

Bildad's Third Speech and Job's Reply

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Job interrupts Bildad's third speech, reiterating his righteousness and God's sovereignty
2. aim – To cause us to consider the awesome mystery of God, as exhibited in his great wisdom
3. passage – Job 25:1-28:28

b. outline

1. Bildad's Third Speech (25:1-6)
2. Job's Considers the Majesty of God (26:1-14)
3. Job's Considers the Righteousness of God (27:1-23)
4. Job's Considers the Wisdom of God (28:1-28)

c. opening

1. **chaps. 22-31** represent **Round Three** of the dialogue of Job and his friends
 - a. **i.e.** Eliphaz has given a **full** speech (**22**), and Job responded to **it** (**23-24**); Bildad will now **begin** to speak (**25**), but Job will **interrupt** him with a consideration of the mystery of God's nature (**26**); then with a **summary** defense of his own righteousness before a God of great wisdom (**27-31**); ending the "dialogue" (and giving Zophar no opportunity to speak again!)
 - b. **IOW:** Job **ignores** the naivete of his friends and turns his attention to the Lord of Glory ...
2. **Calvin** notes the following that we must consider (from **Sermon 102** on **28:10-28**):
 - a. there is much about life that we simply **cannot** understand, for God often **withholds** the fullness of his wisdom from us – yet, what he **has** revealed we must be content with, for it is all that is **needed**
 1. wisdom (**for Job**) = the knowledge of all things, especially what God keeps hidden (**i.e.** the **secret counsels** of God; **Deut. 29:29**)
 2. thus ... wisdom is **not** found in this world (per se), except as revealed to us by God **and only up to a point** – namely, what God knows to be useful for us

"It is true that many will presume to be wise and will also boast of having all wisdom tied up in a neat package, but the fact is that God keeps it hidden ... consequently, we will gain nothing by going here and there, looking high and low. Man will never attain wisdom by his own diligent efforts, for God is holding it in his hand ... Let us also note carefully that he grants it by measure, and at the same time let us know that our reason and understanding extend only to things here below and which concern the present life ..."(Calvin)
 3. **i.e.** Job's friends have provided no insight – they are **content** with a view of God that is "limited" to a **simplistic** relationship between Creator and creature, one based on pure "ritualistic" conformity to an **unknown standard** (**i.e.** just confess **everything** and life goes on ...)
 4. but ... Job is **realizing** more and more that his situation is part of the larger plan and purposes of God, and that his **response** needs to be **appropriate** to what is (and is not!) revealed
 - a. **i.e.** instead of getting an "answer," Job settles himself into recognizing that his sufferings **may not actually have a reason**, for God may not have given one (**nor need to!**)
 - b. so ... Bildad tries again, but Job cuts him off, and turns his full attention to the mystery and wisdom of God as the only source of comfort ...

I. Bildad's Third Speech (25:1-6)

Content

a. Bildad's third speech

1. **read 25:2-6:** Bildad **tries again** to turn Job's attention to his own sinfulness
 - a. "**how can he who is born of woman be pure?**" (**v. 4**) = **answer:** no one can, so stop **asserting it**
 1. **i.e.** "**how much less man, who is a maggot**" (**v. 6**) = men are considered "worms" before God by virtue of their sinfulness ... thus **Job**, so are you ... stop thinking falsely about yourself
 - b. **again:** Bildad's answer is **far too simplistic** – for Job to "blame himself" is wrong ...
2. **Bildad tries again to get Job to "punish" himself as a sinner, to stop seeing himself as righteous, and to focus his attention on "mollifying" the deity**
 - a. **however ...** Job **cuts off** Bildad's "push" because he knows that these men **simply don't get it**
 - b. they are so "boxed in" to their ritualistic religiosity that they cannot **consider** the greater intention **obvious** in this situation – the greater nature of **God himself and his purposes therein**
 1. **i.e.** if they would only **remember** what they **knew** about Job from **chap. 1** ...
 - c. **IOW:** Job "brushes off" his friend's advice because **he is connecting** his circumstances **to a much higher purpose**, and to **a much higher God**

