

### Zophar's Second Speech and Job's Response

#### Job 20-21

**Job 20:1- 3** - *"Then Zophar the Naamathite replied: <sup>2</sup> 'My troubled thoughts prompt me to answer because I am greatly disturbed. <sup>3</sup> I hear a rebuke that dishonors me, and my understanding inspires me to reply.'"*

#### Background Notes

In Zophar's opening statements, it's obvious that he is very angry. He feels that Job has insulted him. *"I hear a rebuke that dishonors me, and my understanding inspires me to reply"* (v3). To what is Zophar specifically referring? Job had warned his three so-called friends that if they continued to persecute him, they themselves were in danger of the judgment of God. Look back at the end of chapter 19: *"If you say, 'How we will hound him, since the root of the trouble lies in him, you should fear the sword yourselves; for wrath will bring punishment by the sword, and then you will know that there is judgment.'"*

In response to that warning, Zophar angrily accuses Job of insulting him. Zophar doesn't back off one bit. In his second speech he maintains his incorrect premise that Job is suffering because he is somehow involved in personal sin.

#### Doctrinal Points

##### 1. In his second speech, Zophar angrily points the finger at Job.

In verses 4-29, it's hard to miss the fact that Zophar is pointing his finger at Job, and maintaining that Job is in the category of the "wicked." Zophar's thesis is that the life of the wicked is short.

**Job 20:4-11** – *"Surely you know how it has been from of old, ever since mankind was placed on the earth, <sup>5</sup> that the mirth of the wicked is brief, the joy of the godless lasts but a moment. <sup>6</sup> Though the pride of the godless person reaches to the heavens and his head touches the clouds, <sup>7</sup> he will perish forever, like his own dung; those who have seen him will say, 'Where is he?' <sup>8</sup> Like a dream he flies away, no more to be found, banished like a vision of the night. <sup>9</sup> The eye that saw him will not see him again; his place will look on him no more. <sup>10</sup> His children must make amends to the poor; his own hands must give back his wealth. <sup>11</sup> The youthful vigor that fills his bones will lie with him in the dust."*

Notice how Zophar implies that Job is a proud man, but that he will be brought down (v6-7). He implies that Job has oppressed the poor in order to gain his wealth, and he'll have to pay it back (v10)! He warns Job that he'll be taken before his time, because he's in the camp of the wicked (v11). According to Zophar, the life of the wicked is short.

**Job 20:12-19** - *“Though evil is sweet in his mouth and he hides it under his tongue, <sup>13</sup> though he cannot bear to let it go and lets it linger in his mouth, <sup>14</sup> yet his food will turn sour in his stomach; it will become the venom of serpents within him. <sup>15</sup> He will spit out the riches he swallowed; God will make his stomach vomit them up. <sup>16</sup> He will suck the poison of serpents; the fangs of an adder will kill him.*

*<sup>17</sup> He will not enjoy the streams, the rivers flowing with honey and cream. <sup>18</sup> What he toiled for he must give back uneaten; he will not enjoy the profit from his trading. <sup>19</sup> For he has oppressed the poor and left them destitute; he has seized houses he did not build” (v12-19).*

Using vivid descriptions of the short-lived riches and pleasures of wicked people, Zophar argues that the riches and the pleasure of the wicked is temporary. And what Zophar describes is true - but **it was not true for Job!** Job was not wicked. Notice how Zophar implies again that Job has oppressed the poor, and obtained his wealth by grabbing land (v19). But this was completely false! In fact, God had declared that Job was blameless (Job 1:1)!

**Job 20:20-29** - *“Surely, he will have no respite from his craving; he cannot save himself by his treasure. <sup>21</sup> Nothing is left for him to devour; his prosperity will not endure. <sup>22</sup> In the midst of his plenty, distress will overtake him; the full force of misery will come upon him. <sup>23</sup> When he has filled his belly, God will vent his burning anger against him and rain down his blows on him. <sup>24</sup> Though he flees from an iron weapon, a bronze-tipped arrow pierces him. <sup>25</sup> He pulls it out of his back, the gleaming point out of his liver. Terrors will come over him. <sup>26</sup> Total darkness lies in wait for his treasures. A fire unfanned will consume him and devour what is left in his tent. <sup>27</sup> The heavens will expose his guilt; the earth will rise up against him. <sup>28</sup> A flood will carry off his house, rushing waters on the day of God’s wrath. <sup>29</sup> Such is the fate God allots the wicked, the heritage appointed for them by God.” (v20-29).*

In verses 20-29, Zophar’s main point is that the death of the wicked is painful. It’s not pleasant to think about the painful death of verses 24-26. It’s clear that Zophar is pointing the finger at Job, because Job has lost all of his possessions in one day, and is living in bodily pain (v28). Zophar is clearly putting Job in the category of the wicked, who are under the wrath of God.

In his second speech, Zophar angrily points the finger at Job.

