

Job Replies to Eliphaz's First Speech

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Job replies to Eliphaz's assertion of his guilt before God, lamenting his friend's help
2. aim – To cause us to recognize that we don't often understand how God works in this world
3. passage – Job 6:1-7:21

b. outline

1. Job Laments His Friend's Advice (Job 6:1-27)
2. Job Asserts His Own Innocence (Job 6:28-30)
3. Job Contemplates the Mysteries of Existence (Job 7:1-21)

c. opening

1. an **introduction** to the “replies” of Job to his “friends”
 - a. **structure: chaps. 4-14** represent **Round One** of Job's friends speaking to him
 1. after each speech, Job will **reply** to his friend's **implied question**:
 - a. for Eliphaz (**5:27**): “*this we have searched out; it is true. Hear, and know it for your good*”
 - b. **IOW**: we know what's best for you, do you not *understand this*???
 2. **friend's thesis (in 4-14)**: it is Job's **moral failures** that account for his present plight
 - a. the **character** of Job is being **questioned**, under a **horrible assumption by his friends**: since the wicked *always* get what they deserve, and because Job is suffering, therefore Job must be a reprobate man suffering for his “hidden” evil
 - b. and ... to “right” the matter, he must go to God, confess his sin, and be restored
 - c. and ... we know this to be true because a “spirit” came and *told this to us* (**5:12-21**)
 3. so ... Eliphaz's implied question (to which Job *replies*) is: do you not see the evil within yourself that has brought this suffering upon you???. (**i.e. 5:17**)
“Behold, blessed is the one whom God reproves; therefore despise not the discipline of the Almighty” (or “God disciplines those who are wicked, despise it not, for it is designed to turn you away from your evil and back to the Lord”)
 4. **remember**: none of these men know that the **intention** of this suffering is God's ordination over Job to show *the decree*: all God declares to be *is so*
 - a. thus, the back-and-forth is based on 1) the **limited** revelation of God, and 2) the **typical** responses of human beings to the issues of suffering and death (**see end-of-sermon**)
 - b. **structure: Job's reply** to Eliphaz is hard to outline, given its rather “back-and-forth” nature
 1. **i.e.** he seems to talk to himself, to Eliphaz, and to God *at various times* throughout the reply
 2. **i.e.** it takes Calvin **x7** sermons (**23-29; over a full week**) to analyze Job's reply
 3. however ... the **KISS** principle suggests the following: a) Job laments his friend's advice to him (including some *continued* lamentation over his life), b) Job asserts his innocence (before Eliphaz *and God*), and c) Job contemplates the mysteries of the human condition
 - c. **Calvin** notes the following revealed in this speech:
 1. our **natural** tendency is to fear that which touches our **body** *far more* than any fear of the judgment of God that comes upon the soul (as *physical* beings), and
 2. our **human** strength against trials and temptations is **utterly insufficient**, thus we need for God to sustain us (to *preserve* us)

I. Job Laments His Friend's Advice (Job 6:1-27)

Content

a. Job laments the **futility** of his life (vv. 1-13)

1. **read 6:1-4, 8-10**: Job is **confused** over the (seeming!) futility of his life
 - a. **ITC**: Job picks up where he left off in **chap. 3** = if only I could be “spared” of having to live this life and examine the realities of “**calamity**” – O that God would “**crush me**” out of existence
 - b. he has “**vexation**” (**v. 2**) = the state of being annoyed or frustrated; unable to *understand fully*
 - c. he sees his life as “**tasteless**” (**v. 6**) = having no savor, just bland and unappetizing (**v. 7**)
 - d. he knows that what is befalling him is from the “**Almighty**” (**v. 4**) = he is not just experiencing *random* difficulties, but things that come from God *by virtue of what he ordains to come to pass*
 1. but ... he **mistakenly** assumes that he must find the strength to make it through (**vv. 12-13**)

- e. **again:** Job makes his good points *badly* – he recognizes that suffering is (often!) *something that we cannot fully process and understand*, and it is what God has ordained over us
 - 1. but ... he cannot seem to help but *lament* his life as being *futile*, even though *all* is from God
- 2. **Job starts his reply with a “pity party” about the futility of his life ...**
 - a. however ... even in the midst of his “pity” he does make **a good point:** in **v. 10** he confesses that he has “*not denied the words of the Holy One*”
 - b. **i.e.** he has *not* gone so far as to *deny* the teachings of God regarding human life – he may *pity* himself, but he does *admit* that there is more to the story **than meets the eye ...**
- b. Job laments the empty comfort of his friends (vv. 14-27)**
 - 1. **read 6:14-17, 24-27:** Job laments that his friends *are no friends at all*
 - a. he considers the advice of Eliphaz to be synonymous with “*withholding kindness*” (**v. 14**)
 - 1. **e.g.** like a “*torrent-bed*” (a wadi) that fills during the rains, but only allows for the water to *flow away*, and dries up almost immediately – it does not keep *long-lasting help* for the weary traveler (**vv. 18-19**), but only the “remnants” of what was (once!) there
 - 2. **i.e.** Eliphaz’s advice only *adds* to Job misery – it is like looking into the wadi for life-giving water, only to see dryness and emptiness ... because ...
 - b. he considers the advice of Eliphaz to “miss the mark” of his *real need* (**v. 25**)
 - 1. **i.e.** as a *despairing man*, his friends *assume* that his words (**v. 26**) reveal something *in need of “reprove”* – that he is *morally impure* (in some way!) from which he must repent
 - 2. but ... they are wrong, for Job is convinced that he *is not* being *punished* (**see below**)
 - a. **e.g.** Bildad will consider Job’s reply (here!) to be “*a great wind*” (**8:2**), going back to Eliphaz’s point in *condemning* Job for refusing to see his own sin
 - 2. **Job laments the empty comfort of his friends, for their advice is shallow and unhelpful**
 - a. **application: be careful who you surround yourself with, who you call a friend**
 - 1. **i.e.** even those who *call* themselves a Christian (or an “expert”) *can* “drag” you away from the truth of Scripture to any number of “common” fallacies in the world (**1 Corinthians 15:33f**)
“Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company ruins good morals.’ Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.”
 - 2. **remember:** the devil can use even the most *unsuspecting of souls* to fill your life with lies ...

