

Job Chapter 4

Verses 4:1 – 27:23

Three rounds of dialogue occur between Job and his three friends.

Chapter's 4-14, contain the first round of dialogue.

In verses 4:1 – 5:27

This is Eliphaz's first speech.

His main emphasis is that no one who was innocent has ever suffered as much as Job (who ever perished, being innocent?); thus God has brought this punishment to chasten a sinful Job and restore him to righteousness (see chapters 15 and 22), for Eliphaz's other speeches.

He spoke profoundly and gently, but knew nothing of the scene in heaven that had produced the suffering of Job.

Verses 1-6

In Hebrew, "Eliphaz" means "My god is Gold."

His name and native land ("Teman"), were associated with Esau and Edom (Gen. 36:11; 1 Chron. 1:36; Jer. 49:7).

Eliphaz began his speech with sarcasm, essentially accusing Job of not practicing what he preached.

Job 4:1 "Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said,"

The actual dialogue with his friends begins here and takes up most of the book.

It consists of three cycles in which each friend speaks and Job replies, with the exception that in the third cycle Zophar does not speak.

"Eliphaz" speaks first because he was probably the eldest and wisest.

He was also the most compassionate of the three.

Eliphaz takes the position of a theologian, emphasizing the greatness of God and His judgment of sin.

Bildad takes the position of a traditionalist, emphasizing the principles of wisdom, which he suggests Job has violated.

All three of them take a negative view of Job, assuming that he has done something to bring this trouble on himself.

Verses 2-6

Job's friend finally spoke after 7 days of silence and began kindly by acknowledging that Job was recognized for being a wise man.

Unfortunately, with the opening of their mouths for the first speech, all the wisdom of their silence departed.

Job 4:2 "[If] we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved? but who can withhold himself from speaking?"

Or, (without a note of interrogation), thou wilt be grieved.

Our words will undoubtedly vex thee, and not comfort thee, as we intended and desired to do.

We must not use words of comfort, but of sharp reproof, which will be irksome to thee.

And this makes me desire to be silent, if it were possible.

"Who can withhold himself from speaking":

When he hears such unreasonable and ungodly words coming from such a person as thou art, whereby thou dost accuse thy Maker, and reproach his providence, and condemn his blessings?

No man who hath any respect to God, or love to thee, can forbear reproving thee.

Eliphaz was fully aware that up until this time Job did not want his friends to talk to him.

We discussed earlier, that many times deep grief has to be worked out silently within one's self.

Now, Eliphaz believed that it might be time to speak to Job.

He was actually asking Job's permission to speak to him.

He had waited 7 days, and now he felt he must speak.

Job 4:3 "Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands."

It is well known thou hast given good counsel unto others, teaching them those lessons which, it appears, thou hast not thyself learned.

And wilt not practice, namely, patiently to bear afflictions, and to submit to God's will and providence in all things.

And thou hast strengthened the weak hands":

Hast encouraged those that were dispirited; hast administered counsels, supports, and comforts to such as were unable to bear their burdens, or to do their duty.

It appears, that Job had ministered to those around him who had problems of any kind. It appears, he had instructed them in the ways of God.

His instructions had strengthened those who were weak in the LORD.

Job 4:4 "Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees."

That was ready to sink under his pressures, or to fall into sin, or from God, through despondency and distrust of his providence and promise, or through impatience.

"And thou hast strengthened the feeble knees":

Such as were weak-hearted, and fainting under their trials.

We knew earlier of Job's great concern for his own children, but this shows me a man who was concerned about all of those around him as well.

Job's advice to others in trouble had been of great help to them in their recovery.

Job 4:5 "But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled."

That is, the evil which thou didst fear (Job 3:25), or that which had come upon those whom thou didst so comfort.

"And thou faintest":

There is no more spirit left in thee: and thou canst not practice thy own advice.

"It toucheth thee, and thou art troubled":

It is now come to be thine own case, and thou art struck with consternation.

This friend was telling Job that he was good at giving advice, but he was not very good at taking advice.

He was also saying, take for yourself the advice you have given others.

This friend of Job believed that this calamity that had befallen Job, was a chastisement from God.

He was thoroughly convinced that Job had done some terrible thing, and God was punishing him for it.

Job 4:6 "[Is] not [this] thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?"

The meaning seems to be, "Should not thy fear or piety be thy confidence, and the uprightness of thy ways or hope?"

Should not the piety you were so ready to commend to others supply a sufficient ground of hope for thyself?"

Or we may understand, "Is not thy reverence, thy confidence, thy hope, and thy integrity shown to be worthless if thou faintest as soon as adversity toucheth thee?"

The drift of the speaker is virtually the same in either case.

Job feared God, and had confidence that God would see him through every peril.

