

JOB

Chapter-By-Chapter Through The Greatest Poem in Literature

Session 17 | Job 20:1-21:34

Zophar's Second Speech | Job 20:1-20

- Verses 20:1-3 - Zophar's Desire to Answer.
 - Having been silent since chapter 11, now Zophar will **make haste** to answer, and knows exactly what he will say, for **the spirit of my understanding causeth me to answer**.
 - Note that a *passion* to answer does not mean the speaker will have a *correct* answer.
- Verses 20:4-11 - What happens to the wicked: Zophar's view.
 - Zophar repeats (as the others have done *ad nauseum*) his worldview that wickedness has its own punishment in this life, and that the wicked will not escape.
 - His wicked-shall-be-doomed philosophy is that:
 - Any victory of the wicked is short lived (v. 5)
 - Any **joy** of the wicked is **for a moment** only (v. 5)
 - Any **excellency** of position will soon be erased and **shall perish for ever like his own dung** and those who saw him will marvel at his demise (vv. 6-7).
 - The wicked will quickly vanish **as a dream** (v. 8-9).
 - The **children** of the wicked will **seek to please the poor** (presumably that were robbed by their father) (v. 10)
 - The **sin of his youth** will catch up to him, and he will soon **lie down...in the dust**.
 - As with the other speeches, Zophar has Job in mind even though speaking in the unnamed third person.
- Verses 20:12-22 - Zophar says that Wickedness is like sour food.
 - Continuing his philosophy (of which there is some truth but which has a flawed foundation), Zophar says that **wickeness may be sweet in his mouth** so that one desires to **keep it still within his mouth**, yet later **in his bowels is turned** and becomes **the gall of asps within him** (vv. 12-14). Though the wicked man **swallowed down riches...God shall cast them out of his belly** (v. 15). In the end, **he shall not see** the fruits of his labor (vv. 16-18).
 - Zophar seems to accuse Job of oppression of the poor, with the only specific accusation given in the entire book, that the wicked man (presumably Job) **hath violently taken away an house which he builded not** (v. 19).
- Verses 20:23-29 - Zophar's view of how God punishes the wicked.
 - Zophar has a "Sinners in the hands of an angry God" outlook. God **shall cast the fury of his wrath** upon the wicked just **when he is about to fill his belly** (v. 23). While the wicked man flees from **the iron weapon** he is struck by **the bow of steel** (v. 24) which **cometh out of the body** as a **glittering sword** (v. 25). He may try to hide but whatever he does to hide or protect himself will work against him (v. 26-27).
 - The idea: Job has no place to escape. He will receive **the portion of a wicked man from God** (v. 29).

Job Replies to His Three Friends | Job 21:1-34

- Verses 21:1-6 – Listen up, Friends!
 - Job is about to give a very important speech, so he pleads that his friends would **hear diligently my speech**.
 - Job has previously argued that his friends were of no consolation. Now he instructs them, saying, **let this be your consolations**. That is, use the truth of what I am about to tell you to console me (as opposed to your version of reality that you have been using).
 - Job would like them to "bear with me" for a moment, and only after his speech should they **mock on**. (v. 3). We should understand that we should at least give an ear to an opposing argument. Too many times we **mock on** with little to no understanding of the actual argument.
 - Job assumes a negative answer to his question, **is my complaint to man?** His **complaint** is actually to God. If it were to man, he would not have a **spirit** that was **troubled** (for he would be dealing with flesh and blood, not spiritual forces) (v. 4).

- Before Job speaks, he again calls for his friend's attention letting them know that they will soon **be astonished** so much so that they will **lay their hand upon their mouth** (a gesture that goes into ancient history (known through archeology) to show amazement and shock (v. 5).
- Job says that **when I remember I am afraid**. It is not certain whether his memory is of his tragedy or when he remembers what he is about to say, but the former seems more logical (v. 6).
- Verses 21:7-16 - Job makes a stunning claim!
 - While Zophar had claimed that the wicked die young (Job 20:11) and all the friends had claimed that God punishes the wicked and they do not thrive, Job now says that the **wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power** (v. 7). Not only that, but after they are gone, **their seed is established in their sight** (v. 8) and **their houses are safe from fear** and **the rod of God** is not upon them (v.9). In their ranches, their **bull gendereth** and their **cow calveth** a healthy calf (vv. 10-11). The wicked are not unhappy, but **take the timbrel and harp** (v. 12) and **spend their days in wealth** (v. 13). This is in spite of the fact that they **desire not the knowledge** of God's ways (v. 14) and have no thought of serving **the Almighty** (v. 15).
 - This view of reality was polar opposite of what Job's three friends had been teaching, yet is closer to both the reality we experience and the consistent teaching of Scripture: *sometimes (often?) the wicked prosper*.
- Verses 21:17-26 - Does God punish the wicked?
 - Verse 17 is a set of two rhetorical questions with an assumed answer. **How oft is the candle of the wicked put out?** (I believe a "?" is preferred over a "!"). Similarly, **how oft cometh their destruction...**? The assumed answer is: *not enough!* The final statement of v. 17 is likely a third repetition of the question, *how oft does God distribute sorrows in his anger?*
 - Verse 18 could also continue this line of questions: *do the wicked become as stubble before the wind...?*
 - While the wicked are not punished, it seems that **God layeth up his iniquity** [calamity] **for his children** while **He rewardeth** [recompense] his own children for their sins (v. 19) and God's children **shall see destruction** and shall **drink the wrath of the Almighty** (as opposed to the wicked, who seem to "get away with murder.") (vv. 19-20).
 - Note that the Scripture consistently teaches that God punishes *His children*, and that the tribulation (of which Job typifies) is the *day of Jacob's trouble* in which God's own nation experiences destruction and wrath.
 - Concerning God's own children, they lose their **pleasure...in his house...when the number of his months is cut off**. That is, the joy of being God's chosen has gone. In the case of Israel, they are allotted 490 years, and the last 84 months is of such agony and is **cut off** (literally, *divided into groups*) **in the midst**. Could this be a literal revelation of the division of the tribulation into two 42 month segments? (v. 21).
 - During this time in which God judges His children, **shall any** of His children **teach God knowledge**, especially **seeing he judgeth those that are high** (i.e.: His own children - Israel?). No, rather these will be days in which Israel shall remain silent before God. (v. 22).
 - Job laments that **one dieth in his full strength** and **another dieth in bitterness of his soul** but **they shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them** (vv. 23-26). Job could be speaking about the death of God's own during the tribulation, or he could be referring back to the wicked, stating that God does not always punish them.
- Verses 21:27-34 - Job confronts the falsehood of his friends.
 - Job says that he knows **the devices which ye wrongfully imagine against me** (v. 27). Namely, that Job is wicked (rather than a child of God receiving the treatment of a son). Signs of his wickedness (in their estimation) is that he has no house (v. 28). Job says, "you've asked every passerby about me, and you know what they all say" (v. 29), each of them agreeing that Job is wicked and that he, therefore, has been **reserved to the day of destruction** (v. 30). Rather than talk about Job behind his back, he challenges them to **declare his way to his face** (v. 31). Job knows that he will **be brought to the grave**, but that **the clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him** (v. 32-33). Finally, he challenges them to rid themselves of their **vain** comforts and recognize that **in your answers there remaineth falsehood** (v. 34).
 - Note that, in the tribulation, the Jewish people will be maligned, as has Job, and the world will hate them, accusing them all variety of wickedness. More and more as we journey through Job we see that he becomes a figure of the Jewish people during the tribulation.