

Bildad and Zophar's Second Speeches

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Job replies to Bildad and Zophar's second speeches, pointing to his living redeemer
2. aim – To cause us to look to our living redeemer, Jesus Christ, as the source of all hope
3. passage – Job 18:1-21:34

b. outline

1. Bildad and Zophar's Second Speeches (18:1-21, 20:1-29)
2. Job's Response to Zophar (Job 21:1-34)
3. Job's Response to Bildad (19:1-29)

c. opening

1. **chaps. 15-21** represent **Round Two** of Job's friends speaking to him
 - a. **friend's thesis (in 15-21)**: it is Job's **stubbornness** that exacerbates his present plight
 1. **i.e.** a more **aggressive** assertion of the same point as in **Round One (as in 4:8)**
 2. **now**: Job is **unafraid** of God, "deluded" about his own state – thus, his **refusal** to acknowledge his sin (and his friend's advice) only **exacerbates** his suffering (**see 15:4**)
 3. so (once again) ... Job is forced to respond to his "friends" ...
 4. **note**: for the sake of *time*, we will **finish Round Two** by looking at both Bildad and Zophar
 2. **Calvin** notes the following that we must consider (from **Sermon 71** on **19:17-25**):
 - a. it may be that God would allow others to fail us so that we seek even greater refuge in him
 1. **i.e.** as long as we have something to depend on *in this world*, we do not hope in God as we should – we are "bound" to this world, for our nature is inclined toward *it*, thus (sometimes!) it is necessary for God to "turn" us away from the things of this world to find our refuge *in him*
 2. thus, God may use the **rejection** of family and friends to humble us

"... God, in his desire to draw us to himself, will deprive us of all human help, and he will do it in order to humble us, for we think that he is obliged to have some regard for us and we deserve it ... consequently, our Lord will sometimes want to instruct us in humility by having us scorned by everyone and rejected by great and small ... but even so, should that happen, let us realize we are not abandoned by God ... for we see that Job still takes refuge in him and is not disappointed ..." (Calvin)

 - a. here is Job, finding no comfort from his friends *nor his wife* (**see below**)
 - b. yet, he will seek his refuge and comfort *in the Lord*, which is the sovereign *purpose* after all
 - b. so ... Bildad and Zophar continue to **reject** Job's assertion of righteousness, and **insist** that Job must stop **defying** God *against what is "obvious" in the world* ...
 1. and ... Job replies to this rejection by seeking his refuge in the arms of his **living Redeemer**

I. Bildad and Zophar's Second Speeches (18:1-21, 20:1-29)

Content

a. Bildad's second speech (18:1-21)

1. **read 18:2-4**: Bildad reiterates Eliphaz's point in **17:9**: why do you refuse to listen to us?
 - a. we are not "**cattle**" (**i.e.** dumb animals) nor "**stupid**" – we have wisdom *to which you should listen*
 - b. **note**: Zophar will begin with the same assertion in **20:3** – he hears "**censure that insults me**" = Job's **ignoring** their collective "wisdom" is an **affront** to their position and friendship
2. **read 18:5-8, 21**: Bildad reiterates the **Friend's Axiom** = the wicked get what they deserve
 - a. **i.e.** the **same point** as before: the wicked receive *in this life* what their wicked deeds deserve
 1. in **vv. 7-20**, Bildad poetically lists the kinds of things the wicked receive: traps, terrors, failing strength, homelessness, dryness, lack of remembrance by others, darkness, poverty, etc.
 2. **again**: Bildad simply **doubles down** on his assertion that the wicked are *always* stricken with punishments, because they "**know not God**" (**v. 21**) – thus, this is Job's **true** problem
 - b. **we know**: while Bildad is **incorrect** to assert that the wicked will receive these punishments *in this life*, it is **true** that the wicked **will** receive these punishments *in eternal death*
 1. **i.e.** **vv. 7-20** are an apt description of **hell**: a place where "**terrors frighten him on every side**" (the wrath of God; **v. 11**), "**his strength is famished**" (**v. 12**), "**he is torn from the tent in which he trusted**" (no home, family, friends; **v. 14**), "**sulfur is scattered over his habitation**" (**v. 15 cf. Rev. 21:8**), and "**he is thrust from light into darkness**" (**v. 18 cf. Matt. 8:12**)
3. **Bildad simply repeats the axiom of Job's friends: the wicked suffer for their wickedness, therefore, you suffer because you are morally corrupt – stop defying this truth**

b. Zophar's second speech (20:1-29)