His hope was that he lived before God the very best that he could.

He had done everything as nearly perfect as he knew how.

It was very hard to put that confidence in God into practical application, with as much trouble as Job had at this time.

The friend was making a deceptive remark to Job about his righteousness.

He was saying, if you were righteous in the sight of God, wouldn't he save you from this?

He had begun to insinuate that Job had sinned.

Verses 7-11

Eliphaz illustrated his belief in the principle of divine retribution (“plow” and “reap”), with an example from the animal kingdom: if a lion does not catch its prey, then it and its cubs will suffer.

Job 4:7 "Remember, I pray thee, who [ever] perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?"

This was, probably, some very good advice that Job had given to his friends in need who had come to him.

God would not be cut off.

It just appeared that way at the moment.

“Who ever perished, being innocent”?

Eliphaz, recognizing Job’s “fear of God” and “integrity” (verse 6), was likely encouraging Job at the outset by saying he wouldn’t die because he was innocent of any deadly iniquity, but must be guilty of some serious sin because he was reaping such anger from God.

This was a moral universe and moral order was at work, he thought.

He had oversimplified God’s pattern of retribution.

This simple axiom, “the righteous will prosper and the wicked will suffer,” does not always hold up in human experience.

It is true that plowing and sowing iniquity reaps judgment, so Eliphaz was partially right (Gal. 6:7-9; 1 Peter 3:12), but not everything we reap in life is the result of something we have sown (see notes on 2 Cor. 12:7-10).

Eliphaz was replacing theology with simplistic logic.

To say that wherever there is suffering, it is the result of sowing sin is wrong (Exodus 4:11; John 9:1-3).

Job 4:8 "Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same."

“Even as I have seen,” that is, Eliphaz’s argument was based on personal experience.

“They that plow iniquity ... reap the same,” meaning, you reap what you sow.

Therefore, Job must be suffering because of sin.

With friends like this, Job did not need enemies.

His friend was accusing him of sin.

Iniquity here, was speaking of both physical and spiritual evil.

He was saying, "you reap, what you sow".

He was convinced that Job had sinned and was refusing to repent of that sin.

This was not true.

Job 4:9 "By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed."

They and their works, those that plough, the sowers, and reapers of iniquity; the allusion is to the blasting of corn by the east wind, or by mildew, etc.

Having used the figures of ploughing and sowing before; and which is as soon and as easily done as corn, or anything else, is blasted in the above manner.

And denotes the sudden and easy destruction of wicked men by the power of God, stirred up by his wrath and indignation, because of their sins.

Who when he blows a blast on their persons, substance, and families, they perish at once.

“And by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed”:

Meaning his wrath and anger, which is like a stream of brimstone, and kindles a fire on the wicked, which are as fuel to it, and are soon consumed by it.

The allusion is to breath in a man's nostrils, and the heat of his wrath and fury discovered thereby.

Some think this refers to Job's children being destroyed by the wind (see Isa. 11:4).

It is the breath of God within all of us that allows us to live.

God is in control of our birth and our death regardless of who we are or what we have done.

It is also Jesus who is the Judge of all the world.

It is his determination of whether we live in heaven or spend an eternity in hell.

Verses 10-11:

Wanting to demonstrate that wicked men experience calamities in spite of their strength and resources, Eliphaz illustrated his point by the destruction that comes on lions in spite of their prowess.

Five Hebrew words were used here for lion, emphasizing the various characters of wicked people, all of whom can be broken and perish.

Job 4:10 "The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions, are broken."

Understand vanishes, or perishes (out of Job 4:9).

Or, is restrained, or suppressed, as may be gathered out of the following branch of this verse.

"And the teeth of the young lions, are broken":

The power of such mighty ones to do mischief is taken away from them, and they and their families are brought to ruin.

The teeth of lions are very strong in both jaws; they have fourteen teeth, four incisors or cutters, four canine or dog teeth, six molars or grinders.

Job 4:11 "The old lion perisheth for lack of prey, and the stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad."

Dares not venture out of his den in search of prey, amidst the roar of thunder.

The blaze of lightning, and the violence of the storm, that blast of God, mentioned in the preceding verse.

"And the stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad.":

Are so affrighted with the lightning and thunder, that, being separated, they flee in different ways, and cannot find the path which leads to the den of the lioness, their dam.

Thus do the divine judgments suddenly oppress, scatter, and bring to nothing the fierce and powerful tyrants of the earth, and unexpectedly strip them of all their wealth gotten by injustice and oppression.

Eliphaz now, was relating Job to evil men who were spoken of as lions.

He was saying that Job had abused his power as a leader.

The old lion was a tyrant who had lost his power.