II. Job Asserts His Own Innocence (Job 6:28-30)

Content

a. Job asserts his innocence before God

- 1. **read 6:28-30:** Job asks the **\$64,000** question, of both his friends *and* of God (and of another)
 - a. it *appears* as though Job looks at Eliphaz to make this statement (“*look at me*”, **v. 28**)
 - 1. since it is *Eliphaz* that has accused him of being “un-right” with God, Job makes the statement to him, by way of *reply* – **i.e.** let me be clear to *you*, Eliphaz, in the face of *your accusation*
 - b. but, the statement is *also* directed towards God himself – by implication, the *only one* who can truly *know* if Job is innocent *is God himself* – **i.e.** “*Please turn*” (v. 29) = a call for God to *look* at him and bring “*vindication*” which (Job claims “*is at stake*”) can only come *truly* from God
 - c. and **IMO**, the statement (**from our perspective**) is also directed to *Satan* – “*is there any injustice on my tongue?*” = has Job said *anything* that would *change his state before God?*
 - 1. true, as he laments his existence and struggles to understand *why*, he does *not* actually say anything *sinfully untruthful* – he understands the importance of *truth*, which Satan *does not*
 - d. **Job asserts (by way of rhetorical question) that he has not said (or done!) anything sinful**
 - 1. **i.e.** there is no reason to believe that his “*palate*” (mouth) is “*the cause of [his] calamity*” (**v. 30**)

III. Job Contemplates the Mysteries of Existence (Job 7:1-21)

Content

a. Job contemplates the realities of life (vv. 1-10)

- 1. **read 7:1-3, 7:** Job (again) laments the reality of the human condition
 - a. **note:** Job first contemplates the *realities of life*, *speaking to himself*, in order that God would hear him, *then* turns directly to speak to God in **vv. 11-21** (see “*therefore, I will*” in **v. 11**)
 - b. life is full of “*hard service on earth*” (**v. 1**) = the *unfortunate* reality of human existence is **the Curse:** a fallen world extracts a *short* life of difficulty and suffering for those born into it
 - 1. **e.g.** “*months of emptiness*” (**v. 3**), “*nights of misery*” (**v. 4**), “*my flesh is clothed with worms and dirt*” (**v. 5**), “*my days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle*” (**v. 6**) = life is short

2. **e.g.** “my life is a breath” (v. 7) = we live but a short time on the earth and are gone, like “the cloud that fades and vanishes” (v. 9)
 - c. **IMO:** this is not Job complaining about the *specific* nature of *his* suffering (although it looks like it in v. 5b) – this *is* Job considering the **existential nature of man living in a fallen world**
 1. **IOW:** this is Job confirming that our *natural* tendency is to fear that which touches our *body* far more than any fear of the judgment of God that comes upon the *soul*
 2. **i.e.** because we are *mortal*, we are *terrified* of that which would come against *the body*, thus we have a tendency (then!) to “ignore” the spiritual reality of *God’s judgment* (**e.g.** look how easy is it to “scare” people in this *post-pandemic* world, **in spite of the evidence**)
 - d. **Job contemplates the reality of human life, that it is short and full of trouble, but this is only the introduction of his address to God ...**
 1. v. 11 – “therefore” I will *now* consider the *greater truths* that need to be addressed ...
- b. Job contemplates the nature of God (vv. 11-21)**
1. **read 7:12, 17-21:** Job asks why God would take *any account of (a) man*, given the gulf between them
 - a. the question posed in v. 17 is eerily similar to **Psalm 8:1-4**

“O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?”

 1. in **Psalm 8**, the writer asks the question in the framework of the glory of God – that God has crowned humanity with a glory *from himself*, and that this is to the praise of his name
 2. **here**, Job asks this question in the framework of the brevity of human life (v. 16b) – how is it that God could care *at all* about the puny creatures inhabiting this puny planet, especially given their short duration and plight on the earth *as compared to his infinite nature*?
 - a. **e.g.** realizing how small you really are when traveling by airplane over 8,400 miles
 3. **i.e.** in the midst of a world covered by the Curse, how can an *infinite* God have *anything to do with us* as finite creatures – how can he *love us*, sinners that we are?
 4. Job *implies* (through this “mystery”) that the only way to make it through this life, to survive *before God*, is by *this infinite One providing the support needed to carry on*
 - b. **Job doesn’t fully know the nature of God ... he lives “before” the full revelation comes**
 1. **but ... we know the full nature of God in relation to puny humans (Hebrews 2:5-6, 9)**

“For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere, ‘What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him?’ ... But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.”

 1. our *human* strength against trials and temptations is **utterly insufficient**, thus we need for God to sustain us (to *preserve* us)
 2. and ... this is *ultimately* accomplished through the power of God exercised through the *man*, Jesus Christ, the Son of God who suffered through life *as we do*, died, rose, ascended to his royal throne, and sent his *Spirit* to uphold and preserve all who belong to him
 3. **i.e. why is this book in our Bible – answer:** to show us the *default thinking of men*, as a historical book recounting events *before* the advent of redemptive history ...