1. **read 20:4-8:** Zophar moderates the **Friend's Axiom** = the wicked *eventually* get what they deserve
 - a. **i.e.** the same point, but slightly moderated: the wicked *may not* suffer in this life, but they will *eventually* get what they deserve
 1. in **vv. 6-28**, Zophar poetically lists this eventuality: **e.g.** “[they] fly away like a dream” (v. 8), “his youthful vigor ... will lie down ... in the dust” (v. 11), “he will give back the fruit of his toil” (v. 18), “his prosperity will not endure” (v. 21), “the heavens will reveal his iniquity” (v. 27)
 2. **we know (see above):** the wicked *will* receive these punishments as the outcome of judgment
 - a. **i.e.** these men *intrinsically* know that a *holy* God must deal with *unholiness*
 - b. they know this out of **natural revelation** ... **Romans 1:19-20**
“For what can be known about God is plain to [men], because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.”
 - c. **i.e.** even Job's friends *know* that there is a Creator God who has established law and order in the world, and *deviation* from such an *objective* and *transcendent* moral standard *must be dealt with harshly*
 - d. **theory:** given the *timing* of Job, is it possible that the Flood is still in living memory ... ?
 - b. but ... Zophar is **intimating something more:** since the wicked *will* get what they deserve, it is best to consider it *in this life* = **i.e.** Job, you mustn't *assume* your innocence, for a great day of judgment is coming *over you* – your sufferings *now* are a **foretaste** of what is to come
 1. **i.e.** I concede that Bildad is not *exactly* correct, but it *may be* that the suffering you are enduring is *still because of your own iniquity*, and God is giving you a “sneak peek” into what's coming
 2. **IOW:** even if the wicked *do not always* suffer, **you are!** – this should be your “wake up call”
2. **Zophar moderates the axiom of Job's friends, but he continues to stick to the point – you suffer because you are morally corrupt and judgment is coming – stop defying this truth**
 - a. **note:** we will look at Job's responses in **reverse order** – to emphasize the point he makes ...

II. Job's Response to Zophar (Job 21:1-34)

Content

a. Job's response to Zophar

1. **read 21:2-7, 14-16:** Job asserts that his friend's conclusions are *in error*
 - a. **again:** he applies *simple logic* against their point: wicked people *all over the earth* live, prosper, grow old, and die without the seeming “destruction” that comes “naturally” upon the wicked
 1. in **vv. 7-13**, he lists many of the “blessings” that come upon wicked men *even in this life:*
 - a. **i.e.** they “reach old age” (v. 7), “their offspring are established” (v. 8), “their houses are safe from fear” (v. 9), “their bull breeds without fail” (v. 10), “they sing ... and rejoice” (v. 12), “they spend their days in prosperity” and “in peace they go down to Sheol” (v. 13)
 - b. **IOW:** they enjoy all of the blessings that human life can offer (generally speaking), even in a fallen world filled with suffering and evil (in which they cooperate with their evil)
 2. **and:** they spend their lives *ignoring* or *resisting* God himself (**vv. 14-15**)
 - a. **i.e.** *if* the wicked get from God what they deserve, why is it that *so many* prosper in this life *even as they mock God and rebel against him?* (**Habakkuk's eternal question**)
 - b. **IOW:** even an **observant fool** recognizes that Zophar (and Bildad) are *wrong*
 - c. however ... Zophar's **moderation** of the **Friend's Axiom** needs to be addressed ...
 1. namely, *sometimes* judgment is reserved for “later”, but that does not mean that one should simply *ignore* the “sneak peek” that often comes *in the form of suffering*
2. **read 21:17, 22-26, 29-30, 34:** Job asserts that his friends do not really understand life and death, nor do they understand the ways of God sovereignly ruling over this world
 - a. through a series of **rhetorical** questions, Job probes the understanding of his friends
 1. **v. 17** – “how often” does “calamity” and “pains” really come upon the wicked?
 2. **vv. 29-30** – “have you not asked those who travel the roads?” = does not *everyone* know that *quite often* the “evil man is spared in the day of calamity” (**i.e.** that there is no natural one-to-one correspondence between wickedness and suffering)
 3. **v. 22** – “will any teach God knowledge?” = does God not *know* that all men have *very similar fates* (**i.e.** one dies in full vigor, the other in bitterness and poverty) – but, in the end, all men die, *irrespective* of their lot in life – is this not what *God himself* has sovereignly ordained?
 4. **v. 34** – “how then will you comfort me?” = if you can't even see *this very obvious truth*, how can you *possibly* hope to comfort me and help me understand *my sufferings*?
3. **Job (once again!) points out the folly of his friend's naïve understanding and lack of comfort**