In this last statement, it was a terrible blow to Job, because his children were called the whelps.

They were taken from Job, but they were not scattered, they were in heaven with God.

Job's friend spoke of them, as if they were lost for the sins of their father.

All of the statements from Job's friend were not true, because they were not from God.

Verses 12-20

This frightful dream ("in thoughts from the visions of the night"), which Eliphaz claimed was from God, supposedly affirmed his view of how divine justice works (see note on 4:7-11).

His words offered Job no comfort; instead, they conveyed God as a judge unfamiliar with mercy.

Verses 12-16

"A thing was secretly brought to me":

Eliphaz spoke of a mysterious messenger in a vision, eerie fantasy, or a dream.

He claimed to have had divine revelation to bolster his viewpoint.

Job 4:12 "Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof."

He now proceeds to enforce and illustrate what he has said in highly poetical language, which has been versified in one of Byron's Hebrew Melodies.

"Secretly brought to me":

Literally, was stolen for me.

Joseph uses the same expression of himself (in Genesis 40:15).

"Mine ear received a little thereof":

Compared with the inexhaustible resources remaining unrevealed.

The word used for little is only found once again, and in the mouth of Job (Job 26:14).

Job 4:13 "In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men,"

While Eliphaz was thinking of and meditating upon divine things, or while he was revolving in his mind some night visions he had, before this was made unto him (see Dan. 2:29).

In meditation, the LORD is often pleased to make known more of his mind and will to his people.

And this is one way in which he would do it in former times, in a vision either in the day, as sometimes, or in the night, as at others, and as here (see Num. 12:6).

"When deep sleep falleth on men":

On sorrowful men, as Mr. Broughton renders it; such who have been laborious all the day, and getting their bread with sorrow and trouble, and are weary.

Who as soon as they lie down fall asleep, and sleep falls on them, and to such it is sweet, as the wise man says (Eccl. 5:12).

Now it was at such a time when men ordinarily and commonly are asleep that this vision came.

Whether this was speaking of a dream or a vision, it does not matter.

There are two sources for dreams and visions.

Only one source is from God.

I would believe that Satan was using this friend to further attack Job.

Notice also, that the words he heard were as a whisper, which he did not hear clearly.

Job 4:14 "Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake."

Either caused by the apparition following.

Or sent by God to humble him, and to prepare him for the more diligent attention to, reverent reception of; and ready compliance with, the Divine message.

Job 4:15 "Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up:"

He does not intimate whether it was the spirit of a man, or an angel who thus appeared.

The belief in such apparitions was common in the early ages, and indeed has prevailed at all times.

No one can demonstrate that God could not communicate his will in such a manner as this, or by a messenger deputed from his immediate presence to impart valuable truth to people.

"The hair of my flesh stood up":

This is an effect which is known often to be produced by fear.

Sometimes the hair is made to turn white almost in an instant, as an effect of sudden alarm; but usually the effect is to make it stand on end.

It would not matter that this was an evil spirit, he would have felt fear from it anyway.

There was no question that Eliphaz had encountered the spirit, but the question is, was it from God or Satan?

Satan will use members of our family and our closest friends to do us hurt.

Job 4:16 "It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image [was] before mine eyes, [there was] silence, and I heard a voice, [saying],"

That is, the spirit, or the angel in a visible form.

It was before going to and fro, but now it stood still right against Eliphaz, as if it had something to say to him, and so preparing him to attend to it.

Which he might do the better, it standing before him while speaking to him, that he might have the opportunity of taking more notice of it.

But, notwithstanding this advantageous position of it.

"I could not discern the form thereof":

What it was, whether human or any other.

"An image was before mine eyes":

He saw something, some appearance and likeness, but could not tell what it was.

Perhaps the fear and surprise he was in hindered him from taking in any distinct idea of it.

Or that particular notice of it, so as to be able to form in his own mind any suitable notion of it, or to describe it to others.

"There was silence":

Both in the spirit or image, which, standing still, made no rushing noise.

And in Eliphaz himself, who kept in his breath, and listened with all the attention he could to it.

Or a small low voice, as Ben Melech interprets it: so it follows:

"And I heard a voice":

A distinct articulate voice or sound of words.

Very audibly delivered by the spirit or image that stood before him.

Verses 17-21

This is the content of the message which is, in effect, that God judges sin and sinners among men (described in verse 19 as “houses of clay”), as He did among angels (verse 18; compare Rev. 12:3-4).

Job 4:17 "Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?"

Here is the conclusion of Eliphaz's revelation, that Job suffered because he was not holy enough, not righteous enough.

The key to this was in the fact that the spirit planted a question in Eliphaz's mind.

God makes statements and Satan brings questions that cause us to doubt.

This spirit was of Satan.

