

## **The Book of Job Chapters 8-10**

### **Job Chapter 8 Bildad's First Speech**

Job's speech in chapter 7 echoed many of the themes of Job 3, and so Bildad speaks to correct what he saw as Job's foolish words. As was true of Eliphaz, we know nothing historically about Bildad. He's simply the second speaker in each of the cycles. This implies that he had lower status than Eliphaz, and Bildad appears to be less eloquent than Eliphaz as well. Bildad, however, is more direct.

### **Job 8:1-7**

What is the tone of Bildad's words in 8:1-4? How is it different from the way Eliphaz began his speech in 4:2-4?

What assumption is Bildad making in verse 4? (see 1:18-19)

In verse 7, what is Bildad assuming Job will do?

### **Job 8:8-19**

This section provide Bildad's evidence for God's justice. Bildad believes that everyone who's ever dealt with God has experienced his justice. According to Bildad, in verses 8-10, where should Job look for true wisdom?

Verses 11-19 provide a series of illustrations from nature that argue the justice of God. Papyrus, reeds, spider webs, root systems, and rocks provide Bildad with examples of his basic premise. Those who sin will be punished severely.

### **Job 8:20-22**

These verses state the other side of the coin in Bildad's mind. If those who sin are punished, then God won't punish a person of integrity, or a blameless person. If Job repents, God will again consider him righteous, and will restore to him joy and laughter.

### **Job 9-10 Job's First Response to Bildad**

Job's reply to Bildad isn't easy to understand. He appears to start a train of thought and then switches tracks to another train of thought. He frequently uses unusual Hebrew words (at least, unusual compared with the rest of the

Old Testament). Scholars who try to determine the exact meaning of these words have great difficulties in Job 9. What's clear, is that Job was in search of a deeper understanding of God than that with which he had been raised—a deeper understanding than that of his friends. There's a basic agreement between Job and his friends about the character of God. The issue at stake concerns the “whys and wherefores” of God's dealings with Job.

### **Job 9:1-4**

In the opening line of his response, Job agrees with Bildad, “*I know that this is so.*” His agreement is with Bildad's affirmation from Job 8:3 that God does not pervert justice. In Job 4:17, Eliphaz had raised the question of how a person could be just before God. The language of justice suggested the courtroom to Job, and his thoughts turned in that direction. The rhetorical question in verse 2b, “*How can a man be declared innocent [or just or righteous] before God?*” implies that Job didn't think a person *could* be acquitted if God was the accuser. Yet, his own conscience knew no serious sin, and so his confidence that God wouldn't pervert justice led him to contemplate the impossible... pursuing litigation against God.

To put verse 3 in human terms, think how successful we might be in a debate with someone like the late great debaters William F. Buckley or Charles Krauthammer?

### **Job 9:5-13**

Job continues to reflect on God's greatness that would make litigation against him foolish. Verses 5-10 have been compared with the great descriptions of God in the Psalms, in Amos 4:13, Isaiah 40:21-31; and in Genesis 1. What natural forces does God use in 9:5-6 and 9:7? How did God literally “*tread on the waves of the sea*” (Mark 6:48).

But, despite God's great power, verses 11-12 point out that the Old Testament God has cloaked himself with mystery. Human eyes can't see him. Human sense can't perceive him. Human power can't resist him. When God unleashes his anger, no power can resist him.

In verse 13, Job speaks of the helpers of Rahab bowing before God's anger. This word Rahab doesn't refer to the prostitute of Jericho (her name has a different Hebrew spelling). The KJV translates this as “*the proud helpers do stoop under him,*” “*proud*” also being a possible translation for “*Rahab*,” but other references in Job (3:8, 7:12) seem to favor the meaning

of Rahab being a sea monster. This word Rahab describes one of the sea monsters—Leviathan and Tannin being the other major ones. The nations around Israel saw these sea monsters as symbolic of the chaos of the world without God’s restraining order. God’s work of creating and sustaining the universe was the work of defeating the forces of chaos to impose and maintain the order of the universe. God has defeated the very powers of chaos. How could Job or any other human hope to successfully defeat him in a court battle?

