

JOB



LOOKING BACK

- Bildad's second speech in Job 18 described the terrifying fate of the wicked.
- His words were increasingly aimed at Job, suggesting Job's suffering was proof of hidden sin.
- Job responded in chapter 19 by describing how abandoned, misunderstood, and isolated he felt.
- Even in the middle of his pain, Job made one of his strongest declarations of faith: "I know that my Redeemer lives."
- Job still did not understand why he was suffering, but he continued to hold on to what he knew about God.
- Now Zophar speaks again, insisting that the prosperity of the wicked is always temporary.

THE TRIUMPH
OF THE
WICKED IS
SHORT LIVED



20:1-11

“Then Zophar the Naamathite replied:

2 “I must reply

because I am greatly disturbed.

3 I’ve had to endure your insults,

but now my spirit prompts me to reply.

4 “Don’t you realize that from the beginning
of time,

ever since people were first placed on the
earth,

5 the triumph of the wicked has been short
lived

and the joy of the godless has been only
temporary?

6 Though the pride of the godless reaches to
the heavens

and their heads touch the clouds,

7 yet they will vanish forever,
thrown away like their own dung.

Those who knew them will ask,
‘Where are they?’

8 They will fade like a dream and not be
found.

They will vanish like a vision in the night.

9 Those who once saw them will see them
no more.

Their families will never see them again.

10 Their children will beg from the poor,
for they must give back their stolen riches.

11 Though they are young,
their bones will lie in the dust.”

THE TRIUMPH OF THE WICKED IS SHORT LIVED



- Zophar believes history proves that the success of the wicked never lasts
 - He sees life through a simple formula: the righteous prosper, while the wicked eventually fall
 - Zophar's mistake is assuming Job's suffering automatically proves Job's guilt
 - Zophar leaves no room for suffering that is not connected to personal wickedness

ZOPHAR'S THEOLOGY IS TOO RIGID TO MAKE ROOM FOR JOB'S REALITY



SIN TURNS BITTER

20:12-22



“They enjoyed the sweet taste of
wickedness,
letting it melt under their tongue.

13 They savored it,
holding it long in their mouths.

14 But suddenly the food in their bellies
turns sour,

a poisonous venom in their stomach.

15 They will vomit the wealth they
swallowed.

God won't let them keep it down.

16 They will suck the poison of cobras.

The viper will kill them.¹

7 They will never again enjoy streams of
olive oil

or rivers of milk and honey.

18 They will give back everything they worked
for.

Their wealth will bring them no joy.

19 For they oppressed the poor and left them
destitute.

They foreclosed on their homes.

20 They were always greedy and never
satisfied.

Nothing remains of all the things they
dreamed about.

21 Nothing is left after they finish gorging
themselves.

Therefore, their prosperity will not endure.

22 “In the midst of plenty, they will run into
trouble

SIN TURNS BITTER

- Zophar describes wickedness as something sweet at first but poisonous in the end
 - He connects greed, oppression and dishonest gain with individual loss
 - His words increasingly sound like a direct accusation against Job
 - Zophar interprets Job's losses as evidence that Job must have gained his wealth dishonestly

ZOPHAR MISTAKES JOB'S CIRCUMSTANCES FOR
PROOF OF JOB'S CHARACTER



GOD'S
JUDGMENT
WILL FIND THE
WICKED

20:23-29



“May God give them a bellyful of
trouble.

May God rain down his anger upon
them.

24 When they try to escape an iron
weapon,
a bronze-tipped arrow will pierce
them.

25 The arrow is pulled from their back,
and the arrowhead glistens with
blood.[\[a\]](#)

The terrors of death are upon them.

26 Their treasures will be thrown into
deepest darkness.

A wildfire will devour their goods,
consuming all they have left.

27 The heavens will reveal their guilt,
and the earth will testify against them.

28 A flood will sweep away their house.
God’s anger will descend on them in
torrents.

29 This is the reward that God gives the
wicked.

It is the inheritance decreed by God.”

GOD'S JUDGEMENT WILL FIND THE WICKED

- Zophar insists that the wicked cannot escape God's judgment
 - He describes destruction so vividly that Job would have clearly heard himself in the picture
- Much of what Zophar says about God's ultimate justice is true
 - His error is assuming that God's justice must always be immediate and visible

GOD'S JUSTICE IS CERTAIN, BUT ZOPHAR
WRONGLY ASSUMES HE CAN ALWAYS
IDENTIFY IT IN THE MOMENT



BUT
SOMETIMES
THE WICKED
PROSPER

21:1-16



“Then Job spoke again:

2 “Listen closely to what I am saying.

