

Job

Lesson 13

Chapter 20

2.C.V – Zopher, 20:1-29

Zopher's opening comments respond to Job's final warning, which he considers an insult, followed by his variation in the theme of the fate of the wicked. They have nothing to say about Job's argument re the suffering and death of the righteous. Their theology admits of no such possibility.

Vv. 2-3. Zopher is stung by the way Job discredited his claim to be wise; hence his parade of understanding.

V. 4. Zopher bases his assertion on common and timeless knowledge. He is surprised that Job does not know such things.

Vv. 5-11. The joy of the godless is brief. But Job has already argued that the life of all men is transitory, whether good or bad. His retribution will be dramatic (vv. 6-7) and swift (v.8). He dies while his bones still are still full of youthful vigor. By his evasion, Zopher concedes that present experience might not give the final answer. He has moved closer to Job's position that confidence in God's justice is not based on observation, but is a matter of trust and hope.

Vv. 12-18. There is a certain realism in Zopher's remarks. They are not without foundation in fact. If judgment is a slow process, it is because God uses a person's own wickedness to bring about his downfall.

V. 19. Neglect and mistreatment of the poor is one of the worst fault's of the rich.

Vv. 20-22. These verses are not clear. As a result, translations differ. However, there are at least three basic matters to be learned.

1. The rich man is dissatisfied with what he has, and wants more.
2. He often has a dramatic reversal of his fortune.
3. When he falls into want his suffering will be greater because he is used to plenty.

Vv. 23-29. References to various weapons are painful echoes of Job's description of God's wrath (Chs. 16 and 19). His portion from God is his recognizing a final decisive day of God's wrath.

Chapter 21

2. c. vi. Job answers Zophar.

The time has come for Job to demolish his friends' position. In counter attack, Job refers to prior statements that are a good guide to interpretation.

By quoting their words and refuting them, Job comes closer to formal debate. His words are emotional, but less invective.

- I. VV. 2-5. Job is angered by his friends' lack of empathy. A more fitting response would be to be appalled (5a) or silent (5b). Just to listen (2a) would be a consolation (2b).
 - a. v. 4. This verse implies that God is the source of Job's trouble.
 - b. His friends agree with this statement.
- II. VV. 6-16. Job's friends' thesis is that sin produces suffering. The inference is that suffering proves sin. Job denies both.
 - a. V. 7. Job denies that the wicked die prematurely (Zophar, 20:11).
 - b. v. 8. The wicked have large, happy families (Bildad – 18:19).
 - c. v. 9. The houses of the wicked are secure. The rod of God that Job is feeling (9:34) does not fall on them.
 - d. Job is learning why belief in God does not enable us to answer all questions or to account for everything that happens under the sun. By Job's standards any faith that cannot be lived every day in all circumstances is worthless (Phil. 4:11-13).
 - e. v. 10. The wickeds' cattle are fertile.
 - f. vv. 11-12. The wicked live under idyllic conditions.

- g. v. 13. The wicked die with no ill effects.
- h. vv. 14-15. The wicked enjoy all of this while practicing the most presumptuous profanity.
- i. v. 16. The wickeds' prosperity is not of his own making. Job will have none of the wickeds' counsel. He will have none of it.

III. VV. 17-22.

- a. vv. 17-18. When Job's friends say that the wicked do not prosper, Job says they do. The friends respond that the prosperity of the wicked does not last long. Job wants to know how long, "How often is the lamp of the wicked put out?"
- b. vv. 19-21. If the punishment of the wicked is delayed, the friends fall back another step. The children of the wicked will pay. Job considers this to be encouragement of depravity. What do they care about what happens to their descendants?
- c. v. 22. Job checks himself with the confession that God's ways are inscrutable and he judges all, no matter how exalted they may be.

