

## Day 252

### Eliphaz and Job's Interchange

Job 4.1 – 7.21

Breaking the silence of seven days, Job's friends now seek to give him advice on why this great catastrophe has come upon him. What is sobering in the whole series of exchanges is that none of them has reckoned with Job's close relationship with the Lord, and the real reason for this trial which Job is going through, mainly because they could not know.

Job 4.1-11 Eliphaz reminds Job that Job himself has sought to help others in similar situations, and therefore should listen to his friends' counsel. Since Job has been protesting his lack of deserving this outcome, Eliphaz gives his opinion that 'there is no smoke without fire', that no evil is undeserved and Job must have given God cause to act against him.

Job.4.12-21 Eliphaz speaks in mystical terms of spiritual realities which have been revealed to him in dreams, as if this gives him more authority, tending to chill the ears and draw the attention of the hearers. He pursues the message that God does not spare even his angels if they sin (which is an interesting angelological observation), thus man is not exempt from the judgement of God if he does wrong.

Job 5.1 – 27 Eliphaz encourages Job to be philosophical about the hardships he faces, suggesting that it is all part of sinful man's lot to suffer under the hand of God. 'Man is born for trouble..' he asserts, and God is powerful, delivering the needy, but, by implication, punishing the proud and wise.

He calls on Job to see this pain as the correction of the Lord, who can bring good as well as bad. In this way, Job will see his fortunes restored, and all will be well in the final analysis.

Job 6.1 – 30 Job responds as a hurt and anguished man to Eliphaz, not accepting his idea that God is just a heavy-handed, distant judge who acts without grace to all. Job bewails the pain and distress, and also is offended by the fact that his friend does not hear his case or believe him. He calls on Eliphaz to think again, and re-assess the case.

Job 7.1 – 16 Job returns to his lament of the situation, not only his own, but also man's in general. He speaks of the shortness of life, and its bitterness.

Job.7.17-21 Job questions why the Lord even bothers with mankind; and why is his situation so hard? Job is aware that the Lord has the capacity to forgive, and yet he is left in terrible hardship. Even in this outburst, there is a sense of the relationship Job has with the Lord, that he knows the Almighty's character, and appeals to Him for vindication.

## Day 253

### Bildad and Job Discuss Life's Meaning

Job 8.1 – 10.22

Job.8.1-7 An over-arching quality of God's character for Bildad is His justice. The idea that Job is questioning God's ultimate equity of action provokes Bildad to speak. He urges Job to appeal to God, who will come and *right-wise*, will justify Job if he calls.

Job 8.8-10 If Job wants to know Bildad's authority for saying this, he need only look to the witness of the past, since 'we were born only yesterday and know nothing.' (The Hebrew literally says *for we are of yesterday* אֲנַחְנוּ כִּי הָמָּוֶלֶת, emphasising the transience of our lives.) This is a phrase which has passed from Scripture into English everyday language.

The accumulated wisdom of former generations will bear out what Bildad is saying; after all, the story is passed on through time for those who will hear it.

Job 8.11 – 22 Bildad calls Job to hold on to his hope in the Lord, as the source of his very being, because the godless have no hope and no future. He assures Job that he will see joy again in his life.

Job 9.1 – 24 Although Job acknowledges the truth in what Bildad says, he sees God as distant and not interested in him, continuing His creative journey with hardly a thought for an individual like Job. He sees God, therefore, as too remote to be appealed to, and as unmoved by the plight of ordinary people.

Job 9.25 – 35 Even if Job was to cheer up, the burden of his sufferings and the transience of life is so heavy upon him, that it seems pointless to try and be happy. Job acknowledges the Lord's omnipotence and his own weakness.

Job then expresses a yearning for a go-between, a mediator between God and man who could bring them together; someone to remove the sense of God's anger, so that Job could express his cause without fear. Here is a cry for the one who will come, the God-man who can be our advocate before the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. (1 John 2.1)

Job.10. 1 – 7 Job does not care if he lives or dies, so he pours out his complaint freely to the Lord. He asks the Lord if He is enjoying Job's pain. Job also then asks whether God really knows what it is like to be flesh and blood, whether He can experience what Job is going through. If God did, He would know that Job is powerless to change what God decrees, even though he is blameless before Him.

Job 10.8-12 Has God just made Job for the purpose of destroying him? Job recalls the wonder of his creation, the process of conception and gestation which leads to the human child being born. In giving life, God has also shown Job *chesed*, His self-sacrificial obligation, and cared for him lovingly.

Job 10.13 – 22 In spite of this wonder of life, Job believes God is out to get him, watching his every move to punish him for his sin. Why, then, did the Lord allow him to be born? Job longs for God to leave him be and give him some respite before death comes.

