

JOB'S INNOCENCE

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The Book of Job is composed of 42 chapters. The majority of them contain the back-and-forth discussion between Job and his three friends about why Job was suffering. Throughout this discussion, we find Job's friends consistently and repeatedly condemning Job as being wicked, because in their minds, God would never bring such sufferings upon a righteous man. We also have the privilege to see how Job exalted God and humbled himself.

Job's innocence challenged

When Job professed his innocence, his friends had accused Job of making himself more righteous and pure than God. In Job 4:17, Eliphaz the Temanite asked, "*Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?*" In Job 8:3, Bildad the Shuhite also asked, "*Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice?*" This was his way of accusing Job of saying that about God when Job claimed that he was suffering when he had done no wrong. Bildad continued his rebuke of Job, saying, "*If thy children have sinned against him, and he have cast them away for their transgression; if thou wouldest seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication to the Almighty; if thou wert pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous. Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase*" (Job 8:4-7). Their accusations were false. Job said that he could not answer God (Job 9:3,14,32). Job acknowledged God's power and authority (Job 9:4-13). Job humbled himself and said that he would not justify himself or call himself perfect (Job 9:20-21), even though he was righteous and perfect (Job 1:1). God Himself acknowledged that He had been moved to "destroy him without cause" (Job 2:3).

Eliphaz's error

Job said that the righteous do suffer in this life. But Job's friends had said that only the wicked suffer in this life. In Job 4:7-11, Eliphaz said, "Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same. By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed. The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions, are broken. The old lion perisheth for lack of prey, and the stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad." Eliphaz continued: "For wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one. I have seen the foolish taking root: but suddenly I cursed his habitation. His children are far from safety, and they are crushed in the gate, neither is there any to deliver them. Whose harvest the hungry eateth up, and taketh it even out of the thorns, and the robber swalloweth up their substance" (Job 5:2-5). Still going strong in his condemnation of Job, Eliphaz added, "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: for he maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole. He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. In famine he shall redeem thee from death: and in war from the power of the sword. Thou shalt be hid from the

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(continued)

scourge of the tongue: neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh. At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh: neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth. For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee. And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace; and thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin. Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great, and thine offspring as the grass of the earth. Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season. Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good."

Bildad's error

In Job 8:8-11, Bildad said, "For inquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers: (for we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow:) shall not they teach thee, and tell thee, and utter words out of their heart? Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow without water?" He too had much more to add to his teaching and admonition of Job: "Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow without water? Whilst it is yet in his greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish: whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand: he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure. He is green before the sun, and his branch shooteth forth in his garden. His roots are wrapped about the heap, and seeth the place of stones. If he destroy him from his place, then it shall deny him, saying, I have not seen thee. Behold, this is the joy of his way, and out of the earth shall others grow. Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evil doers: till he fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing. They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame; and the dwelling place of the wicked shall come to nought" (Job 8:11-22).

Job speaks the truth

Yet Job's friends' accusations against him were false. Job refuted their error by saying that even the perfect suffer (Job 9:22), and that the earth is given into the hands of the wicked (Job 9:24). In Job 21:7-15, Job said, "Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them. Their bull gendereth, and faileth not; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf. They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" God agreed with Job, *not* with Job's friends. In Job 42:7, the Lord "said to Eliphaz the Temanite, *My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.*"