

Session 4

Job and His Three Friends: The Introduction of Eliphaz

Job 4–5

Scriptures

Job 4:1

Job 42:7

James 3:1

Jeremiah 23:16

Job 4:2–11

Job 4:12–17

Colossians 2:18

Ezekiel 13:1–3

Jeremiah 23:25–26

Genesis 40:8

I John 4:1

Deuteronomy 13:1–3

Job 4:18–21

Job 5:1–27

John 16:8

Hebrews 4:12

We now come to line D in the structure of Job: D | iii. 1 —xxxi. 40. Job and his friends.

It consists of twenty-nine chapters. Since God ultimately reproves Job's words as well as his three friends, one might ask why such an extensive record is given to speeches that the Lord later declares as completely full of error. The answer lies in the fact that the Lord desires to prove that human reason and rationality, no matter how developed it is, and no matter how much time it is given to advance its case, will always come short of any true understanding of the ways of God and His will for man.

Thus, the Lord allows sufficient time for those involved in the trial, to prove that human wisdom, no matter how developed, nor even how religious it is, can release the sinner. This can be done solely by God's Word.

Bullinger's Notes on The Book of Job

We come, therefore, at once to the next member, "D." It is a large one, consisting of twenty-nine chapters. It contains and records the conference of Job with his three friends; the design of which is to show that man, apart from Divine revelation; has not true wisdom and cannot find out or know God: and cannot understand or know himself. Until man has this knowledge, he will neither justify God nor condemn himself. He may understand Jehovah's "works," but His "ways" cannot be known. His works are seen by all; but His ways are secret and hidden, and can be known only by revelation to His People. Hence we read (*Ps. [103:7]*):

He made known His WAYS unto Moses, His ACTS unto the children of Israel.

Ample time is given to Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar so that every ounce of human wisdom is given a reasonable chance to help Job in his circumstances.

Thus, for twenty-nine chapters human opinion, speculation, and reason are allowed every viable opportunity to prove themselves totally capable of delivering a man afflicted by Satan, and blind to his own religious pride.

Dr. Bullinger's notes on the Book of Job give us an overview of the general mode of the human analysis of Job's problem, by his three friends: Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.

Bullinger's Notes on The Book of Job
Eliphaz reasons on human experience.

Bildad reasons on human tradition; while

Zophar reasons on human merit.

If we look at the three colloquies as a whole, the one great lesson for ourselves is this: that man with all his wisdom, and all his powers, cannot get to know God, and cannot meet man's needs. He can neither satisfy the righteous claims of God, nor heal the wounds of the sinner's heart.

All these reasonings were wrong in their conclusions, as they were false in their logic. They reasoned from the particular to the general: i.e., they argued that what they had seen and observed in their own respective spheres was true universally.

They may speak truly of the "works" of God, and of what they had seen in the case of individuals; but it did not follow that they could gather from these few cases what was the law which regulated the "ways" and dealings of God with mankind.

Eliphaz is the first to answer Job's complaints. His three utterances are given (1) chaps. iv., v., (2) chap. xv., and (3) chap. xxii.

His reasonings, as we have said, are based on human experience. He argued from the particular to the general, and hence arrived at a wrong conclusion. He based his argument on his own experience. "As I have seen" is the burden of his speech. As he had "seen" that it was the wicked who always suffer, and the righteous who prosper, so he concluded that as Job was suffering he must therefore have committed some dreadful sin. At first he only insinuates this. He asks Job if he had not noticed the same thing himself.

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

Eliphaz spoke before the other two either because he was the eldest, or perhaps because he viewed himself the most knowledgeable. Either way, as the first to speak, Eliphaz no doubt considered himself the one most able and skilled to set Job right. Yet as will be later revealed, Eliphaz is the only one of Job's three friends, whom the Lord directly calls out by name, and publicly reproveth for speaking things, concerning both Job, and Himself, which were not right.

Job 42:7 And it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.

Since Eliphaz had placed himself first, and viewed himself as the one with the greatest wisdom, the Lord singled him out for being the greatest and most foolish sinner.

He had publicly lifted himself up because of his religious pride, which also he ironically accused Job of. Fittingly the Lord would publicly address Eliphaz as the one who manifested the greatest ignorance.

