

JOB 14-21

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Introduction

Last week we considered the first cycle of speeches and conversations. We noted in particular that the trials that befell Job in the beginning have only continued on the form of the three “friends.” The friends are actually accusers, and their words are like more wind, blowing on the house of Job. Today we consider the second cycle of speeches.

Following Job’s Argument

Beginning with his initial curse (ch. 4) and pleas for death (6:8-9), Job has narrowed his request and complaint to the issue of a hearing with God. He has said that one cannot contend with God (9:3). Even if God answered Job, he would not believe it (9:16). Job cannot take God to court; who would be the arbiter (9:32-33)? Despite what his friends say, Job still desires to speak to the Almighty (13:3). Job wants to defend his ways before God even if he dies in the process (13:15). And Job finishes his reply to Zophar’s first speech by saying that even a tree has hope in that when it is cut down and its roots die in the earth, with a little water, it will again bud and bring forth branches (14:7-9). And then Job asks, “What about man?” (14:10-14) In fact, Job says that he will wait until his change comes, and when God calls, Job will answer (14:14-15).

Eliphaz’s Second Speech

Eliphaz says that Job’s knowledge is “windy”, and he says that Job is full of the “east wind” (15:2). This is the second time that Eliphaz has described the “crafty.” Eliphaz initially said that God frustrates the crafty (5:12), and now he asserts that Job has chosen to align himself with them (15:5). It is interesting that Paul quotes Eliphaz in I Cor. 3:19, refuting the worldly wisdom of the Corinthians. This further confirms that the great sin of the friends was not so much in what was said but in how it was said and when. Eliphaz says that the wisdom of old age is with him and his friends (15:9-10). Eliphaz repeats what the spirit asked in 4:18 (15:15). He says that everyone who tries to defy God will be consumed (15:20-35). Fire will consume them (15:34, cf. 1:16).

Job’s Response

Job says that the words of wind continue to blow against him (16:3). Job says that God has attacked him (16:9) in the form of ungodly and wicked hands that surround him (16:10-11). He says that he is an Abel whose blood will cry out for justice (16:18). His friends scorn him, and Job cries for a hearing with God that he might speak to God as a man speaks to his neighbor (16:20-21). Job says his friends are mockers, and their deceit is evidenced in their lack of loyalty (17:3). He says that he has become a byword and men spit in his face (17:6). Job asks if hope will come with him to the grave (17:14-16).

Bildad’s Second Speech

Bildad asks if it’s really worth all the fuss that Job is making: will the earth be sad after Job is gone (18:4)? Bildad says that the wicked die and their memory perishes with them (18:5, 17ff).

Job’s Response

Job says that the friends are actively tormenting him and they have now insulted him ten times (19:3). This

indicates that Job has been insulted both by the words of the three and by their refusal to listen to him. There have been ten interchanges since Job's initial curse. Ten insults is reminiscent of the ten rebellions of Israel in the wilderness (Num. 14:22), a rejection of the Ten Words of Sinai and the ten signs and wonders of the Exodus. Job says that his glory has been stripped, and the crown has been taken from his head (19:9). Job's hope has been uprooted like a tree (19:10). Yet, despite all that has come against him, particularly the persecution of his friends (19:21-22), Job knows that his Redeemer lives and he will stand on the dust (19:25). What he ultimately wants, a meeting with God, will happen after his skin is destroyed. After he has died, he will see God in his flesh (19:26-27). And Job's hope is particularly in the fact that there is a judgment (19:29).

Zophar's Second Speech

Zophar says that it is his turmoil that causes him to speak out; Job's rebuke reproaches him and the "wind" of his understanding causes him to answer (20:2-3). Zophar says that since Adam was placed on the earth, the wicked have not ever lasted long. The wicked get what they deserve.

Job's Response

Job insists that Zophar is just wrong. The wicked have long lives and joy, and they do it all scorning God (21:7-16). And even when God eventually brings the judgment on their descendents, they don't care (21:19-21). Some die at ease and secure and some die in bitterness and sorrow; but they all alike die (21:22-26). This is reminiscent of Solomon's wisdom in Ecclesiastes (e.g. Eccl. 2:15-16, 7:15, 8:14). Job knows that his friends are scheming to wrong him (21:27), insinuating that he (the king) must be wicked since all this calamity has fallen upon him (21:28-31). Their "comfort" is only empty and false (21:34).

Conclusions & Applications

Job's argument and insistence is based ultimately upon his faith in the resurrection. He wants a judgment, a day in court with God, and knows that ultimately this will occur at the resurrection. And this is no less our hope in the midst of injustice, evil, and the schemes of the wicked. There is a judgment. And the gospel of Jesus is the appearance of that judgment in history before the end, a final word before the final word.

This final word applies to the guilt of our sins. There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

And all that lies ahead: What shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? Nothing. And we know this because we know Jesus. And this is also our hope when we are accused, when injustice seems to prevail, when the wicked seem to escape. Jesus is the final word.



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