

Zophar's Second and Last Speech (c. 2200 BC)

Job 20

Zophar is Offended by Job's Rebuke

1 Then Zophar the Naamathite answered:

2 "This is why my troubled thoughts bring me back—
because of my feelings within me.

3 When I hear a reproof that dishonors me,
then my understanding prompts me to answer.

Zophar Expands on Bildad's Perspective—The Joy of the Wicked is Short and They are Quickly Punished by God

4 "Surely you know that it has been from old,
ever since humankind was placed on the earth,
5 that the elation of the wicked is brief,
the joy of the godless lasts but a moment.
6 Even though his stature reaches to the heavens
and his head touches the clouds,
7 he will perish forever, like his own excrement;
those who used to see him will say, 'Where is he?'
8 Like a dream he flies away, never again to be found,
and like a vision of the night he is put to flight.
9 People who had seen him will not see him again,
and the place where he was will recognize him no longer.

10 His sons must recompense the poor;
his own hands must return his wealth.

11 His bones were full of his youthful vigor,
but that vigor will lie down with him in the dust.

12 "If evil is sweet in his mouth
and he hides it under his tongue,

13 if he retains it for himself
and does not let it go,
and holds it fast in his mouth,

14 his food is turned sour in his stomach;
it becomes the venom of serpents within him.

15 The wealth that he consumed he vomits up,
God will make him throw it out of his stomach.

16 He sucks the poison of serpents;
the fangs of a viper kill him.

17 He will not look on the streams,
the rivers, which are the torrents
of honey and butter.

18 He gives back the ill-gotten gain
without assimilating it;
he will not enjoy the wealth from his commerce.

19 For he has oppressed the poor and abandoned them;
he has seized a house which he did not build.

20 For he knows no satisfaction in his appetite;
he does not let anything he desires escape.

21 "Nothing is left for him to devour;
that is why his prosperity does not last.

22 In the fullness of his sufficiency,
distress overtakes him.
The full force of misery will come upon him.

23 "While he is filling his belly,
God sends his burning anger against him,
and rains down his blows upon him.

24 If he flees from an iron weapon,
then an arrow from a bronze bow pierces him.

- 25 When he pulls it out and it comes out of his back,
the gleaming point out of his liver,
terrors come over him.
- 26 Total darkness waits to receive his treasures;
a fire which has not been kindled
will consume him
and devour what is left in his tent.
- 27 The heavens reveal his iniquity;
the earth rises up against him.
- 28 A flood will carry off his house,
rushing waters on the day of God's wrath.
- 29 Such is the lot God allots the wicked,
and the heritage of his appointment from God."

Job's Response to Zophar (c. 2200 BC)

Job 21

Job Tells His Friends to Listen

1 Then Job answered:

- 2 "Listen carefully to my words;
let this be the consolation you offer me.
- 3 Bear with me and I will speak,
and after I have spoken you may mock.
- 4 Is my complaint against a man?
If so, why should I not be impatient?
- 5 Look at me and be appalled;
put your hands over your mouths.
- 6 For, when I think about this,
I am terrified and my body feels a shudder.

Job Points Out Exceptions to Their Worldview—The Wicked Are Prosperous

- 7 "Why do the wicked go on living,
grow old, even increase in power?
- 8 Their children are firmly established
in their presence,
their offspring before their eyes.
- 9 Their houses are safe and without fear;
and no rod of punishment from God is upon them.
- 10 Their bulls breed without fail;
their cows calve and do not miscarry.
- 11 They allow their children to run like a flock;
their little ones dance about.
- 12 They sing to the accompaniment of tambourine and harp,
and make merry to the sound of the flute.
- 13 They live out their years in prosperity
and go down to the grave in peace.
- 14 So they say to God, 'Turn away from us!
We do not want to know your ways.
- 15 Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him?
What would we gain
if we were to pray to him?'
- 16 But their prosperity is not their own doing.
The counsel of the wicked is far from me!

Job Points Out Exceptions to Their Worldview—The Wicked Are Long-lived

- 17 "How often is the lamp of the wicked extinguished?
How often does their misfortune come upon them?

- How often does God apportion pain to them in his anger?
18 How often are they like straw before the wind,
and like chaff swept away by a whirlwind?
19 You may say, 'God stores up a man's punishment for his children!'
Instead let him repay the man himself
so that he may know it!
20 Let his own eyes see his destruction;
let him drink of the anger of the Almighty.
21 For what is his interest in his home
after his death,
when the number of his months
has been broken off?

Prelude to Ecclesiastes—The Prosperous and the Impoverished Suffer the Same Fate

- 22 Can anyone teach God knowledge,
since he judges those that are on high?
23 "One man dies in his full vigor,
completely secure and prosperous,
24 his body well nourished,
and the marrow of his bones moist.
25 And another man dies in bitterness of soul,
never having tasted anything good.
26 Together they lie down in the dust,
and worms cover over them both. [cf. [Ecc 2:15–17](#)]

Ask Those Who Travel the World—They Will Confirm the Peace and Prosperity of the Wicked

- 27 "Yes, I know what you are thinking,
the schemes by which you would wrong me.
28 For you say,
'Where now is the nobleman's house,
and where are the tents in which the wicked lived?'
29 Have you never questioned those who travel the roads?
Do you not recognize their accounts—
30 that the evil man is spared
from the day of his misfortune,
that he is delivered
from the day of God's wrath?
31 No one denounces his conduct to his face;
no one repays him for what he has done.
32 And when he is carried to the tombs,
and watch is kept over the funeral mound,
33 The clods of the torrent valley are sweet to him;
behind him everybody follows in procession,
and before him goes a countless throng.
34 So how can you console me with your futile words?
Nothing is left of your answers but deception!"

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