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, Job 4:1
Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said. When Job was done cursing his day, and had finished his doleful ditty on that subject, then Eliphaz took the opportunity of speaking, not being able to bear any longer with Job and his behaviour under his afflictions; Eliphaz was one of Job's three friends that came to visit him, Job 2:11; very probably he might be the senior man, or a man of the greatest authority and power; a most respectable person,

had in great esteem and reverence among men, and by these his friends, and therefore takes upon him to speak first; or it may be it was agreed among themselves that he should begin the dispute with Job; and we find, that in the close of this controversy the Lord speaks to him by name, and to him only, Job 42:7;

When men take upon themselves the senior position, as Eliphaz did, and deliver what they think as righteous correction, but are ultimately proven wrong, then they will also need to bear the greatest judgment.

Hence, if men are led by pride to think themselves the most knowledgeable, then they also endanger themselves for receiving the greatest heavenly correction.

Eliphaz was supremely overconfident in his assertions, though he possessed no genuine truth, nor hidden revelation, in anything he said, to actually assist Job in his troubles. By taking the highest seat, he attracted the Lord's attention, and as such became worthy of the most public correction and chastisement. He foolishly thought himself a teacher of God, when in fact his true condition, was actually lower, than the one (Job) he sought to instruct.

James 3:1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

Benson Commentary, Jas. 3:1–2

*Be not many masters—*Διδασκαλοὶ, teachers. Let none of you rashly, and without proper qualifications, undertake the office of teachers of others; an office into which many are ready to intrude themselves, without being called of God to it. "The great desire which the Jewish Christians, to whom this letter was written, had to become teachers in the church after their conversion, and to inculcate the obligation of the law of Moses, is noticed by St. Paul, 1 Timothy 1:7. *Desiring to be teachers of the law, &c.*—These teachers of the law in the Christian Church were the great corrupters of the gospel." Knowing that—*If we err, we shall receive the greater condemnation*—On account of our taking upon us an office for which we are not qualified, and in the exercise of which more is required of us, in many respects, than of others in a more private station of life.

It is wisdom to know when God has appointed us to speak in His name, but also sometimes even greater wisdom to refrain when God has not given us such an honor.

Ultimately, to properly speak for the Lord, the Lord must first prompt the message, since it is not given to any man to speak on God's behalf, without first receiving the heavenly revelation, concerning what the Lord actually desires spoken.

Hence, no man is given the freedom to come in God's name, or speak on His behalf, without first being called and appointed for such a purpose.

If this principle is not adhered to, then you can be certain that much that is spoken by those who think they know God, does not come from Him.

Jeremiah 23:16 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD.

Benson Commentary, Jer. 23:16

Thus saith the Lord, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets—People are under no religious obligation to hear what is contrary to the revealed will of God, or to obey those who enjoin things which that does not require. *They make you vain*—Or rather, *they deceive you*, as the words may be properly rendered: or they make you trust to and

undertake vain things. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were fed by these false prophets with the vain hopes of being able to drive the Babylonians from their walls, and raise the siege of the city; yea, and of shaking off the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar entirely, and being quite free for the future. *They speak a vision of their own heart*—A pretended vision which they have framed themselves.

Eliphaz, fully confident in his own fleshly and human rationale, begins the first of his discourses recorded in chapters 4, 5, 15, and 22.

Job 4:2–11 If we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved? but who can withhold himself from speaking?

³ *Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands.*

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

⁵ *But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled.*

⁶ *Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?*

⁷ *Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?*

⁸ *Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.*

⁹ *By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed.*

¹⁰ *The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions, are broken.*

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

Eliphaz very narrowly argues the basis of Job's sin, by what he has seen.

He corrects Job for being a teacher of others, who now, in his own distress, has not even the answers to help himself. He presumes to know Job's guilt, but is woefully ignorant of the wicked forces that are involved in his life.

The real truth also is that Job did not plow iniquity, nor did he sow wickedness, as Eliphaz so erringly and caustically implied.

Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.

Job 4:12–17 Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof.

¹³ *In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men,*

¹⁴ *Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake.*

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

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,*

¹⁷ *Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?*

Because we know that Eliphaz had spoken of God that which was not right, then it is hard to hold any confidence in his declared vision (v. 12).

Hence, even if the Lord had given him revelation, which it is abundantly clear He had not, then it is safe to assume that he also could never possess any true interpretation.

It is also worth noting that many in the religious realm have claimed to see things which they actually have never seen, simply because of being puffed up with human conceit and fleshly pride.

