

The Wisdom Literature

Lesson #3

Job 15:1-28:28

Outline

I. **Speeches (3:1-27:23)**

A. Second round of speeches (15:1-21:34).

1. Eliphaz (15:1-35).
2. Job (16:1-17:16).
3. Bildad (18:1-21).
4. Job (19:1-29).
5. Zophar (20:1-29).
6. Job (21:1-34).

B. Third round of speeches (22:1-27:23).

1. Eliphaz (22:1-30).
2. Job (23:1-24:25).
3. Bildad (25:1-6).
4. Job (26:1-27:23).

II. **Interlude: Hymn To Wisdom (28:1-28)**

Notes

Job 15:1-21:34

- Eliphaz's second speech (15:1-35).
 - Eliphaz was angry. He had run out of patience. The time to be polite (4:2) and indirect was over. He considered Job's words not only valueless but deceitful and irreverent. In his opening lines he accused Job of belching out a hot wind of useless words.
 - He chided Job for arrogance. Was Job wise enough to sit in the council of God's angels? In reality he was not even wise enough to be in harmony with the elders and wise men on earth.
 - Eliphaz bolstered this "revelation" with wisdom that came from tradition -- the wicked never escape the torment they deserve; and even if they do for a moment, trouble is just around the corner.
 - He finishes his second speech with a poetic discourse on the fate of the wicked. Job's friends thought that the idea of the wicked prospering was heresy. Eliphaz believed that wicked people always suffer.
 - Eliphaz viewed humankind as either all good or all bad. He allowed no room for a good man to have doubts and struggles, and those who are bad Eliphaz wanted to reduce to nothing. There is nothing in his thoughts that would lead one to the conclusion that God loves sinful human beings.

- Job's reply (16:1-17:16).
 - Job would have given genuine encouragement to them if the tables were turned, but all he got were arguments and scoldings. Job's friends were pestering him without any understanding of his real problem.
 - He viewed himself as one whom God had seized by the scruff of the neck and thrown into the clutches of the wicked. God had made Job His target, an object of attack; like a warrior He pierced him without pity.
 - Job thought he would die before he could be vindicated; so he was concerned that the injustice done to him should never be forgotten. That is what he meant when he called on the earth never to cover his blood or bury his cry. Abel's innocent blood was crying out to God as a witness against Cain. So Job was consoled to think his cry would continue after his death.
 - In 17:5, Job is using a proverb to remind his friends of the stiff consequences of slander. Job saw God as the one who made him suffer humiliation. There were few who believed he was innocent. Most people thought they were doing God a favor by attacking Job. But Job said that righteous people can pity him without being wrong. This is what his friends could not understand.
 - In the final section, Job seems to mock his friends' earlier advice which said that night would be turned into day for Job if he would repent. He had no hope but death, and he despaired the grave.
- Bildad's second speech (18:1-21).
 - Bildad considered Job beside himself, a man no longer acting fully responsible. He resented Job's attitude toward them as belittling and accused Job of being irrationally self-centered.
 - Bildad felt Job did not really understand the doctrine of retribution. He probably considered Job weak on this subject because Job kept harping on how the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper.
 - His main concern is to establish in Job's mind the absolute certainty that every wicked person gets what they deserve for their wickedness.
- Job's reply (19:1-29).
 - Job shows increasing irritation over his friends' attacks and his impatience with their superior claims. He feels that his friends have no right to interfere and behave as if they were God.
 - He expresses his feelings of abandonment by God and his perception that God's attack on him is wrong. In Job's mind God was at war with him. God's troops had laid siege as if Job were a fortified city.

- Then he blames God for alienating his relatives and household, even his wife. What could be worse in a patriarchal society than to have children ridicule the patriarch?
- He surprisingly ends this lament with a triumphant expression of faith in the one who will ultimately champion his cause and vindicate him. Slandered by his friends and with death imminent, Job looked to the future where his Redeemer waited.
- Zophar's second speech (20:1-29).
 - Zophar took Job's words, especially his closing words in the previous chapter, as a personal insult. Job had dared to assert that on Zophar's theory of retribution, Zophar himself was due for punishment!
 - To him the joy of the wicked would always be brief and like a fantasy. Oppressing the poor is the mark of the truly wicked. On this subject Job had no quarrel with Zophar, but, of course, he denied being that kind of person.
 - Zophar, despite his eloquence, had no compassion. He left no room for repentance and put all his stress on the importance of material possessions, while Job at this point was increasingly concerned over his relationship with God, no matter what happened to his body or possessions. He concluded his speech with a statement in which he claimed that all he had said was in accordance with God's plan for the wicked.
- Job's reply (21:1-34).
 - Job's true fear was that God might be responsible for his plight. He was terrified because he knew how awesome a task it is to complain against God, but he knew of no other way out of his plight.
 - Those who wish to know nothing of God's ways, who even consider prayer useless, flourish in all aspects of their lives. Far from dying prematurely, they live long and increase in strength. Bildad's claim that the wicked have no offspring or descendants to remember them was denied by Job. Job said that prosperity was often enjoyed by godless people.
 - Job realized his friends were going to repeat the same worn-out arguments that implied he was a wicked man. He called these arguments schemes by which they wronged him. He challenged them to investigate the total experience of people throughout the world to determine whether he was right. It is impossible to derive a law of appropriate retribution from what we observe in this present world.

