

JOB 8-10

BILDAD SPEAKS

8: 1-7 After listening to Job address God in such a brazen fashion, Bildad feels justified in rebuking Job. He basically tells Job to stop speaking nonsense (2). "Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert the right?" he asks. Good question isn't it? Then Bildad suggests that Job's children must have sinned to have suffered such a cruel fate. Moreover, Job is in danger of suffering even further unless he pleads with God in humility. Perhaps, God will justify him by healing him of his suffering and blessing him even further than before.

8: 8-22 Bildad then goes on to expound his theology of God based on a traditional faith of the ancestors. Such a faith is now familiar to us. He goes on to speak of how the wicked will not get away with their wickedness for long. Like a papyrus plant without watering, they will shrivel up and die. Those who are upright and blameless, on the other hand, will be blessed and protected by God. They must be patient and steadfast.

JOB REPLIES

9: 1-12 Job acknowledges once again the traditional faith by which he has lived. "Yes," he says in effect, "I know God justifies the righteous and punishes the wicked." But he goes on to suggest that if a human being had an issue with how God was handling things, what recourse would they have? Who can question God in such a way that God would listen?

9: 13-24 Job goes on to contend that God has treated him unfairly but he has no way of calling God to account, or at least calling God to give some reasons. The traditional faith teaches that there is a reason, a purpose for everything that happens, suffering included. Job doesn't understand the reasons and he has no way of getting God to provide them. Moreover, Job goes so far as to say that God may not be consistent in his treatment of the wicked and the righteous. Job's condition has made him aware of the injustice in the world. "therefore I say, he (God) destroys both the blameless and the wicked. When disaster brings sudden death, he mocks at the calamity of the innocent. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; he (God) covers the eyes of the judges – if it is not he, who then is it?" (22-24)

9: 25-35 What are Job's options? What if he stopped complaining and just cheered himself up as he could. (27) But his suffering will not allow him to do this. What if he washed himself up and practiced a ritual of purification? (30) His condition is such that he has sores that ooze puss all over his body. Basically, God is continuing to afflict Job and there is no court or "umpire" (33) that can call God to give reasons for why God is doing this.

10: 1-17 Job now expresses what is in him without reservation, “in the bitterness of my soul.” Why is God attacking him? Why is God attacking that which God has created? (2-3) Why does God allow the wicked to get away with murder, so to speak? Why is God not forbearing and forgiving for any sins committed, since humans are so fragile in their mortality as it is? (6) But the sting for Job is that he doesn’t believe he is guilty of the kind of sin meriting such punishment just the same. God created Job in love and blessed him. And now, God is punishing him in such a way that even if he were a terrible sinner it would be harsh and overwhelming. How much more awful and inexplicable it is given that Job has made every effort to be a good man.

10: 18-22 Job now laments once again (as in chapter 3) the day of his birth. Why had he not died right then. Now, all he asks is that God leave him alone since God’s only involvement in Job’s life seems to be to punish and afflict him.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Even though Job still holds to the traditional faith of his friends, he has also gone further in several respects.

1. He no longer sees the world as a place that follows a moral universal law based on divine justice. The wicked do prosper and the righteous do suffer.

2. He has also come to the realization that anyone, good or bad, ought to experience the offer of mercy and forgiveness, the chance to make amends, the possibility for redress and reconciliation. If God were truly a good God, justice would be defined by mercy and grace above a cold understanding of “you get what you deserve.” After all, human beings are God’s creation. There is something beautiful and precious about them. They deserve to experience their preciousness and beauty in their relationship with God.

3. Finally, Job’s suffering pushes him to demand and expect more from his relationship with God. It is not enough to have a relationship based on fearful reverence. Better that reverence come from a deeper understanding of God’s purposes. Job is looking for greater intimacy with God, a greater back and forth of dialogue, of prayer. Even though he believes at this point that this is hopeless, that this is just an anguished dialogue within the soul of a sufferer, what he is looking for in his relationship with God offers amazing possibilities. What do you think?