Job had not tried to say that he was pure, or that he was more just than God.

God had said that Job was righteous.

It was God who said all of these nice things about Job.

Job appears, from everything he said and did to be a humble man.

Job 4:18 "Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly:"

Imperfection is to be attributed to the angels, in comparison with Him.

The holiness of some of them had given way (2 Peter 2:4), and at best is but the holiness of a creature.

“Folly”:

Is the want of moral consideration.

All of these accusations were lies from the father of lies, Satan.

Job did not worship angels who are ministering spirits.

He put his faith in the LORD, where it belonged.

Just as God knew that angels were not infallible, Job knew they were not too.

Job 4:19 "How much less [in] them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation [is] in the dust, [which] are crushed before the moth?"

"Houses of clay":

(2 Cor. 5:1).

Houses made of sun-dried clay bricks are common in the East; they are easily washed away (Matt. 7:27).

Man's foundation is this dust (Gen. 3:19).

"Before the moth":

Rather, "as before the moth," which devours a garment (Job 13:28; Psalm 39:11; Isa. 50:9).

Man, who cannot in a physical point of view, stand before the very moth.

Surely cannot in a moral sense, stand before God.

Job's friend was saying that God could not even trust Job to do the right thing.

He was housed in a body of clay and was therefore worldly.

Job's friend was speaking lies.

God did trust Job.

That was what this whole attack on Job's person was about, because God did trust him and told Satan that He did.

Job 4:20 "They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish for ever without any regarding [it]."

The process is continual and unceasing, and when we consider the ravages of time on history, we may well say (as in Job 4:20), that "none regardeth it."

The next verse however, may seem to imply that they themselves are unmindful of their decay, it is so insidious and so complete.

He was speaking of the fact that all flesh dies.

Part of this is true.

God has no regard for the flesh of man, just for the spirit that dwells within that flesh.

Job 4:21 "Doth not their excellency [which is] in them go away? they die, even without wisdom."

Whatsoever is really or by common estimation excellent in men, all their natural, and moral, and civil accomplishments, as high birth, great riches, power, and wisdom, etc.

These are so far from preserving men from perishing, as one would think they should do, that they perish themselves, together with those houses of clay in which they are lodged.

"Which is in them go away":

I.e. die and perish, as that phrase is oft used as (Gen. 15:15; Joshua 23:14; Job 10:21; Psalm 58:9; Eccl. 12:5; Matt. 26:21), with, as beth is oft used, them; it does not survive them.

"Without wisdom": Either;

- (1) Like fools, wise men and fools die alike (Eccl. 2:16); or
- (2) They never attain to perfect wisdom, to that wisdom which man once had, much less to that wisdom which is in God, which Job conceived he hath.

Otherwise he would not so boldly censure the counsels and works of God as unrighteous or unreasonable, because his human and narrow capacity cannot fully understand them.

Moreover, as folly is oft put for unrighteousness and wickedness, so is wisdom for justice and goodness.

Which is so known, that it is needless to prove it.

And so by wisdom here may be meant that perfect justice and purity which Job arrogated to himself, and which Eliphaz here denies to all men (Job 4:17).

Now we see the jealousy of Job's wisdom by his friend.

He was saying that Job had been known as a wise man on the earth, but his wisdom would die with him.

Job Chapter 4 Questions

1. Which of Job's friends spoke first?

2. What was he asking Job for in verse 2?
3. What do we learn about Job from verse 3?
4. In verse 4, we find of Job's great concern for whom?
5. Job's friend was telling Job that he was good at _____ advice, but not good at _____ advice.
6. What did Job's friend believe caused this calamity to come on Job?
7. Who was Job's confidence in?
8. What was his hope?
9. The friend had begun to insinuate that Job had _____.
10. Verse 7 was, probably, the same thing that _____ had said to those in trouble.
11. By the _____ of God they perish.
12. Who is the Judge of all the world?
13. Who was Job's friend relating him to in verse 10?
14. The whelps, in verse 11, were speaking of whom?
15. What were two different things that verse 12 and 13 could be speaking of?
16. What two very different sources do dreams and visions come from?
17. When this happened to Eliphaz, what effect did it have on him?
18. Who will Satan use to get to do us hurt?
19. What is the key to where this spirit came from?
20. Who had said that Job was righteous?
21. From everything he said and did, we can conclude that Job was an _____ man.
22. Who were all of these lies from?
23. What are angels?
24. What was Job's friend saying about his relationship with God?
25. God did trust _____.
26. What was the reason for the attack of Satan on Job?

27. All flesh _____.

28. God has no regard for the flesh of man. He regards the _____ _____ _____ the flesh.

29. The last verse of this lesson reveals the _____ of Job's friend.