### **Job 9:14-24**

Though verses 5-13 have made the hopelessness of the lawsuit against God clear, Job still pursues the idea in verses 14-24. He knows that even though he knows that he’s in the right, he also knows that he can’t win a case against God. In God’s presence, his words of defense would be turned into an appeal for mercy—hardly a way to win the case. Here Job anticipates the climax of the book in which God finally appears and speaks and Job can do nothing but worship. Already we’re seeing one of the main points of the book—that there isn’t always a satisfactory explanation for why a righteous person experiences specific suffering. General suffering is a result of the world’s Fall into sin. However, God is present with us in the midst of all suffering, which is finally all that God’s people need.

How does Job come close to understanding the *real* reason for his suffering in verse 24?

### **Job 9:25-35**

Verses 25-26 present four quick metaphors for the shortness of life. Like a swift runner, like a fleeing robber, like a fast light boat, like an eagle; life passes quickly away.

What does verse 26 say about Job’s life experiences?

Verse 28 is especially powerful. Job admits that his suffering has brought terror into his life. If he’s suffered so much while blameless, just think what could happen to him should he really be guilty of great sin? It’s easy for us to claim that Job is inconsistent in these verses. However, logical consistency is not Job’s purpose. His emotions are ragged, and he’s lashing out against the pain of his life, and he is lashing out at God because the rules of life (retribution) aren’t working.

Verses 28-31 are addressed toward God. In verse 32, Job begins to talk *about* God rather than *to* him.

Verse 33 is important. Thus, it's presented here in several translations. What does Job wish for?

*If only there were someone to arbitrate between us, to lay his hand upon us both. (NIV)*

*There is no arbiter between us, who might lay his hand on us both. (ESV)*

*There is no umpire between us, Who may lay his hand upon us both. (NASB)*

*Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both. (KJV)*

What comfort do *we* have that wasn't so clear to Old Testament Job, especially in his distress?

## **Job 10**

Chapter 10 can be described as another lament. Verses 1-7 begin the lament with a complaint against God. He openly declares that he's giving vent to the bitterness of his life. In verse 2, Job demands that God declare him "*not guilty.*" The second line of the verse demands that God give a reason for what's happening to him. Job continues the language of the courtroom but now pictures God as the one who initiated the lawsuit. God must declare the charges against Job.

It's been pointed out that had Job known of the "contest" between God and Satan described in chapters 1 and 2, all his suffering would have been easier to bear. But for the "test" to be a genuine test Job can't know the reason for his suffering. Thus, Job must be left in the dark. God can't answer his pleas. Job must feel abandoned by God for God to discover whether Job really trusts him. This paragraph is full of irony. In verse 3, Job asks if it seems good to God to despise the work of your hands. This seems to be a deliberate twist on Genesis 1 where after each day of creation God declared the work of his hands "good."

In verses 5-7, Job asks if God is using all this suffering as a way to find out if Job has sinned. The language is ironic because Job asks if God is seeking

out his iniquity and searching for his sin. If it were true, God would be doing the work of Satan as described in chapters 1 and 2. But in verse 7, Job repeats his confident assertion that God really knows his innocence.

Verses 8-12 reflect on God as Job's creator. Verses 8-9 are built on the metaphor of human beings as clay. In a world in which pottery was the standard cookware and dinnerware, the description of humans as clay speaks of their fragile and weak nature. How do verses 10-12 illustrate the fact that human life begins in the womb, not just after the time of birth?

Verses 13-17 describe God's vigilant watch against Job. Job's lament is that God is constantly on his case watching to see if he will fall.

Verses 18-22 bring Job's reply to Bildad to a close. Job has now stated the issues more incisively than his detached comforters. The two great things he knows about God intersect and clash. God is powerful; God is good. In creation first, and now in Job's recent disasters, the might of God is seen. That God Himself did it all is indisputable. Job doesn't question God's right to do it. But, Job can't detect God's reasons for his actions. Why should he create only to destroy? His superb craftsmanship in a man's body is a supreme token of His commitment to life. But for Job, it has become a burden and a horror.

How is Job's despair reflected in 10:21-22? Job is using the imagery of death which the pagan lands around him used. He feels distant from God right now, but we will see his faith grow stronger in Chapter 19, when he says, "*For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart yearns within me!*" (19:25-27).