III. Job's Response to Bildad (19:1-29)

Content

a. Job's response to Bildad

1. **read 19:2-6:** Job maintains that his circumstances are *not* of his own doing (**i.e.** wickedness), but ordained by God *for a greater purpose*
 - a. *"know then that God has put me in the wrong" (v. 6)* = it is *God himself* who has placed this upon me and *"closed his net about me"*
 1. **again:** although it was the *devil* that brought suffering on Job, the sovereign will of God over all things *insists*, whatever happens, is *ultimately the will of God*
 - a. **e.g.** the *perpetual theodicy*: if God is good, why is there evil? – **answer:** because God has purposed it for his glorious intentions; his decree of redemption includes evil and suffering in order that his larger goals of justice and mercy can be realized (**Romans 9:22f**)
 2. in **vv. 7-22**, Job lists the ways that God has put him under this reality – the *"he"* and *"his"* pronouns are all references to this being *God's will* over him
 - b. **remember (IMO):** Job's understanding of God's purposes is *growing* in the *natural* revelation given to him (even in a time of limited *salvific* revelation) – God is *leading Job* into greater understanding, whereas his friends are "stuck" in their **suppression** of the truth
2. **read 19:16-20:** Job is saddened that, in his circumstances, *everyone* has abandoned him
 - a. **note:** this is the greatest *travesty* of his suffering, but also his greatest *hope*:
 1. my *"brothers far from me" (v. 13)*, my *"relatives have failed me" (v. 14)*, *"guests ... count me as a stranger" (v. 15)*, *"no answer" from "my servant" (v. 16)*, *"my breath is strange to my wife" (v. 17)*, *"young children despise me" (v. 18)*, *"my intimate friends abhor me" (v. 19)*
 2. **i.e.** everyone who *should be comforting him* has abandoned him, especially (even!) *his wife*
 - a. *"I have escaped by the skin of my teeth" (v. 20b)* = an ancient adage; a reference to something *barely there*; **ITC:** Job has *barely* survived, given the abandonment he feels
 - b. **IOW:** Job has *no place to turn* – **God has removed from him everyone who would be a refuge and a strength to him** – in his sovereign purposes, God has left Job *only one* refuge ...
3. **read 19:23-27a:** Job turns to the only One who can be a source of comfort to him
 - a. *"Oh that my words were written" (vv. 23f)* = a plea that God would *vindicate* him, by writing his innocence *"with an iron pen and lead ... engraved in the rock forever"*
 1. **i.e.** that God would *speak forth* words of comfort as *no one else seems to want to do*
 - b. *"For I know that my Redeemer lives" (v. 25)* = Job knows that there *is* a Living One who can act as his redeemer, One who can *vindicate* him as righteous *even as he is abandoned by all others*
 1. **i.e.** nobody else will take up my cause ... God will, for he is the only *refuge* to which I can turn
 2. *"redeemer"* = the OT concept of a *kinsman-redeemer* (**e.g. Ruth 4**) – one who could *restore* a rightful family member to their place of inheritance
 - c. **Job turns to the One who would stand up and vindicate his innocence, One who would speak on his behalf, One who would never abandon him and always consider him righteous**

c. Job's refuge as we understand it

1. **remember:** what *Job* does not know, **we know** ...
 - a. that phrase in **19:25 (see above)** should **"pop out" at us**
 1. **we know:** the Redeemer has made himself known – God has "appeared" in the Person of the Son in order that *he* might vindicate the righteousness of his people
 2. he *"lives"* = a) he is now "real", as a man, in time and space (not just a future "promise"), b) he has been raised from the dead (he lives *again!*), and c) he has ascended to sit *alive* at the right hand of God, making continual *intercession* (vindication) for us
 - a. it is *to Christ* that **we** flee for refuge – it is in *his* saving work that we seek our justification, the declaration *in the Son* that we are (indeed!) righteous in his sight
 - b. **i.e.** it is inscribed *"in a book"*, *"engraved in the rock"* – the revelation of Scripture *points to Christ Jesus*, the author and finisher of our faith (**Hebrews 12:2**)
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2. **the message of Job is simple:** although God may purpose that all others *abandon us* in our pursuit of holiness, **he will never do so**, because **Christ Jesus the Son ever lives to be our advocate and our righteousness**, a refuge of *salvation* and *assurance* (**Hebrews 6:17f**)

"So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise [us vs. Abraham] the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things [his character and his oath], in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us."