3. **in conclusion re: Job's friends:** these men represent the world of *lost people* – “lost” in that they stumble around *in the dark* looking for answers to life's realities
 - a. but God has drawn *us* to himself, revealed the *true* Christ to us
 - b. and *now that we see it, we can't unsee it* ... Job sees it, and there is no “going back” ...
4. **now:** Job's responses *turn to God* = first, a consideration of the *majesty* of God (in comparison to the *feeble* view his friends hold); second, a consideration of the *righteousness* that comes only from God (*i.e.* his own); and third, a consideration of the *wisdom* of God under which this is understood

II. Job's Considers the Majesty of God (26:1-14)

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a. Job condemns the worthless advice of his friends (vv. 1-4)

1. **read 26:2-4:** your advice has not been helpful *at all*, and *I will not listen to you any more*
 - a. “*with whose help have you uttered words ... ?*” (v. 4) = your advice has been nothing but “worldly” wisdom – it has not come from God, nor have you even *attempted* to consider his ways
 - b. *i.e.* to listen to your *shallow* words is to “miss out” on something *far greater* ...

b. Job compares such advice to the majesty of God (vv. 5-14)

1. **read 26:5-6, 10-11, 14:** Job turns (instead!) to the majestic One, who can *truly answer his query*
 - a. **e.g.** in vv. 5-13, Job lists some of the things that *can only be ascribed to an omnipotent God*
 1. the place of the dead (Sheol, Abaddon) is “*naked*” (*i.e.* fully visible) to God (v. 6); he hangs the earth “*on nothing*” (*i.e.* in the vacuum of space; v. 7); he hides the moon (*i.e.* with an eclipse?; v. 9); he has inscribed a “*circle*” on the water, separating light and dark (*i.e.* day and night spreading across a spinning orb; v. 10); he “*stilled the sea*” (*i.e.* determines the boundaries of weather; v. 12); etc.
 2. **note:** for a man living >4,000 years ago, he sure seemed to know a lot about the natural world *as we now see it in the “age of Enlightenment”* (*i.e.* a spherical earth, eclipses, space, etc.)
 - b. but ... “*these are but the outskirts of his ways*” (v. 14) = the *power* exhibited by God in the things above are just the “outside edges” of his true power
 1. **e.g.** “*how small a whisper do we hear of him*” = we get a *tiny glimpse* of the total power of God
2. Job recognizes that the *true answer* to his circumstantial questions is held in the *mind* and *heart* of God, who is far greater (by **magnitudes**) than his “simplistic” friends (or their advice)
 - a. **IMO:** this is the point where Job has been fully turned **by God** – turned away from “worldly” things, and turned *directly to God himself*, to see God rightly “through” his circumstances
 1. **LOW:** what God has been *purposing in this matter from the beginning* ...
 2. **remember:** the book gives *no answer* to the “why” of suffering – it points us *to God* ...
 - b. **principle: the answers to all human questions is God himself, especially as he is now revealed in the Person of the Son of God Incarnate (the ontological answer)**
 - a. *i.e.* not in *answers* (per se), but in the very *Person* of Christ – *he* is the answer to *everything*, and our goal should be to seek *him* (**Colossians 3:1-4**)

“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are *above*, where *Christ* is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your *minds* on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is *hidden with Christ* in God. When *Christ* who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

III. Job's Considers the Righteousness of God (27:1-23)

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a. Job (again) asserts his righteousness before God (vv. 1-6)

1. **read 27:2-6:** Job (again) asserts that he is righteous before God, and that his testimony is true
 - a. “*my lips will not speak falsehood*” (v. 4), “*I hold fast my righteousness*” (v. 6) = over against his friend's accusations, Job maintains that *God has no “beef” with him*, for God “knows” him
 1. **note:** the righteousness Job claims is *not* a righteousness “of deeds” (*i.e.* he is *sinless*), but a righteousness of *status* (*i.e.* God has *declared* him to be so)
 2. **remember:** the doctrine of **justification by faith** is the belief that God *declares* a man to be in a state of righteousness by virtue of *a divine work of regeneration and effectual calling (faith!)*
 - a. *i.e.* no man can change his *state*; no outward works make a man “different” by nature – only God can make a man righteous (**ITC:** by God's own declaration in **Job 1:8**)
 3. **LOW:** Job is *not* seeing himself righteous because of his own *personal deeds*, but on the basis of what a *majestic, all-powerful, earth-hanging, eclipse-producing* God declares (**see above**)

b. Job sees the fate of all men (righteous or wicked) as from God (vv. 7-23)

