

Job 22-31, Emphasis 31
January 30, 2011
Round 3

I. Comment on Round 3

Round 3 is mostly a dud; it points out how useless men's words are in describing God. Eliphaz rehashes what he has already stated, perhaps going further in "pinpointing" Job's sin. Basically he provides a summary for the "friends." Bildad adds a short burst, but again nothing new. Zophar does not speak at all. Job responds to the two who speak, and then provides a rousing conclusion by summarizing his thoughts. We will emphasize Chapter 31 at the end of the conclusion.

II. Eliphaz's Third Speech, Chapter 22

Eliphaz appears to lose his reasoning power in this chapter. He accuses Job of all kinds of horrible sins, the typical sins of strong wicked people in OT times, without any evidence to back up his claims. Indeed, we know that Job has not done any of the things of which he is accused. Beyond the false accusations, Eliphaz has nothing new in his final words.

III. Job's Third Reply to Eliphaz, Chapters 23-24

Job appears to ignore the most recent charges brought by Eliphaz. Perhaps, he felt that he had already answered the "friend" several times. Later, he will summarize his response to all the friends, including Eliphaz.

Job wants to find God so that he can present his case to Him, but he is unable to find God. Job believes that God will exonerate him when he finds Him. The words of Eliphaz and the others have not helped Job's situation, only made his situation even more difficult by causing him to self-righteously defend his integrity and to become bitter.

While Job ended Chapter 23 with a great conceptual victory (i.e. fearing the Lord is a good thing), in chapter 24 he appears to go backward in self-doubt, thereby also doubting God. Job is sick, he does not know what God is doing, and his "friends" are attacking him. This leads him to the question of why the innocent suffer in this world and why the guilty do not.

IV. Bildad's Third Round, Chapter 25

Bildad repeats accusations of Job for not being totally righteous before the totally righteous God. He is correct, as Job has admitted. Clearly, though, we know that this is not the cause of Job's suffering. Some suggests that Bildad's final argument is based on a misconception that Job is saying that God is wrong. Basically, Job is simply saying the obvious that God is beyond his understanding

V. Job's Response to Bildad, Chapters 26-28

Job is the apparent speaker for chapters 26-31. For our discussions, we will assign Chapters 26-28 as Job's final defense to the "friends, and Chapters 29-31 as his final concluding remarks.

Job has "won" the debate with the "friends." They are done but apparently stay near Job, perhaps through the beginning of Chapter 42; they do not speak again. In Chapter 26, Job gives his final disgust to these "friends" and their unhelpful advice. Later, God will tell them that they have sinned unlike Job and must submit sacrifices to God for these sins. Job will forgive them and have his original riches returned twofold. After this is all over, one wonders what Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar would have said?

In Chapter 27, Job continues a consideration of the wicked, repeating theology that sound like the friends" (i.e. All punishment is caused by sin.) In Chapter 28, Job points out that no matter how hard a man might work to get riches, he cannot know true wisdom without getting it from God.

VI. Job's Final Defense, Part 1, Chapters 29-30

It is not clear as to the time horizon in which Job spoke. Perhaps, what we have recorded took days to deliver. Perhaps, there was a break in his speaking between chapter 28 and 29.

In Chapter 29, Job remembers how wonderful his previous life had been. In Chapter 30, Job sounds as though he has had enough; his complaints become even louder. As we read through these soul-searching statements of this chapter, we can see him potentially proceeding from complaint to revolt. Yet, he never gives up on God. He said stuff that he wished that he had said, but throughout the ordeal, he never gives up on God. Undoubtedly this is why James wrote the following about him:

James 5:10-11

10 Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

NIV

VII. Job's Final Defense, Part 2, Chapter 31

In this chapter, we have the final words of Job before God speaks to him. His words are totally self-righteous as he argues for his vindication. If his friends or other people had not assumed that he was guilty, he might not have gone so far in his declarations. Even when we think that we are doing it for good motivations, we should be careful how we counsel or confront someone; we might do more harm than good.

Many see commonalities with this chapter and Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. What similarities do you see between the two?

The sins denied by Job include:

- Lust (1-4)
- Falsehood (5-6)
- Covetousness (7-8)
- Adultery (9-12)
- Mistreatment of one's servants (13-15)
- Lack of concern for the poor (16-18)
- Failure to clothe the poor (19-20)
- Perversion of justice against the weak (21-23)
- Trust in wealth (24-25)
- Worship of the heavenly bodies (26-28)
- Satisfaction at a foe's misfortune (29-30)
- Failure to extend hospitality to a sojourner (31-32)
- Concealment of sin without confession (33-34)
- Abuse of the land (38-40)

Obviously, some of the above overlaps, such as the first four deals with sexual integrity and several others with dealing with the poor or the weak.

Why is Job arguing so hard for his vindication? Can the people before him help him recover?

In the ancient world, one way to show innocence was to call down a curse on one's self that would be imposed if one was guilty. As such, some scholars believe that Job was making such an attempt to exonerate himself in this chapter.

Assume for a moment that everything that Job declares was true about him; certainly God has said that he is blameless and upright. Why were people so cruel to Job?

Job closes out this chapter and his word-lengthy defense by point out how clean or righteous that he is/was. His next words after God speaks are:

Job 40:4a

4a "I am unworthy—how can I reply to you?"

NIV

Why the difference?

VIII. Reactions

At the end of Chapter 2, we are all sympathetic to Job's plight. Are still so sympathetic?

What have you learned about suffering from Job? What would you to be a better sufferer?

What have you learned about helping someone who is suffering from this book? What have you learned not to do?

If you could say anything at the end of Chapter 31, what would it be?