Job 22:1-27:23

- Eliphaz's third speech (22:1-30).
 - Eliphaz seemed so convinced of Job's wickedness -- even to the point of exaggeration ("wickedness great," vs. 5) -- that he did not believe

he could be vindicated. So in his mind Job's blamelessness was hypothetical nonsense. For Job to be vindicated would be a lie; how could God take pleasure in that?

- Eliphaz no longer believed Job was basically a God-fearing man. Job's troubles were God's rebuke. That they were so bad testified to the extent of his sin. So Eliphaz felt free, maybe even obligated, to address the possible nature of those sins, which he thought were social oppression and neglect.
- Having become convinced Job was a man who followed the path of the ungodly, Eliphaz used Job's own words to refute him. Job had complained that the blessing of the wicked was God's doing (21:13-16). Eliphaz turned that around by saying that the wicked are destroyed before their time, i.e., before they can fully enjoy what good God provides.
- Eliphaz was, no doubt, sincere in this his final attempt to reach Job through a call to repentance. This call for Job to submit; to be at peace with God; to hear God's word and hide it in his heart; to return to God and forsake wickedness; to find delight in God rather than in gold; and to pray, obey, and become concerned about sinners could not be improved upon by anyone.
- Job's reply (23:1-24:25).
 - Job reasserted his claim to be an upright man with renewed confidence that God agreed with him. This is why having an audience with God was very important to Job. He continued to be positive about the outcome of such an encounter.
 - Though he wrestled with God verbally, he had no immediate sense of God's presence nor of God's voice communicating with him. Job felt that God's testing was a way to prove that he was pure as gold.
 - Chapter 24 is a complaint on why God did not set straight the balance of justice. Job felt God should demonstrate His justice by openly punishing the wicked. In God's speeches, He would teach him a lesson about this, which he did not now understand.
 - The murderer, thief, and adulterer all share a common characteristic: they love darkness rather than the light. Job actually never claimed that the wicked always prosper or never come to a bad end. His problem was that God treats the good and bad alike.
 - Job was not convinced that judgment little-by-little was truly just, since the righteous often suffered the same. There is no direct teaching of final judgment to set right the balance of justice, but there is a concept here that anticipates the teaching that God will have His day to set everything right.

- Bildad's third speech (25:1-6).
 - Bildad did not bother to answer Job's recent argument. He only repeated what had already been said by Eliphaz. Bildad wanted to show how God's power established order in the heavens and His dominion extends to all created beings.
 - In chapter 22 Eliphaz left the door open for Job to be restored if he repented, but Bildad repeated the question of 9:2 ("How should man be just with God?") with an implied negative answer. If God is inaccessible, it is because He is too pure; and a human being, like Job, is a hopeless worm or maggot.
- Job's reply (26:1-27:23).
 - Bildad struck a nerve. In all Job's speeches nothing had been more important to him than his determination to be vindicated, to be shown blameless in God's tribunal. Bildad has just labeled that impossible. Job could not restrain himself.
 - Job replied very sarcastically. He had nothing but contempt for Bildad's wisdom. He was angry that they had given up the idea that he was an upright person temporarily suffering for sins, but instead considered him wretched. Job said that his friends were actually hopeless as friends.
 - God's power is incomprehensible. The heavens are visible; yet they do not fall to earth; there is no visible means of support. Even the earth itself can be said to hang on nothing. That God can spread out the heavens over empty space, hang the earth on nothing, and fill the clouds with water without their bursting should make us stand in awe. He has authority and dominion over even night and day.
 - An oath based on the existence of God was the most extreme measure available (the last resort) in Job's society for a condemned person to plead innocent. Either he was innocent, or he would suffer the divine sanctions; for if Job was a liar, he was blaspheming God. His oath is followed by an imprecation against his friends.
 - Job reminded them of an issue on which they all agreed -- that the wicked deserve God's wrath. But they had put Job in that category falsely. He did not have to explain to them about God's ability to set everything straight. Interestingly, Job expounded on the fate of the wicked to drive home the point that they deserved punishment for the way they were treating him with false accusations.

Job 28:1-28

- Searching in the blackest darkness required light. This could be accomplished by cutting a shaft and letting in sunlight or by torches. The ability to cut shafts through rock is seen in the elaborate water tunnels in cities like Jerusalem and Megiddo, long before the tunnel of Hezekiah,

whose Siloam Inscription tells of the rigors of boring through hard limestone. Copper was mined in Edom and the Sinai Peninsula.

- While there was no gold in Palestine, Egypt controlled rich mines in Nubia. As for iron, it was not used widely in Palestine till shortly before 1200 B.C. The Old Testament reflects Israel's general lack of technical knowledge in smelting and smithing iron before the time of David (cf. 1 Samuel 13:19-21).
- Vss. 15-19 quantifies wisdom so that the author could compare the search for it with the human search for treasures of gold, etc. Human intelligence and determination may enable people to accomplish amazing feats of technical ingenuity, but left to themselves they cannot find wisdom.
- God alone knows where the wisdom is, for He knows all. Human beings must search for their treasure, but God sees everything without searching. Wisdom is the summary of the genius God used to fashion the universe. We must look to God for wisdom. To acknowledge Him as God and to live within the sphere of His life-giving precepts is wisdom for us.