

Abounding Grace Christian Church

What about the Book of Job? – Part 5

I. The Three Friends “comfort” Job.

A. As was mentioned last time, in **Chapter 3** Job begins to speak out of great distraught. This leads to the first of Job’s friends, Eliphaz to respond. Scholar Robert Laurin writes:

“The stage is now set for the three cycles of speeches. When Job was first struck by his troubles, he gave no indication of rebellion against the will of God. But months have probably passed (cf. 2:11–13), and his suffering has continued unrelieved. So in chapter 3 a change has taken place in Job. He no longer submits unquestioningly to God’s will; rather, all he can ponder is the reason for his trouble. He never really curses God, although in later chapters he comes very close to it; he only wonders why. It is the ‘why’ that the three friends seek to explain.”¹

B. **Eliphaz – Chapters 4-5; 15; 22** – Eliphaz responds first which might be because he was the oldest of the three. He starts off by commending Job for helping others who were in distress (**4:3-4**).

Afterward, however, he basically accuses Job of having sinned. He states, **“...who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off? Even as I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.” (4:7-8)**. This demonstrates, again, the **“retribution principle”** which was a predominant mindset in those days. Allen C. Myers writes;

“Perhaps because he is the oldest, Eliphaz speaks first in each of the three cycles of speeches intended to console and comfort the stricken Job (Job 2:11). In his first (4:1–5:27) he shows himself to be the most sympathetic of the friends (cf. 4:2–6); nevertheless, he upholds the orthodox view of suffering as divine retribution upon the wicked (5:6–7) and urges Job to repent in total submission (vv. 17–27). The second speech is more harsh, deriding Job for his impiety (15:4) and arrogance (vv. 7–13), and concludes with a vivid description of the fate accorded to the wicked (vv. 20–35). Finally, Eliphaz argues that God is impartial (22:3), hence Job’s suffering must be the result of specific sins (cf. vv. 12–20) which the Temanite deduces (vv. 6–11); he concludes with a repeated plea for repentance and reconciliation (vv. 21–30).”²

1. This strict retribution principle was also believed in Jesus’ day – **John 9:1-7**.

C. **Bildad – Chapters 8; 18; 25** – Bildad’s statements seem to be much harsher than Eliphaz’. He goes so far as to say that Job’s sons died because they had sinned against God (**8:4**). Again, Allen C. Myers writes:

“Drawing upon the wisdom of the ancient sages, Bildad offers three lengthy speeches in defense of what he perceives to be God’s case against Job. In the first (Job 8) he argues that Job’s misfortune is divine retribution for the misdeeds of Job’s children, which case he supports with examples from human tradition and the natural world. In ch. 18 he returns to defend the allegedly ‘natural order’ whereby Job’s misfortunes are the inevitable result of his wickedness. His final speech (ch. 25, and possibly 26:5–14) is an attempt to convince Job of his own insignificance in contrast to God’s purity and omnipotence.”³

D. **Zophar – Chapters 11; 20** – There are only two discourses attributed to Zophar as opposed to the three for each of the other two friends. Zophar is absolutely brutal in his accusations against Job. He accused him of being wicked, a hypocrite and haughty (**20:5-6**). He also accuses him of oppressing the poor and violently seizing other’s property (**20:18-20**). He also tells Job that he deserves even more punishment (**11:6**). Finis Dake writes:

“Zophar the Naamathite thought it was time for him to answer Job and accomplish what the other two had failed to do up to this point. All three were trying to convince Job of his sinfulness and hypocrisy, to show him that he was reaping what he had sown. Zophar began by accusing Job of sins (Job 11:1–4). He then reasoned that he wasn’t reaping enough for his sins (Job 11:5–6), that man is helpless

¹ Robert B. Laurin, “Job,” in *Job–Malachi*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry, vol. 2, The Biblical Expositor (A. J. Holman Company, 1960), 16.

² Allen C. Myers, “ELIPHAZ,” in *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 327–328.