Job is in a deep well of despair; his emotional turmoil is palpable. What is key here is that Job is not judged for his questioning, even though it is bitter and angry. The Lord holds him in the midst of it.

## **Day 254**

### **Zophar and Job's Interchange**

Job 11.1 – 14.22

Job 11.1 – 9 Zophar takes sharp issue with Job's accusations against God of not caring. He wishes God would answer Job audibly, because there are two sides to the story, and God is not getting to put His.

Zophar questions Job's perspective, since the Lord's nature is beyond measuring or human comprehension. He is also sure that the Lord has already remitted Job's past sins.

Job 11.10- 20 Zophar maintains that God is concerned about human existence, and responds to those who seek Him, with love and affirmation. God can bring us the security and safety we long for, if we will resist the pathways of evil.

Job 12.1 – 6 Job replies sarcastically to Zophar that he is putting himself on a pedestal, as though he is the 'last word' in wise sayings. But Job also has experience of life, and sees the way that the unjust and criminal are more secure and safe than he is at present.

Job 12. 7 – 25 Job maintains that God is the author of this calamity, since He has power over all things. God permits both good and evil, in creation and in human affairs, even things which seem unjust to man, and there is not always a logical, rational explanation. There is a purpose, however, Job asserts, since God has all understanding and wisdom.

Job 13. 1-5 Because God is in control of all things, and all is not in chaos, Job wants to take up the case with God, and have God argue His side of the story. He dismisses the weak theodicy (God-defence) of his friends, calling them 'worthless physicians', or 'quacks,' who speak out of a lack of knowledge.

Job 13.6 – 12 Job rejects his friends' human reasoning on God's behalf. He feels they are on shaky ground arguing God's case for him, with their 'proverbs of ashes and defences of clay.'

Job 13.13 – 22 Job is not afraid to address His Lord face to face, since his relationship is clear, and he has nothing to hide from God. Even if the Lord were to kill him, Job will still choose to hope in Him, because he knows the Lord's righteousness will vindicate him.

However, Job appeals to God for an amnesty in the suffering area while this process is in train, so that he can speak freely.

Job 13.23 – 14.6 Job asks the Lord to bring the charges against him so that he can answer them. After all, Job is a man, a vapour and a breath, a flower here today and gone tomorrow – why should he be of such interest or bother to God? Surely this small being cannot be of such import to the great Creator?

Job 14.7- 17 Job reminds the Lord of the nature of man. Here is a view of human life as a once-only experience, unlike the tree which has hope of new shoots when it is cut down. There seems to be a belief here that life ends with death.

However, there is hope – ‘I will wait for my release to come’ (14.14). The Hebrew here is *chaliphah* (Heb חֲלִיפָה) from a root word meaning to sprout or to spring up, to change nature) and it carries a sense of new beginning. Perhaps here, in the midst of a sense of futility, there is a looking to resurrection. The Creator will call again the one He has created, He will long for his return, and there will be final vindication for the one who loves God.

Job 14.18 – 22 However, for now, there seems only the ephemeral nature of man’s painful life; he does not live to see his descendants succeed, but is left in the solitude of his grief. It is a dark place indeed that Job sees himself in.

## **Day 255**

### **Eliphaz and Job Dispute Together**

Job 15.1 – 17.16

Job 15.1 – 13 Eliphaz now accuses Job of arrogance before God, because he dares to question the Lord. He warns Job to beware of being carried away by his grief and placing his own wisdom before the wisdom of other sages, who, Eliphaz says, are philosophically on the side of Job’s friends.

Job 15.14-35 Eliphaz expounds his belief that there is nothing good in man whatsoever, and that he naturally espouses evil. Therefore, all he can expect from God is anguish and ruin because of his rebellion. He is obviously including Job in this predicament, missing the point that this suffering is not of Job’s doing at all.

In many ways, Eliphaz is putting forward the popular myth about God’s malevolent attitude towards mankind. There is no sense here of any relationship possible, such as Job has; only servile fear is possible before this crushing God.

Job 16.1 – 6 Job has had enough of the hot air of his friends. He says it is all very well to make philosophical speeches, but it doesn’t alter the pain Job feels.

Job 16. 7 – 17 Job makes no bones about calling God to account for what He has permitted to happen to him. Job is a witness to the terrible power of God’s hand, with His ability to bring devastation. He protests his innocence of crime – there is something here,

perhaps, of a lack of understanding of the nature of what God is doing. But Job is seeking to understand, which is why he is wrestling with God in this way.

Job 16.18 – 21 Job again makes reference to one who can mediate for him with the Lord; somewhere in the unseen realm, Job looks for a witness (Heb. שָׁהֵד *sahed*, from a root meaning to record or to witness), one who can stand before God and argue his case from the perspective of the divine. Here would be one who could intercede with God on man's behalf. Could such a one exist?

