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## A Wrong View Of Death

September 2, 2018 - Job 13-15 - <https://epmkg.com/job13-15>

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**13:20–14:22 What is it God has against Job?** There are two thrusts in Job's address to God here. The first (13:19–27) is a demand that God will bring out into the open what he has against Job; the second (13:28–14:22) is, quite paradoxically, that he will leave Job alone to die in peace. These two pleas have been heard before from Job.

**19–27** Job first summons God to enter into a lawsuit with him with the purpose of pronouncing a verdict of 'innocent' upon Job (19). He sets two conditions for fairness (20): first God must *withdraw* his *hand* from him, and secondly, he must *stop frightening* him with his *terrors* (21). Only then may God begin the proceedings, or if he prefers, Job will do so (22). In the language of the lawcourt, Job asks for a list of charges against him (23). He is, of course, not admitting to any crime but means 'what you claim are my sins'. It seems to Job that God is making much ado about nothing (25), punishing him for childhood errors (26) and, as we have heard before (*e.g.* 3:23), constricting and confining him (27).

**14:1–22** The focus changes here from Job himself (as in 13:20–28) to humankind generally. Job is, of course, still speaking of himself but, as he has done before, projects his own feelings and experiences onto all humanity (*cf.* 3:20; 7:1–10). The point of this chapter is that human beings are too insignificant to deserve the kind of divine scrutiny Job himself is experiencing. Since humans are so short-lived, God could reasonably overlook their sins; they can hardly challenge the world order (4).

**7–12** The contrast between the *hope* of a tree and the hope of humankind for a life beyond death underlines the thought of v 5. Human life has a fixed end and cannot be extended. A tree can hope for new life (7); for humans there is none *till the heavens are no more* (12), which is never, as far as Job knows. Job's thought trembles on the edge of a hope for resurrection: if only Sheol could be not a final resting place from which there is no exit but a hiding place from God's scrutiny and anger (13), a place of *hard service* which would one day come to an end (14)! If only it could be a place from which God would gladly bring human beings back, having stopped searching for any sins they might have committed, and having *sealed up* their *offences in a bag* (16–17). But the hope is an empty one, says Job, and he asks, '*If a man dies, will he live again?*' (14). No! As mountains are worn down and the soil is washed away, even the firmest hope of humans is eroded by the bitter reality of death (18–19). Humans have no hope but to be 'overpowered' finally by God (20) and brought to Sheol in loneliness, not even knowing what goes on above the ground, even if their children come into honour (21). In their isolation they feel *only the pain* of their *own body* (22). The Christian hope of the resurrection, in its own way, fulfils Job's trembling

wish. Even though Job would have been prepared to wait an eternity for his vindication, in his story it is what happens in this life that matters.

Something dramatic has happened in this speech. After all Job's demands to be put out of his misery as soon as possible, and after all his assertion that it is hopeless to dispute with God, he finds himself doing the dangerous and the impossible thing. Job now formally obliges God to give an account of the crimes for which he is being punished. And that demand, now that it has been made, cannot be taken back. Job has not gone to court to plead for his life or to beg for mercy, but to clear his name. He has no faith in the goodness of God and little faith in God's justice, but he believes so strongly in his own innocence that he is convinced that sooner or later he will be vindicated.

All this language of lawsuits is metaphor, of course. But that does not mean it is just decorative language. It is the language of feeling, of the feeling of what it is like to be out of harmony with God. After a lifetime of godly living, Job has found his life shattered, and he has to learn a new and more bitter language to give voice to the discord in his universe. Now it must be the language of compulsion and division, of contest and defeat.

### ***15:1–35 Eliphaz's second speech: 'Beware the fate of the wicked'***

In the first part of this speech (2–16), Eliphaz addresses Job directly; in the second (17–35), he speaks more indirectly of the fate of the wicked. In this second section Eliphaz means to imply that Job is *not* such a man and so has no reason for fear. The whole speech is, therefore, meant as an encouragement to Job, and Eliphaz's position is the same as in his first speech (chs. 4–5).

In Eliphaz's view, Job has two faults: an intellectual and a moral one. The intellectual mistake is not to see that even the most perfect human is tainted in God's sight (14–16). Job does wrong in thinking himself above the ordinary (9) and in undermining the traditional theology in favour of his own experience (4). The moral fault is not to bear his suffering with bravery and patience. Whatever fault it was that earned him his suffering in the first place, it was minor compared with the wrong he is now doing in behaving as he does. It is a sin against himself (6) and against God (13) to speak so one-sidedly and bitterly about God. The very passion of Job's speech is proof that he is in the wrong (12–13); the truly wise person is calm in speech. Eliphaz does not reject Job as a person, but he cannot see that Job is not a man to be reasoned with. Job is a hurt and angry person; to invite him to patience is to demand him to be dishonest. If Job were to suffer in silence, he would be accepting God's judgment against him, and he can only do that if he abandons his integrity.