- IV. VV. 23-26. Life does not disclose any patterns. Death always has the last word. In life, no moral differences explain the diversities of fortune or their common fate.
- V. VV. 27-34.
- a. vv. 27-28. The thinking of the friends is so dishonest it can only arise from malice. Although their accusations rarely come out into the open, their inference is obvious.
 - b. vv. 29. Zophar appeals to universe of knowledge (20:4). Job responds that he hasn't been around much. Any traveller can tell you that life is opposite of what you say.
 - c. vv. 30-34. The wicked are reserved (spared) for the day of calamity and they will be led forth on that day (30). Who will tell him that he is wicked and who will take him to court (31). The truth is that even in death the wicked have the advantage because men watch over his tomb (32). Even the dust of the earth will gently cover him (see Job 3:19; 17:16). Men will follow after him and go before him (33). What Job has been offered for comfort is both vane and false.

Chapter 22

2. D. The third round of speeches.

2. D. i. Eliphaz the Temanite responds.

In the first cycle the generalizations did not apply doctrine openly.

In the second cycle the theme is the fate of the wicked. Job's view comes into open contradiction with his friends.

In the third cycle what had been inferred now comes into the open. The breach is complete. Once this point has been reached there can be no further discussion. The dialog grinds to a halt.

Eliphaz is a good man. There is no malice in his words. The problem is that he does not see Job's problem through Job's eyes. In vv. 2-11 he tries to bring Job face to face with his sin. In vv. 12-20 he offers another tribute to the greatness of God. In vv. 21-30 he makes a final appeal to Job to repent.

I. VV. 2-11.

- a. vv. 2-4. Eliphaz preaches the orthodoxy of his day. God does not need the strength or wisdom of man and takes neither pleasure nor profit from either. As far as man's reverence is

concerned, God takes no notice. If Job has any of these qualities it does not stop God from reproving Job. Eliphaz's statements remove God from compassionate involvement with humanity. He does not take pleasure in creation and is not moved by the problems of his creatures. Religion is to wean man from sticky emotional problems relative to God's divinely dispassionate existence. Eliphaz greatest problem is that he does not know God. People do matter to God. The cross proves that God is love and that God does love his creation.

- b. vv. 5-11. Eliphaz more openly and bluntly brands Job as a sinner who engaged in greater wrongs than any sinner before him. No flaws had been charged against him before. Eliphaz' unsupported charges are pure slander. Dare we slander the friends of God? If I am blameless in the eyes of God, should I not treat his others so? Should I not make hearts lighter and not heavier? If Christ has forgiven, who am I to condemn (Col. 2:1-2; Gal. 6:2).
- c. vv. 12-20 –a tribute to the greatness of God.

- i. vv. 12-14. Job admits that God is great. Eliphaz argues that Job says that God is so great and so high that he does not know what goes on here.
- ii. vv. 15-16. Eliphaz charges that while Job walks in the ancient path of the wicked and that he, like them, will be swept away before their time. This could be a description of the pre-flood wickedness (“washed away by a river”), but it could also apply to anyone.
- iii. vv. 17-20. The attitude of the wicked toward God is that they shun him and have no fear of what he can do to them (17). Still God fills their houses with good things. Even so the counsel of the wicked is far from Eliphaz (18). The attitude of the righteous toward the destruction of the wicked is one of mockery and gladness (19-20). Is this not an accurate description of Job’s friends toward him?
- d. vv. 21-30. There is no mistaking the earnestness of Eliphaz’s closing words. He is a soul-winner doing this best. What he says about God is correct. The warmth of his language is an improvement over prior severity. Eliphaz prefers God’s mercy

to his terrifying judgment. The only thing wrong is that it is completely irrelevant to Job.

- i. vv. 21-22. Job will find peace and good by accepting God's instruction.
- ii. vv. 23-26. If Job returns to the Almighty he will be restored (literally, built up). The conditions he needs to meet are 1) removing all unrighteousness from his tent, and 2) get rid of his gold. By mentioning only gold Eliphaz may be suggesting that wealth was Job's problem. The truth was that Job had already made God his gold. The irony was that in the end Eliphaz would be the recipient of Job's power as an intercessor (42:8).
- iii. vv. 29-30. These words are almost a prophecy. Eliphaz declares that if Job repents and returns God can use him to lift up the down cast and God will deliver them through the cleanness of Job's hands. Does this not sound like 42:8? God was surely listening to the abuse of Job and preparing to provide Job's friends with a fine meal of crow, *i.e.*, making them eat their words.