As pride will often deceive all those who are driven by it, to falsely presume that they have received something from the Lord, when actually it has only come from their own puffed-up fleshly mind.

Colossians 2:18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.

Benson Commentary, Col. 2:18

Intruding into things which he hath not seen—With great presumption, and pretending to discover wonderful secrets, relating to their various ranks, subordinations, and offices. “The apostle’s meaning,” says Macknight, “is, that the false teachers, of whom he speaks, presumptuously penetrated into the secrets of the invisible world, and talked of them with an air of certainty, without having any knowledge of the things which they affirmed; particularly that the angels intercede with God for men, and that to worship them is acceptable to God.” *Vainly puffed up by his fleshly*—His corrupt and carnal; *mind*—With the conceit of things which it is impossible he should understand, and a desire of introducing novelties into religion.

It is true that the Lord gives men visions, but it is equally true that many who claim to have seen visions, have actually experienced nothing at all.

Undoubtedly, a man may say that God has spoken to him, but this does not mean that he speaks the truth—since many have proclaimed, and do proclaim even today, that they speak for the Lord, when in fact, the Lord has never, even remotely spoken to them.

Ezekiel 13:1–3 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

² Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD;

³ Thus saith the LORD GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!

So also, as we read in:

Jeremiah 23:25–26 I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed.

²⁶ How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart.

Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible, Jer. 23:26

How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? . . . To invent such lies, and deceive the people, and turn them away from God; agreeably to the preceding and following verses: this shows that this was not through ignorance and inadvertence; it was a meditated and studied thing by them; they contrived it in their hearts, and they were resolute and bent upon it, and took much delight and pleasure in it; their hearts were in it, and it was in them to do as they did; and in this way they had been long, but should continue no longer.

Just as certain that Eliphaz was never given a vision, it is also certain that he was never appointed to be God’s spokesman.

Sincerity is no guarantee for truth, even if many are deceived to believe, that human and fleshly thought, is divine revelation.

Genesis 40:8 And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you.

All who claim to speak by the Spirit of the Lord should be tried, to (and) discern whether what is claimed to have come from the Lord, actually has.

There is also absolutely nothing in God's Word that implies, and surely does not command, that Christians should receive all who come in Christ's name, without first careful spiritual and biblical scrutiny, to determine if they truly are who they claim to be.

For this reason every spirit—and/or every man who claims to speak by the Spirit—should be examined, in order that spiritual impostors, do not gain any preeminence or spiritually respected position, in Christ's church.

I John 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I John 4:1

Beloved, believe not every spirit—Do not confide implicitly in everyone who professes to be under the influences of the Holy Spirit. Compare Matthew 24:4–5. The true and the false teachers of religion alike claimed to be under the influence of the Spirit of God, and it was of importance that all such pretensions should be examined. It was not to be admitted because anyone claimed to have been sent from God that therefore he was sent. Every such claim should be subjected to the proper proof before it was conceded. All pretensions to divine inspiration, or to being authorised teachers of religion, were to be examined by the proper tests, because there were many false and delusive teachers who set up such claims in the world.

The last point worth considering is why the Lord even allows false prophets and false teachers to remain in this world and does not reveal them as the spiritual counterfeits they really are. The book of Deuteronomy details the answer.

***Deuteronomy 13:1–3 If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder,
2 And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them;
3 Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.***

Matthew Poole's Commentary, Deut. 13:3

Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet; not receive his doctrine, though the sign come to pass. For although when such a sign or wonder foretold did not follow or come to pass, it was a sign of a false prophet, as is said, Deu 18:22, yet when it did come to pass, it was no sufficient or infallible sign of a true one, especially in such a case when he brings in new gods. The reason of the difference is, because many causes must concur to make a thing good and true, but any one failure is sufficient to make a thing bad or false. And particularly there are many signs, yea, such as men may think to be wonders, which may be wrought by evil spirits, God so permitting it for divers wise and just reasons, not only for the trial of the good, as it here follows, but also for the punishment of ungodly men, who would not receive Divine truths, though attested by many evident and unquestionable miracles, and therefore are most justly exposed to these temptations to believe lies.

Proveth you, i.e. trieth your faith, and love, and obedience, examineth your sincerity by your constancy. See Matthew 24:24 2 Thessalonians 2:11 Revelation 13:14.

Ultimately, it is by false prophets, and dreamers of dreams, that the Lord's people are tried, and spiritually proven if they hold true affection for the Lord or not.