**15:2–16 Job's folly and sinful speech.** Job is not behaving like a wise man with his multitude of *empty notions* (2). What is more, in demanding vindication from God and in speaking of God's destructive power as he has (perhaps Eliphaz is thinking of 12:13–25),

Job is being irreligious (*you even undermine piety*; 4). It is this error (*your sin*; 5), rather than true theology, that determines what Job is saying.

**7–16** Eliphaz says again that Job is not behaving wisely but is letting his tongue lead him into sin. For all his claim to knowledge (*eg.* 12:3; 13:1), he is not wise like the first man, Adam (for references to the wise first man on the holy mountain of God see Ezk. 28:12–14). Nor has Job been a listener in the heavenly *council* of God (8) like the prophets who know God’s secret plans (Je. 23:18, 22); nor does he have the wisdom that the friends have because they are older than him (10). It is no shame to be a little imperfect; not even the angels (*holy ones*) are perfect (15); but because he cannot be absolutely perfect, Job must expect a certain amount of suffering. **16** Eliphaz is not insulting Job personally when he speaks of humans as *vile and corrupt*; it is simply a generalization, however extreme, about the human race compared with God’s purity.

**15:17–35 The miserable life and the fearsome fate of the wicked.** In this picture of the life history of the wicked man, the first section (20–26) concerns his anxiety as he lives in fear of death, and the second section (27–35) deals with his final destiny, that he will die before his time (31–33). All along, Eliphaz has been maintaining that Job is not one of the truly wicked, and so this description is precisely what does not apply to him. Job has not suffered *torment all his days* (20), and he is not, like them, hatching *trouble, evil and deceit* (35). He ought to recognize, then, that he does not belong to the *company of the godless* (34) and take care that he does not join them by his hostility toward God (25).<sup>1</sup> There is, of course, a good deal of wishful thinking about both main themes in this picture.

## Job Rebukes his Friends

### Job 13:1–12

Job has just painted a graphic picture of God’s wisdom and might. He assures his friends that his knowledge of these things is not inferior in the least to theirs. Yet his theological knowledge has offered him no solution to the question which is haunting him, *viz.*, Why am I suffering? (13:1–2).

In spite of his knowledge of God’s wisdom and might, Job desires to speak directly to the Almighty, to reason with him. Surely God would understand him even if his friends did not.

<sup>1</sup> Clines, D. J. A. (1994). Job. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., pp. 469–471). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

Job calls his friends “forgers of lies.” Literally, they are falsehood plasterers. They smear their lies over God’s government of the world so as to cover up all its hideous defects and give it a fair appearance. They were “physicians of no value” for they were trying to deal with a problem which they were not competent to treat. Since the friends could not help Job, their silence would be the most helpful thing they could do. Job is hurling back at the friends the concluding words of Zophar’s last speech: “Even a fool, when he holds his peace, is counted wise” (13:3–5).

Job now goes on the attack against his friends. He calls upon them to listen to his argument against them. First, he charges them with partiality for God. They are acting like advocates for God. In so doing they were speaking “unrighteously” and “deceitfully” in behalf of the Lord. In their partiality for God they were ignoring the facts in Job’s case. They had no personal knowledge of any guilt in Job’s life, yet they assumed that guilt. They took God’s part in the argument, not because they had facts to back them, but because of superficial religiosity bordering on superstition (13:6–8).

What if God should search out the hearts of the three friends? Would they be able to deceive God as they had deceived their fellow man? God is so righteous and impartial that he would rebuke them for their misrepresentation of the facts even in his defense. These phony friends would stand paralyzed before God should their hearts come under scrutiny (13:9–11).

Job accuses the friends of using cliches—“memorable sayings”—which were nothing but “proverbs of ashes,” i.e., worthless. The great arguments which they had used in defense of God turn out to be “defenses of clay” (13:12).

### **Job Challenges God’s Wisdom**

#### **Job 13:13–22**

Job senses that the friends were now anxious to jump back to the attack. He orders them to hold their peace so that he may have his say. In the Hebrew the first person pronoun is emphatic. He is willing to take whatever risk there may be to voice his complaint against God. He knows that what he is about to say will place his life in jeopardy (13:13–14).

Job 13:15 as translated in the KJV is one of the greatest statements of faith in the entire Bible: “Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him; even so I will defend my own ways before Him.” As much as one might wish to cling to this rendering for sentimental reasons, the Hebrew rendering points in a different direction. Literally, the verse reads: “Behold, he shall slay me, I shall not wait; but my ways to his face I will defend.” Job anticipated that God would slay him for what he was about to say. He would not wait for a death in the more distant future. He would speak his piece and accept his punishment.

The very fact that Job wishes to defend his life before God indicates that he is a righteous man. A godless man would not dare to go before God. His sense of innocence would be his “salvation,” i.e., would secure him victory in his plea with God. To Job his consciousness of innocence was equivalent to innocence itself (13:16).

Job is certain of ultimate vindication. Therefore, he commands his friends to listen carefully to his cause. He declared: “I know that I shall be justified,” i.e., found to be in the right (cf. 11:2). Who then would dare to stand up to oppose him? If anyone could produce a case against him, Job pledges that he would forever keep quiet, i.e., he would stop pleading his innocence. He would simply give up the effort of self-defense and die (13:17–19).

