

## **JOB 22 - 31**

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### **Introduction**

We come now to the third cycle of discourses. During the last cycle we noticed the trajectory of Job's speeches leading through death looking forward to the resurrection where "there is a judgment." At this point it's worth remembering that Job's struggle runs parallel in some ways to the life of Jacob, whose wrestling culminates in being crowned a "prince" (Gen. 32:28).

### **Eliphaz's Last Speech**

Eliphaz says that even if Job was righteous it wouldn't matter (22:2-3), but the bottom line is that Job isn't righteous and that's why God is correcting and judging Job (22:4). It's interesting that Eliphaz says that God "enters into judgment" with Job since that is what Job has been asking for (e.g. 9:19, 13:3-19, 19:7). But Job seems to recognize this too (14:3), and it's this judgment that he wants a further judgment on (23:4). He wants an appeal. Eliphaz finally gets specific and says that Job has oppressed the poor (22:5-20). Eliphaz says that Job should acquaint himself with God (22:21ff). He says that if Job does this, not only will Job be blessed materially (22:23-25), but Job will also pray and be heard (22:26-28). Eliphaz at least understands that this is Job's chief desire: the ability to speak to God.

### **Job's Response**

Job goes right to the final point of Eliphaz: Job wants to find God, to present his judgment before Him (23:3-9). Job believes that God is busy turning Job's dust into gold (23:10), but this is terrifying (23:14-17). Job again insists that both oppressors and oppressed return to the grave (24:2-24), and calls upon his interlocutors to prove him wrong if they can (24:25).

### **Bildad's Last Speech**

Bildad says that "rule" belongs to God (25:2). The word here connotes wisdom to rule, skill in understanding and leading in the world. It's the same root word for "proverb." Bildad's last words are short and again insist that man is a worm that cannot be righteous before God (25:4-6). Literally, Bildad asks, "How can a man be righteous with God?" (25:4)

### **Job's Response**

Job's response is striking since he immediately begins asking about Bildad's righteousness. And for Job, righteousness is not an immaterial quality so much as it is particular actions in space and time (26:2-4). The implication is that God is righteous, and therefore He does save the weak. The narrator says here that Job continues "his discourse," and the word here is the word for ruling wisely that Bildad ascribed to God. While discoursing on God's wise rule (26:5-14), Job is entering into God's wisdom. While God has taken away Job's justice (in appearance and by accusation) Job will not put away his integrity (27:2-6). Some commentators suggest that 27:13-23 is actually Zophar's last speech (since otherwise he has none), but given 27:7-12, it seems better to see Zophar silenced by Job. Job's appeal to righteousness is grounded in confidence in God's justice (27:13-28).

### **Wisdom and Summary**

Job says that while silver and gold can be mined out of the earth (28:1-11), wisdom is not found in the land of the living (28:12-21). In a strange way Death has heard about wisdom because it is found with God (28:22-29). Job continues speaking with the wisdom of a king (29:1), and laments how far he has fallen (29:2-25). His glory has been turned to shame, and his people have turned against him (30:1-14). Terrors come upon his honor like the "wind" (30:15), and Job summarizes his situation saying that he has become like dust and ashes (30:19). Literally, he has become a "parable" or a "proverb" of dust and ashes (cf. 17:6), and we should not forget the associations of this word with kingly rule (think of Solomon, 1 Kgs. 3:9, 4:29-34). Previously, Job rejected the advice of the friends as "proverbs of ashes" (13:12); their wisdom was based on a different kind of justice, a different kind of

rule. God is the source of true kingly rule (25:2), and Job having been reduced to a “proverb” begins speaking proverbs (27:1, 29:1). He rules from the ashes. The wind of the Spirit has blown over Job, remaking him, filling him with wisdom, and he speaks like a king. Job ends his words with a request to be shown his sin if he is hiding any like Adam (31:33), but what he really wants is an answer (31:35). Job would like to explain his side of the story to God, to approach Him like a prince (31:37).

### **Conclusion & Applications**

Wisdom and understanding is fundamentally a poetic enterprise, it means being able to see and say what things are like. Job has struggled through a war of words, and his words have emerged as proverbs (27:1, 29:1). He has fought like a king, learning the wisdom of the dust of death.

What is the wisdom of the dust of death? From beginning to end, the Scriptures show dust as the place of man’s mortality, the place of the curse of sin, a symbol of judgment, and at the same time, the place of resurrection (19:25). Christ has turned the dust of death into the place of new creation. The curse has been turned into blessing. The Slave of all has become the Lord of all.



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