Job 16.22 – 17.9 Job bemoans again his desperate state, and calls on the Lord to vindicate him, since he has become such a repugnant figure to his friends because of his railing.

17.10 – 16 Job challenges his friends to another round of debate, to see if they can do better. All they seem to be offering is despair, but Job asks them to show him where in this hope lies? Is there really only death and the grave to look forward to?

## Day 256

### **Bildad and Zophar Respond, Job Reveals the Flaws in their Thesis**

Job 18.1 – 21.34

Job 18.1 – 21 Bildad responds to Job's invitation to speak again, largely by reiterating the argument that when bad things happen, it is to wicked people. If one is good, one cannot expect to suffer.

Job 19.1 – 6 Job is exasperated by Bildad's argument, and continues to maintain that it is not because of evil that he is enduring this torment. Job maintains that God has harmed him for no apparent reason, which is why he is seeking to understand God's ways.

Job 19. 7 – 22 Job is reduced to nothing by this experience which God is bringing upon him. It seems as though God is deaf to him, as he cries for *right-wising* justice, seemingly in vain. Not only does God seem to have rejected him, but he is estranged from family and friends, even from his wife. He is only 'skin and bones' and has escaped 'with only the skin of his teeth' – that is, his teeth have been knocked out, and he is left only with his gums! He is in a very dark and lonely place, and cried out for his friends' pity.

Job 19.23 – 27 But despite all his rock-bottom anguish, Job is holding on to what he believes, that his vindication will come. He is anchored in a relationship with God which cannot be shaken, which is rock-solid, and thus he wants to go on record to say 'I know that my redeemer lives' (Heb וְיָדָעְתִּי גֹאֲלִי חַי *Ve'ani yada'ti go'ali chai*) – Job knows that the nature and character of God is in His deepest essence good, and His purpose is to transform even the darkest moments. Thus, even though Job is racked with pain and suffering, he believes that he will still see God, even in the midst of death.

Many will be aware of Handel's setting of these words to music in *The Messiah*, linked to the death and resurrection of Christ. The hope of the Christian is the resurrection of all things, and words such as Job's here point to a hope which goes even beyond pain and

death itself. There is one who transforms, who brings hope to the destitute and changes their mourning into joy.

Job 19.28-29 Job warns his friends to look out, in case by their conclusions they are drawing judgement down on themselves!

Job 20.1 – 3 Zophar, although he is troubled by Job's rebuke, feels he has to make a response.

Job 20.4 – 29 Zophar continues down the line which Bildad has just followed, of evil and wickedness bringing a sure and disastrous outcome – in other words, what Job is experiencing must be the result of something he has done for evil.

Job 21.1 – 3 Job responds by asking for their forbearance to speak again, despite their rejection of his arguments.

Job 21.4 – 18 Job gives the lie to his friends' arguments by pointing out that the wicked seem in fact to do very nicely without God. If their assertions are correct, why do evil men prosper and thrive? They even reject the Lord, believing that they gain nothing by serving Him, and yet they seem to live on regardless.

Job 21.19 – 26 Whether prosperous or destitute, all men will be equal in death. Therefore, it doesn't seem to matter what man does in his lifetime, since the same outcome awaits all.

Job 21.27 – 34 Job says that there is plenty of evidence of that the godless don't always seem to get their just deserts, even being mourned in their death and enjoying honour and a big funeral. For Job, this reduces the observations of his friends to absurdity.

## **Day 257**

### **Eliphaz and Job Speak Again**

Job 22.1 – 24.17

Job 22.1-11 Eliphaz maintains that man is of no profit to the Lord; he is uninterested in man's good deeds altogether. Rather, the Lord notes the wrongdoing, and Job has plenty of them, according to his friend. Whether these are actual sins of Job, or whether Eliphaz is maligning him, we are not given to know. But Eliphaz asserts as before, that Job's misfortune is linked to his sinfulness.

Job 22. 12 – 20 Even if evil people believe that God cannot see what they do, He marks all their wickedness and the righteous rejoice over their destruction.

Job 22.21-30 Eliphaz therefore calls Job to yield to God, and admit his failure, so that he can be forgiven and set to rights. Job is promised restoration if he will just confess to his sinful ways.

Job 23. 1 – 17 Even in the face of Eliphaz’s accusations against him, Job remains firm in his conviction that he can find vindication from the Lord. However, the Lord seems far away from him, and beyond his reach, wherever he turns. How typical of man’s experience is Job’s – the days when we feel as though God is out of sight, and that we are abandoned.

