

Job

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Job 8



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Vss. 1-10

- Having responded to Eliphaz, now Job hears from Bildad the Shuhite. Remember that Bildad could mean "Beloved of the Lord". He was of the tribe of Shuah, who was a son of Abraham (Genesis 25:2). These may have become nomads who migrated in the southeast of Palestine, but archeological sources place a city named Shuhi as an Aramean region on the Euphrates. Bildad thus represents the wisdom of the far east. John D. W. Watts points out that his speeches are not much different in content from Eliphaz, but they are much more vehement.
- As he begins, Bildad rebukes Job for questioning God. He suggests that Job's words were like an empty wind. And then he fires a rhetorical question at Job. Is God unjust? Does God bless the evil and punish the good? If your sons died, then they must have transgressed against God. And like Eliphaz before him, Bildad suggests to Job that his poor condition must be due to sin and if he would just go to God and confess and repent of his sin then God even now would restore his life and fortunes.
- "Please inquire of past generations", Bildad suggests. Those who came before have left their wisdom and experience in poems and proverbs. Bildad is sure that the words of the ancients will show that though the wicked should flourish for a time, yet they will eventually fall and that the righteous, though they may be afflicted for a time, if they seek God, they will ultimately prosper. It was common in debate to make these appeals to the ancients. The results of observation were embodied in proverbs, parables, fables, and fragments of poems and the one who was regarded among the wisest of men was the one who had the fruits of these observations at their command. Bildad appeals to the writings of the ancients and especially to the fragment of an ancient poem (vss.9-10) which he proceeds to repeat, and which, perhaps, is the oldest poem extant in any language.

Vss. 11-22

- In vss. 11-13, Bildad points to a fragile plant's need for water. These words too have all the appearance of being a fragment of a poem handed down from ancient times. His point is that we are as dependent on God as a papyrus stalk is dependent on water. At best, our life is short, like that of the papyrus, but as one cuts the papyrus, and it no longer has its supply of water, it quickly withers and dies. So too are those who are cut off from God, Bildad argues.

- In vss. 14-18, Bildad speaks more about those who are cut off from God, which he is implying Job is. These people are sinners, hypocrites. The hypocrite puts his hope “in his house”, his own strength. But his hope is as fragile as a spider’s web that is easily brushed aside; like a house built on sand that will not stand long term. Like a weed, the hypocrite may shoot up green quickly, but his roots are not deep, just spreading out wide over the rocks of the garden. Soon the sun will cause the weed to wither and die just as quickly as it shot up and there will soon be no evidence left that it ever existed. So too the life of the hypocrite, says Bildad.
- He concludes his opening speech in vss. 19-22. Here Bildad returns to his opening question as to the innate justice of God. God, he says, “will not reject a man of integrity”. The Lord will fill the mouth of a righteous man with laughter and his lips with shouting for joy! But because He is a just God, He will not “support the evildoers.” Those who hate the righteous man “will be clothed with shame and the tent of the wicked will be no longer.”
- God will favor the righteous, but punish the wicked. This opinion the friends of Job maintain all along and by this they urge him to forsake his sins, repent, and return to God.
- This mindset is the mindset that became the central way of thinking in the middle east, especially to the Jews, so that by the time of Jesus it had calcified, hardened like stone. “Who is it that sinned?”, the disciples asked Jesus in John 9 when they saw the man born blind.
- When Jesus healed the paralytic in Luke 5:24, He said to the Pharisees, “But, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,’—He said to the paralytic—‘I say to you, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home.’” Sin and pain had become synonymous. But as Jesus said to the disciples in John 9:3, “It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.”