To actually know the Lord, a man must first recognize His Spirit. Through then recognizing the Spirit of truth, it is easy to discern who really comes in the Lord's name, and who does not.

Job 4:18–21 Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly:

¹⁹ *How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth?*

²⁰ *They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish for ever without any regarding it.*

²¹ *Doth not their excellency which is in them go away? they die, even without wisdom.*

It is unsurprising that Eliphaz after speaking of his own supposed vision from the Lord, now casts doubt on the Lord putting trust in His servants—as if God would reveal revelation to him, but then exclude others from functioning in a similar ministry.

By this it is observed that pride often prompts men to believe that they alone can be used by God, when in fact, if in pride, they actually have no true connection to Him.

An examination of Eliphaz's words reveals, that all he could really do is speak of God, simply because nothing in his words or his professed wisdom indicates that he was actually sent to speak for God.

No doubt, he was a religious man who liked to talk, but in the end, had very little profitable to say.

And though there are small elements of truth in Eliphaz's words, nothing he said was truly inspired by the Holy Spirit.

This is an important point to remember when reading his claims against Job, lest a small element of truth spoken by him is confused to be the full truth.

It is also true that there are many who hold fragments of a knowledge of God, but in the end possess nothing truly profitable, which can assist in strengthening the spiritual lives of others.

Likewise, it is quite amazing that men like Eliphaz can utter so much concerning the Lord, when in fact the Lord has inspired nothing of what is spoken.

Moreover, partial truth, or spiritually inappropriate truth, is actually not really truth at all.

Job 5:1–27 Call now, if there be any that will answer thee; and to which of the saints wilt thou turn?

² *For wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one.*

³ *I have seen the foolish taking root: but suddenly I cursed his habitation.*

⁴ *His children are far from safety, and they are crushed in the gate, neither is there any to deliver them.*

⁵ *Whose harvest the hungry eateth up, and taketh it even out of the thorns, and the robber swalloweth up their substance.*

⁶ *Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground;*

⁷ *Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.*

- ⁸ *I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause:*
⁹ *Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number:*
¹⁰ *Who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields:*
¹¹ *To set up on high those that be low; that those which mourn may be exalted to safety.*
¹² *He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise.*
¹³ *He taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.*
¹⁴ *They meet with darkness in the day time, and grope in the noonday as in the night.*
¹⁵ *But he saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty.*
¹⁶ *So the poor hath hope, and iniquity stoppeth her mouth.*
¹⁷ *Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty:*
¹⁸ *For he maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole.*
¹⁹ *He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.*
²⁰ *In famine he shall redeem thee from death: and in war from the power of the sword.*
²¹ *Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue: neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh.*
²² *At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh: neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth.*
²³ *For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee.*
²⁴ *And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace; and thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin.*
²⁵ *Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great, and thine offspring as the grass of the earth.*
²⁶ *Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season.*
²⁷ *Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good.*

Through Eliphaz's failed ministry to convict Job of sin, we have the first example of how the reasoning of man, assists nothing in the affairs of God—that human wisdom and supposition cannot convict men of sin, regardless of the robe and garment of religiosity put around it.

For this work it must be God's Holy Spirit, Who alone is able to produce true conviction in the sinner's heart, and therefore prompt him to both recognize and repent for his sin against the Lord.

John 16:8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

In the end, Eliphaz's confidence in his own self-righteous ability did absolutely nothing to help Job's suffering, or to convince him of sin. This same result will be seen in all Eliphaz's other speeches recorded in chapters 15 and 22.

Because Eliphaz was never led by God's Holy Spirit, he was totally incapable of accomplishing a work that the Lord alone must do.

Ultimately, it is God's Word, spoken through the influence of the Holy Spirit, which alone is able to pierce the sinner's heart and bring him to a state of repentance.

It is this same Word of God, spoken by the inspiration of God, which lays open the true inner feelings and thoughts of the human heart, a task that absent divine revelation, cannot be accomplished through human reason and supposition.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Heb. 4:12

Sharper than any two-edged sword—Literally, “two-mouthed” sword—*δίστομον distomon*. . . . The comparison of the Word of God to a sword or to an arrow, is designed to show its power of penetrating the heart . . . The idea is that of piercing, or penetrating; and the meaning here is, that the Word of God reaches the “heart”—the very center of action, and lays open the motives and feelings of the man.