Yet Job senses there is something of proving going on for him here, a testing which is like a crucible of fire. If he can hold on, if he can stay faithful and not curse God, he will at last understand what this is all about. (23.10)

In the meanwhile, he can only place himself in the hands of God, from whom all this suffering seems to be coming. It is fearsome in its power, but Job will not go silent on God because of it, but will keep on crying out to Him for an explanation.

Job 24.1 – 17 Job complains of the deeds of darkness of the wicked, their corruption and oppression of the poor and the seeming lack of judgement against them (24.1)

Job 24.18 – 25 Yet the grave will put an end to their evil ways, and even though they seem secure, the Lord has noted all their deeds, and they will not escape being brought low in levelling death.

## **Day 258**

### **Job Completes His Defence**

Job 25.1 – 31.40

The debate between Job and his friends has become entirely polarized; at one end of the spectrum Job is maintaining his complete innocence, and at the other, the friends are asserting that Job has sinned and this is the reason for his distress and pain.

Job 25.1-6 Bildad emphasises the perfection of God and the degradation of man; surely it is impossible for God to be bothered with a maggots like the mass of humanity? (This must be one of the most distressing chapters in the Bible – if Bildad is right, we have no way of relating to the Lord!)

Job now makes a last stand before his friends, in his own defence. He summons all the depth of conviction he can muster to plead his cause, after which Job’s words will no more be heard until the end of the book.

Job 26.1 – 4 Job sarcastically responds to his friends – they have brought him no comfort at all, it seems – he even questions (26.4) by what spirit they are speaking.

Job 26.5-14 God is indeed terrible and fearsome in His omnipotence; even death is an open book to Him, and the skies are his design and artistry. And these are just the dim reflection of His true power! (26.14) How can He be fully known and comprehended, then?

Job 27.1 – 6 Because of this deep sense Job has of God's inscrutability which puts Him beyond total human comprehension, Job will not reduce it all to simplistic statements. He will maintain his integrity, and he will not grovel before God as before an angry tyrant. He stands clear in his own conscience, and will not make a false confession to please his friends.

Job 27. 7 – 23 Certainly Job agrees that wickedness has no long-term fruitfulness, ending in death and ignominy. The riches of the unjust and corrupt will not save them from oblivion, because they have not developed any relationship with God, whom Job knows and can correctly represent. (27.11)

Job 28.1-19 Using the parable of a mine where precious metals are found, Job wants to show how deep men will go in search of valuable things. Yet wisdom, (Heb חֵכְמָה *Chokhmah*) that most precious of all commodities, is not to be found in any mine, nor can it be traded for any price.

Job 28. 20 – 28 God alone knows the source of wisdom, because He has perfect knowledge of all things. Job is certain that his situation has a reason behind it, and he is willing to trust God's integrity even in the midst of his suffering. The key to wisdom and understanding is therefore an awe of God which entrusts itself to His reliability and refuses to act in ways which abuses His person and covenant.

Job 29.1 – 25 Job pours out his longing for things to be as they were, when he was in the place of fulfillment and prosperity, in the prime of his life and when 'God's intimate friendship blessed my tent' (Heb בְּסוּד אֱלֹהִים עָלַי אָהָלִי *Be-sod Eloah alei ahali*; literally, 'In counsel (=be-sod) of God (=Eloah, a rare form of the word for God or Deity) upon (=aley) my tent (= ahali)') This gives an insight into how close Job has walked with the Lord in former times.

In those times, Job was well respected, showed help for the poor and oppressed, and expected to end his life in peace. His opinion was sought out by others, and he had high respect.

Job 30.1 – 15 Now that tragedy has come upon him, he is the object of scorn and derision, with even the sons of those formerly not worth his trouble abusing him and attacking him. He is afraid and has lost his dignity.

Job 30.16 – 19 Now, as his health is broken and his pain unceasing, God's closeness to him is no longer warm and intimate, but a stifling, overwhelming oppression, like a shirt whose neck is too tight! (30.18)

Job 30.20 – 31 Yet the Lord does nothing to intervene, it seems. Rather, He makes things worse for Job, the one who has seen it his business to aid the needy in the past.

His insides are eaten up with worry, and his outward appearance is darkened with a skin condition. He is in a terrible physical state.

Job 31.1 – 40 Lastly, Job catalogues the sins he has avoided; he has not looked at other women, nor swindled anyone; he has stayed faithful to his wife, and treated his slaves well; he has been generous to those in need, not hoarding his wealth, and he has not taken part in any worship of idols. He has not gloated over his enemies' misfortune, has entertained strangers generously and has sought to be transparent in his actions.

He closes with a call to God to witness his signature (Heb *הִנֵּנִי-תָבִי* *Hen-tavi*, literally, 'behold, my mark') as his testimony to the truth of his statement, and for God to present the charges against him, if there are any to answer. With this, Job falls silent to wait for the Lord's response.