1. **read 27:11-12:** Job asserts that his friends (ultimately) know that righteousness and reprobation are “with the Almighty” – i.e. such things are determined **not by men, but by God**
 - a. “why then have you become altogether vain?” (v. 12) = why have you turned inward (vain) to seek the answers to eternal matters instead of turning to the Almighty, where the answers *live*?
 - b. “I will teach you concerning the hand of God” (v. 11) = you need to understand (as I do now!!) that all matters of eternity lie in the “hand of God” (i.e. in his power, in his choices, in his decrees)
 - c. so ... in vv. 13-23, Job lists the various judgments “awaiting” the reprobate (i.e. those passed over by God in his grace towards his elect) – what their fate will be as all things are reckoned by God
 1. e.g. in vv. 16-17, the reprobate may “heap up silver like dust” and “pile up clothing like clay”, but (in the end) it is the righteous that will be given it all (i.e. “the innocent will divide the silver”)
 2. **true:** the reprobate are given the “common” grace of God in this world, but their fate is one of “terrors [that] overtake him like a flood” (v. 20) – their destiny is fixed by God, not by them
2. **Job now recognizes that eternal matters (like righteousness) are in the hands of an Almighty God – unlike his friends, Job now sees who he is through God’s eyes**

IV. Job's Considers the Wisdom of God (28:1-28)

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a. Job confesses that wisdom is only found in God

1. **read 28:1-3, 9-13:** Job concedes that wisdom is not found in the “excavations” of men, rooting it out in the earth – to search for wisdom in a fallen world, amongst fallen men is a task of folly
 - a. in vv. 1-11, Job paints a picture of men “excavating” the earth, searching for precious things (e.g. silver, gold, iron, copper, sapphires, etc.)
 1. a **metaphor** for men searching the world looking for wisdom, yet not finding it
 2. i.e. “the shaft” (v. 4) = an opening in the earth leading to a treasure trove of wisdom
 - b. “where shall wisdom be found?” (v. 12) = is there a “place” where wisdom can be found here?
 1. and ... it cannot be purchased – in vv. 14-19, Job lists precious things that cannot buy wisdom from the earth (e.g. gold, silver, onyx, sapphire, glass, jewels, coral, crystal, topaz)
 - c. **IOW:** wisdom is not a thing of this world – in vv. 20-22, Job concludes with “it is hidden from the eyes of all living and concealed from the birds of the air”
2. **read 28:23-28:** Job confesses that wisdom (understanding) is found only in God
 - a. “for he looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens” (v. 24) = God, the omniscient One, is the true source of all wisdom
 1. and, the “fear of the Lord” is true wisdom (v. 28 cf. Proverbs 9:10) = to truly seek God is to find the answers to all matters of living in a fallen world
 2. Job has come to understand **two things:**
 - a. God is the *inexhaustible* source of all wisdom and knowledge – all of what can be known is found in God himself (not in the “wisdom” of men)
 - b. God has *not revealed* all that there is to know – God reveals *what we need to know*, in order to live according to his purposes, but no more and no less ...
 - c. **Calvin:** God grants knowledge “by measure” = what we need at any given moment is available to us ... everything else, he keeps in his “secret counsels”
 3. thus, Job is willing to submit himself to the wisdom of God ... what God decides to reveal, Job is willing to receive, everything else will need to wait ...
 - b. **we know:** in Christ, the fullness of God’s revelation is completed, such that everything needed for life and godliness has been made known to us (1 Corinthians 1:20-25)
“Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”
 1. **frankly:** what God has revealed in his Word is more than we can grasp **in a lifetime**
2. **the message of Job is simple:** God reveals to us **only what he thinks we need** as answers – sometimes, all we can do is be content in our circumstances, **trusting in Christ**