³ *Ibid.*, 158.

before God (Job 11:7–12), that if Job would stop sinning and pray he would be blessed, and that he must be wicked because of suffering the judgments of the wicked (Job 11:20).”⁴

E. Job rebukes his Friends – 16:1-2 – “Then Job answered and said: ‘I have heard many such things; Miserable comforters are you all...’”

“How do Job’s friends view God? There is much about their view that is thoroughly orthodox. They have a biblical view of God as transcendent and yet deeply involved in his world. They recognize that God is just. They rightly see human life as lived before the face of God, and they know that God hears and answers prayer. They understand that God reveals himself to humans (see also 33:14–15... But they have no sense of God as God, a God whose ways are often unexpected and inscrutable. Their God is reduced to their mechanistic theology. They may appear orthodox, but Job finds them of no help in his torment. In 16:2 he describes his friends as ‘miserable comforters!’”⁵

F. God rebukes Job’s Friends – Job 42:7-9 – As stated above, though they had some things right, their accusations and conclusions toward Job were wrong.

II. Elihu Speaks Up – Chapters 32-37. We are now introduced to a young man, named Elihu. In 32:2, it states that he was “...the son of Barachel, the Buzite, of the family of Ram...”. Though it’s uncertain, according to Allen Myers he may have been, “...possibly a descendant of Nahor’s son Buz and thus related to Abraham (Gen. 22:20–21).”⁶ Nahor was one of Abraham’s brothers. Elihu had been watching and listening to the theological arguments of the four and he became angry with all of them. It states in verse 2 that his wrath was aroused toward Job because “...he justified himself rather than God.” Verse 3 states that he was aroused with wrath at Job’s three friends because “...they found no answer, and yet had condemned Job.” It’s important to note that at the end of the book of Job, God rebukes all the other four, including Job, but He doesn’t address Elihu at all. Some say that Elihu was a brazen young man who should have kept his mouth shut. Others think that everything he said was 100% correct. Everything he said, however, was not correct in light of the New Testament, but he came closer than the others. In fact, in 36:24 through chapter 37, Elihu began to establish a line of thought, which God seems to pick up with when He began in chapter 38. This theme is the awesome majesty of Almighty God, especially in His creation! (36:27-33). Chuck Missler writes:

“Elihu seems to be a kind of “John the Baptist” of the Old Testament. He gives witness to the Mediator who is God Himself. Elihu appears as a preliminary intermediary before God appears on the scene. He begins where the friends began, and ends with words very similar to those of God’s when He at last appears on the scene.”⁷

III. The Lord Speaks – Chapters 38-39; 40:1-2; 41:1-2; 42:1-6. – Roy Zuck gives a great introduction to this when he writes:

“In more than 70 questions—none of which Job could answer—God interrogated Job regarding numerous aspects of inanimate and animate nature. These two science examinations ranged in subject matter from the constellations to the clouds, from the beasts to the birds. The wonders of God’s creation are dazzlingly displayed in outer space, in the sky, and on the earth. Though Job was dumbfounded by this barrage of questions, flunking both lengthy quizzes, he *did* meet God face to face. This reassured the complainer that God had not abandoned him after all.”⁸

A. 38:1 – “Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said...” – The meaning of “whirlwind” is; “any violent storm and is not restricted to a rotary movement of air”⁹
Symbolically, it represented God’s wrath, power and authority.

B. 38:2 – “Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? – Right away God begins to rebuke Job. The New Living Translation puts it this way:

“Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words?”

⁴ Finis Jennings Dake, *The Dake Annotated Reference Bible* (Dake Publishing, 1997), Job 11:1.

⁵ Craig G. Bartholomew, *When You Want to Yell at God: The Book of Job*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew, Transformative Word (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 14–15.

⁶ Allen C. Myers, “ELIHU,” in *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 325.

⁷ Chuck Missler, *The Book of Job*, (Koinonia House, 2002), 72.

⁸ Roy B. Zuck, “Job,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 766.

⁹ J. M. Houston, “Whirlwind,” in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. R. W. Wood et al. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 1238.