That’s one consolation you can give me.

3 Bear with me, and let me speak.

After I have spoken, you may resume mocking me.

4 “My complaint is with God, not with people.

I have good reason to be so impatient.

5 Look at me and be stunned.

Put your hand over your mouth in shock.

6 When I think about what I am saying, I shudder.

My body trembles.”

“Why do the wicked prosper,
growing old and powerful?

8 They live to see their children grow up and settle down,
and they enjoy their grandchildren.

9 Their homes are safe from every fear,
and God does not punish them.

10 Their bulls never fail to breed.

Their cows bear calves and never miscarry.

11 They let their children frisk about like lambs.
Their little ones skip and dance.”

“They sing with tambourine and harp.
They celebrate to the sound of the flute.
13 They spend their days in prosperity,
then go down to the grave[\[a\]](#) in peace.

14 And yet they say to God, ‘Go away.
We want no part of you and your ways.

15 Who is the Almighty, and why should we obey him?
What good will it do us to pray?’

16 (They think their prosperity is of their own doing,
but I will have nothing to do with that kind of thinking.)”

BUT SOMETIMES THE WICKED PROSPER

- Job asks his friends to listen instead of immediately trying to correct him
 - He challenges Zophar's claim by pointing out that some wicked people live long and prosperous lives
- Some openly reject God and still appear to succeed
 - Job is not defending wickedness; he is exposing the weakness in his friends' formula

PROSPERITY IS NOT AUTOMATIC PROOF OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND SUFFERING IS NOT AUTOMATIC
PROOF OF WICKEDNESS



WHERE IS THE IMMEDIATE JUDGMENT?



21:17-26

“Yet the light of the wicked never seems to be extinguished.

Do they ever have trouble?

Does God distribute sorrows to them in anger?

18 Are they driven before the wind like straw?

Are they carried away by the storm like chaff?

Not at all!

19 “‘Well,’ you say, ‘at least God will punish their children!’

But I say he should punish the ones who sin,
so that they understand his judgment.

20 Let them see their destruction with their own eyes.

Let them drink deeply of the anger of the Almighty.

21 For they will not care what happens to their family
after they are dead.

“But who can teach a lesson to God,
since he judges even the most powerful?

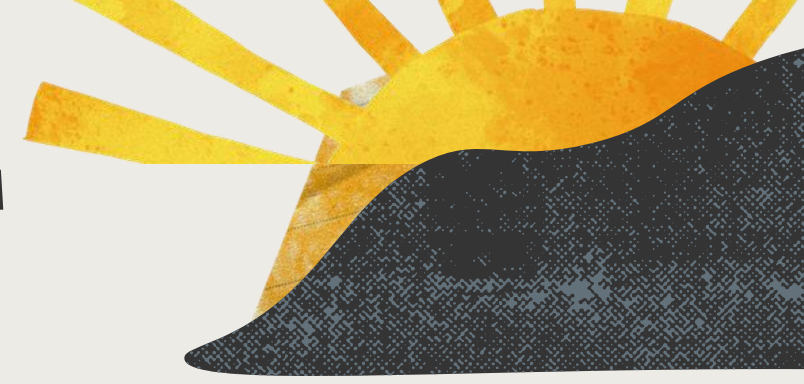
23 One person dies in prosperity,
completely comfortable and secure,

24 the picture of good health,
vigorous and fit.

25 Another person dies in bitter poverty,
never having tasted the good life.

26 But both are buried in the same dust,
both eaten by the same maggots.”

WHERE IS THE IMMEDIATE JUDGMENT



- Job questions whether the wicked always experience the immediate downfall his friends describe
 - He refuses to accept easy explanations for why justice sometimes seems delayed
 - One person may die in comfort while another dies in bitterness
 - Their circumstances in life do not always reveal their standing before God

CIRCUMSTANCES DO NOT ALWAYS TELL THE WHOLE STORY



YOUR
EXPLANATION
DOESN'T FIT
REALITY



21:27-34

“Look, I know what you’re thinking.
I know the schemes you plot against
me.

28 You will tell me of rich and wicked
people
whose houses have vanished
because of their sins.

29 But ask those who have been
around,
and they will tell you the truth.

30 Evil people are spared in times of
calamity
and are allowed to escape disaster.

No one criticizes them openly
or pays them back for what they have
done.