## Chapter 21

### 2. In his response to Zophar, Job systematically proves that Zophar is wrong.

**Job 21:1-6** - *“Then Job replied: <sup>2</sup> “Listen carefully to my words; let this be the consolation you give me. <sup>3</sup> Bear with me while I speak, and after I have spoken, mock on. <sup>4</sup> “Is my complaint directed to a human being? Why should I not be impatient? <sup>5</sup> Look at me and be appalled; clap your hand over your mouth. <sup>6</sup> When I think about this, I am terrified; trembling seizes my body.”*

In the first six verses Job is speaking to all three of his would-be counselors, because “*your*” in verse 2 is plural. Job’s complaint is not with them, or with any other person. Job’s problem is that God is not giving him any insight into why he is suffering. So, he says, at least his three friends could show a little sympathy for his horrible physical condition.

**Job 21:7-13** - *“Why do the wicked live on, growing old and increasing in power? <sup>8</sup> They see their children established around them, their offspring before their eyes. <sup>9</sup> Their homes are safe and free from fear; the rod of God is not on them. <sup>10</sup> Their bulls never fail to breed; their cows calve and do not miscarry. <sup>11</sup> They send forth their children as a flock; their little ones dance about. <sup>12</sup> They sing to the music of timbrel and lyre; they make merry to the sound of the pipe. <sup>13</sup> They spend their years in prosperity and go down to the grave in peace.”*

Job shoots down Zophar’s position in short order. In verses 7-13 he tells Zophar that he is clearly wrong when he states that the lives of the wicked are always short, and that their pleasures are always short-lived, and that their deaths are always painful. The evidence is obvious. Many wicked people prosper, live long and trouble-free lives, and die in peace, without suffering. “Hello! Where have you been? Wake up and look around!” In these verses Job says that even those who openly reject God prosper, and God allows it. *“But their prosperity is not in their own hands, so I stand aloof from the plans of the wicked.”*

This doesn’t mean that Job approves of the way the wicked prosper. That’s just the way it is, he says. And it doesn’t mean that Job doesn’t believe in a judgment after death. Then Job asks how often do the wicked really die young, or how often were the wicked really blown away like chaff? *“Yet how often is the lamp of the wicked snuffed out? How often does calamity come upon them, the fate God allots in his anger? How often are they like straw before the wind, like chaff swept away by a gale?” (v17-18).*

And if Zophar and the others say that the punishment for the wicked would come on their children, then Job responds, *“Let their own eyes see their destruction; let them drink the cup of the wrath of the Almighty. For what do they care about the families they leave behind when their allotted months come to an end?” (v20-21).* In other words, “This is not real punishment for the wicked. They won’t see it, because they will be dead.”

Job’s friends wanted to put God into their own theological box - and that was wrong! In verses 22-26 Job told Zophar that he (and the other two) weren’t allowing God to be sovereign over the life and death of each individual. *“Can anyone teach knowledge to God, since He judges even the highest? <sup>23</sup> One person dies in full vigor, completely secure and at ease, <sup>24</sup> well nourished in body, bones rich with marrow. <sup>25</sup> Another dies in bitterness of soul, never having enjoyed anything good. <sup>26</sup> Side by side they lie in the dust, and worms cover them both.”*

**Job 21:27-34** - *“I know full well what you are thinking, the schemes by which you would wrong me. <sup>28</sup> You say, ‘Where now is the house of the great, the tents where the wicked lived?’ <sup>29</sup> Have you never questioned those who travel? Have you paid no regard to their accounts— <sup>30</sup> that the wicked are spared from the day of calamity, that they are delivered from the day of wrath? <sup>31</sup> Who denounces their conduct to their face? Who repays them for what they have done? <sup>32</sup> They are*

*carried to the grave, and watch is kept over their tombs. <sup>33</sup> The soil in the valley is sweet to them. Everyone follows after them, and a countless throng goes before them. <sup>34</sup> “So how can you console me with your nonsense? Nothing is left of your answers but falsehood!”*

In verses 27-34 Job challenges his friends not to be so provincial in their thinking. Look at the big picture! Ask around! If they do, they'll be hard pressed to prove their premise. Job's friends wanted to put God into their own theological box - and that was wrong!

In his second response to Zophar, Job systematically proves that Zophar is wrong.

## **Practical Application**

### **Refute false theories with irrefutable evidence!**

In these two chapters we see that Job refuted Zophar's theories with solid, irrefutable examples. There were many examples of unrighteous folks who were living long and prosperous lives, and then dying in peace. Zophar's theory was clearly wrong, and the evidence refuted the claim.

We, too, should be ready to refute false theories with irrefutable evidence. What about the false theory that dinosaurs lived millions of years ago? We can refute it with irrefutable evidence: soft tissue, blood vessels and DNA molecules exist in dinosaur fossils that could not possibly have remained intact after millions of years! And radioactive carbon dates are recent – not millions of years!

There's clear evidence that dinosaurs were contemporary with humans. And that's evidence of big problems with the theory of evolution. Many more examples could be given. Check them out!

Be ready to refute false theories with irrefutable evidence!