      2. Job asked why God's justice was not more apparent; why did He not have appointed times when punishment was meted out (vv. 1-2).5
      3. Job described the wickedness of some who take advantage of the helpless and unfortunate (vv. 2-4).
      4. He further described the suffering such wickedness causes the poor (vv. 5-8).
      5. The list of wicked deeds is continued (vv. 9-17).
      6. In the midst of all this wickedness and in spite of the cries of the oppressed, the wicked seem to be “getting away with their sins” (v. 12 – “God does not charge with wrong”). It is also possible that Job was speaking of the ones suffering. They were suffering and yet they were not charged with wrong, i.e., innocent suffering. Either way, this scenario is in disharmony with the doctrine of the friends.
      7. The wicked *should* suffer swift destruction (vv. 18-21).
         1. The ESV has Job apparently quoting the friends regarding the future of the wicked. The quotation begins in verse 18 and ends at the conclusion of verse 20.
         2. The NKJV seems to have Job declaring what the future of the wicked *should* be.
      8. And yet the wicked seemed to prosper and, if they were cut off, it was as happens to all men (vv. 22-24).6
         1. These are admittedly difficult verses. The text does not seem to be clear to me and commentators have reached no consensus of opinion.
         2. Some affirm that Job was actually saying that the wicked do eventual­ly meet with an untimely end at the hands of God. Of course, this is exactly the opposite of the meaning suggested above!7
3. **Bildad's third speech (25:1-6)**
   1. Bildad's third speech seems to indicate by its brevity that the friends are “running out of soap.”
      1. He did not even seem to try to answer Job’s recent arguments that the wicked often did prosper.
      2. Some commentators suggest, in view of the extreme brevity of Bildad’s speech, that 26:5-14 are actually the remainder of Bildad’s speech.8
         1. They reason that the material in that section would fit well with 25:2-3.
         2. 26:1-4 clearly belongs to Job, but would have been displaced.
         3. The transition from 26:4 to 27:1, required by this suggestion, is abrupt and awkward. I favor following the speech divisions as they are in the ESV and NKJV (cf. 25:1; 26:1; 27:1).
   2. Bildad asserted the power and majesty of the Almighty (25:2-3).
   3. Man’s ability to maintain innocence before God (25:4-6)
      1. Bildad’s comments in these verses closely parallel those of Eliphaz (4:17-19; 15:14-16).
      2. Bildad’s point seems to have been to rebuke Job for thinking that he could be righteous before God.9
         1. It is an argument from the greater to the lesser.
         2. Job had maintained his innocence of any sin commensurate with his suffering and had affirmed several times that he was confident his vindication was only a matter of time.
4. **Job’s reply (26:1-14)**
   1. Some would suggest that Job’s specific reply to Bildad comprehends more than just chapter 26 – which may very well be true.
   2. Job questioned the helpfulness of Bildad’s words (26:1-4).
      1. Job affirmed the inadequacy of Bildad’s arguments to help, counsel, save, etc. those in need of help.
      2. It is likely that Job was employing a great deal of sarcasm here, particularly if the verses are translated as statements (ESV; vv. 2-3) instead of questions (NKJV).
   3. Job described the power of God (26:5-14).
      1. Even in the underworld, God’s power was recognized (vv. 5-6).
      2. He continued his description of God’s power by noting its manifestations in heaven and earth (vv. 7-14).
      3. Note Gibson’s comment:10
         1. *This description of God’s power, it must be admitted, contributes nothing fresh to the discussion, the reason being that there was nothing fresh to reply to; but it is obviously intended to show that Job himself knows it all quite as well as his friend who has so kindly taken upon himself the task of instructing him.*
      4. It may be that Job was saying that if man cannot fathom the power/work­ings of God in nature, how could he hope to understand God’s workings in the moral order (his handling of the wicked and the righteous).11

**Endnotes:**

1Driver and Gray, p. 192. So also Gibson, pp. 119-20. 2Driver, p. 195. 3Gibson, pp. 128-9.

4Jackson, p. 59. 5Gibson, p. 129. 6Driver and Gray, p. 213.

7Jackson, p. 60. 8Hesser, pp. 52-3. 9Gibson, p. 136. 10Gibson, p. 137.

11Jackson, p. 61.

***Study & Discussion Questions:***

1. With what specific sins did Eliphaz charge Job? How did these charges differ from Eliphaz’s description of Job in his first speech?
2. What general attitude did Eliphaz accuse Job of holding? Why?
3. How did Eliphaz soften his speech?
4. What was Job’s confidence in chapter 23? Why?
5. What seems to be Job’s point in 24:1-17? How did this affect the argument of the friends?
6. What seems to be Bildad’s point in his short speech?

**Additional Discussion Questions**

1. What virtual prophecy did Eliphaz unwittingly make?
2. Some have suggested that 25:4-5 teaches the doctrine of inherited depravity. How would you respond to this charge?
3. How did ancient mythology suggest that the earth was supported? How did Job explain this? Implica­tion??