32 When they are carried to the grave,
an honor guard keeps watch at their
tomb.

33 A great funeral procession goes to
the cemetery.

Many pay their respects as the body
is laid to rest,
and the earth gives sweet repose.

34 “How can your empty clichés
comfort me?

All your explanations are lies!”

YOUR EXPLANATION DOESN'T FIT REALITY

- Job knows his friends are really describing him whenever they talk about “the wicked.”
 - He challenges them to look beyond their theories and observe the world as it actually is
 - Some wicked people are never publicly exposed or ruined in this life
 - Job's friends came to comfort him, but their explanations only deepened his pain

WHEN OUR EXPLANATION DOESN'T FIT REALITY, IT MAY
BE OUR EXPLANATION THAT NEEDS TO CHANGE



“YOU SHOULD
FEAR
PUNISHMENT
YOURSELVES”

19:28–29



“How dare you go on persecuting me,
saying, ‘It’s his own fault’?

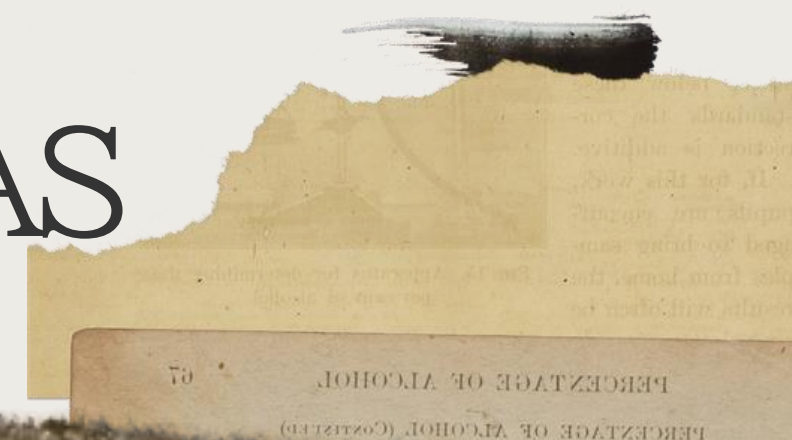
29 You should fear punishment yourselves,
for your attitude deserves punishment.
Then you will know that there is indeed a
judgment.”

“YOU SHOULD FEAR PUNISHMENT YOURSELVES”

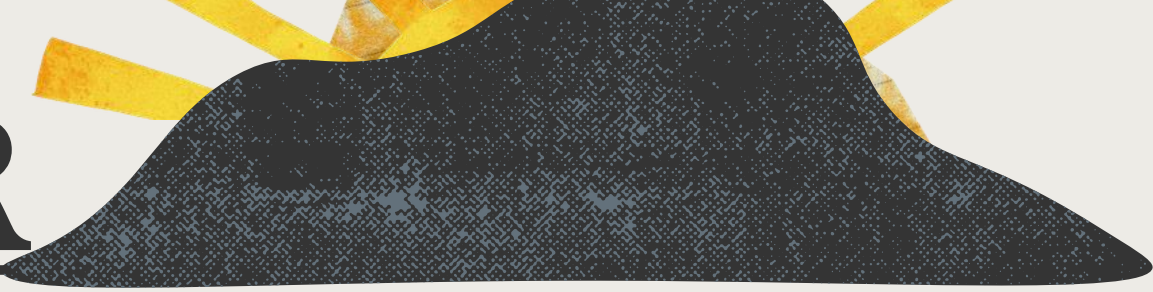


- Job turns the warning of judgment back toward his friends
 - They have confidently assumed that Job is the one who should fear God's judgment
 - Job warns them that they have spoken as though they possess knowledge God has not given them
 - The friends have made themselves judge and jury, but the final verdict belongs to God

WE SHOULD BE VERY CAREFUL ABOUT
SPEAKING WITH CERTAINTY WHERE GOD HAS
NOT GIVEN US CERTAINTY



BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER



- Zophar has a formula; Job has an observation.
- Biblical principles should not be turned into guarantees God never made.
- God's justice is certain even when it is not immediate.
- We cannot judge someone's relationship with God by their circumstances.
- Faith sometimes means trusting God without understanding everything.

Bottom Line:

When life doesn't fit the formula, faith holds on to what it knows about God.



WHAT DO WE TAKE WITH US?

- Be careful about turning biblical principles into rigid formulas
- Don't measure God's justice by today's circumstances
 - Circumstances are a poor measure of someone's relationship with God
 - Faith doesn't require us to understand everything