In his present condition Job did not feel capable of appearing before the Lord in his own defense. He therefore makes two petitions: (1) that God would withdraw his hand far from him; and (2) that God would not terrorize him. If those conditions are met, Job would certainly be willing to answer any summons to stand before God either as respondent or as appellant. The choice is left in God’s hand. The silence of heaven caused Job to conclude that he must present his case before God in his present condition (13:20–22).

### **Job Laments his Condition**

#### **Job 13:23–28**

Job now confidently presents his case before God. His plea resembles that in chapters 7 and 10, but is more subdued and calm. Though he has not convinced his friends of his innocence, in his own mind he has settled the issue. In spite of the suspicions expressed by the friends, and in spite of the implications of his terrible suffering, he was convinced that he was innocent of any sin meriting such treatment. His boldness in presenting his case to God is viewed by Job as evidence of his innocence. A guilty man would have no inclination to plead his case before the righteous judge.

Job begins his plea with a demand to know the number of his sins. He wants to have heaven’s indictment against him made clear. He is referring to great transgressions, to recent transgressions, to transgressions which would call forth such affliction from God. Job does not claim to be sinless (cf. v. 26); what he denies is that he was guilty of any sins of such magnitude as to account for his calamities (13:23).

Job cannot understand why one as great as God would pursue such an insignificant one as he. Why does God continue to hide his face from him thus making it appear that Job was a terrible enemy? Compared to the living God, Job felt he was nothing but a driven leaf or dry stubble, figures for that which is light and worthless. Can God take delight in assailing such an unequal opponent? (13:24–25).

The heavenly judge had written a bitter decision regarding Job. He was making the patriarch to “inherit” the sins of his youth. Job freely admitted the errors he had committed in his youth. Job entertains the possibility that his present afflictions might be the punishment for his former sins which he had thought were forgiven long ago (13:26).

Again Job describes in three figures his physical plight. First, God had put his feet “in the stocks.” The figure is derived from the practice of tying a log of wood to a prisoner’s feet to make it difficult for him to move. Second, God watches all his paths. Job feels he is under constant surveillance. Third, God has drawn a line about the soles of his feet, i.e., he has prescribed his movements. Job is not permitted to overstep his bounds. His physical affliction and mental anguish restrict his ability to present an effective defense before God. Meanwhile, Job was like a worm-eaten object or a moth-eaten garment. He was slowly wasting away (13:27–28).

### **Job Reflects on the Human Predicament**

#### **Job 14:1–12**

In the last verse of chapter 13 Job thought of himself as one member of the human race. Now he begins to expound on the characteristics of this race. First, human-kind experience a short and difficult life. Since woman was under the judgment of sorrow (Gen 3:16), one who is “born of woman” is of necessity weak and doomed to trouble. His days are few, like a flower which soon withers, or a shadow which quickly passes across a path. Flowers in the Bible nearly always suggest a beauty which is short-lived. Job expresses amazement that the great omnipotent God singled out such a creature for judgment (14:1–3).

Second, sin holds sway in the human race. He expresses this thought in a wish that one could bring forth something clean out of something unclean. Here Job expresses the same thought as Paul that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” To be human is to possess a tendency to sin. Job wishes it were otherwise. The point is this: since sinfulness is the universal lot of mankind, should not God show some forbearance? How can he single out certain individuals for such horrendous affliction? (14:4).

Third, the length of each person’s life is predetermined by the Almighty. The Lord has “appointed his bounds that he cannot pass over.” Therefore, Job pleads that God will “look away” from man, i.e., leave him alone, that they may have “rest.” This will enable him to “fulfill his days like a hired man.” Life at its best is hard. During the hot day the laborer has few joys. He looks forward to completing his day’s work. Only at the end of the day does he have rest. So man will find no rest until the end of life’s toilsome day (14:5–6).

Fourth, man’s life inevitably terminates in death. His destiny is sadder than that of a tree. If a tree is cut down, it will sprout again. The roots may grow old, and the tree die from lack of moisture. The scent of water, however, causes the old dead stump to put forth sprigs

like a plant. On the other hand, man dies and lies prostrate. He expires and disappears from the earth. His death is like that of a lake or river which dries up. The waters do not return. So man lies down and does not arise. The death sleep will continue until “the heavens be no more,” i.e., throughout the duration of the present universe. Later Scripture (cf. Isa 26:19) will affirm that God will resurrect man from the grave at the end of the present age (14:7–12).

### **Job Contemplates the Here and the Hereafter**

#### **Job 14:13–22**

Job did not believe that death ended personal existence. One continued to existence in the spirit world, in a place called Sheol. Job prayed that Sheol would be for him a place of refuge where he might hide until God’s wrath had subsided. Should that happen, a resurrection might be possible in the future. Job frames this potential in a rhetorical question: “If a man die shall he live?” If only he could be sure there was another life, then he could bear up under all the affliction which he was experiencing. When his rest in Sheol was over, and God called, Job would be most happy to respond (14:13–15).

The momentary contemplation of a future life is followed by a picture of the severity with which God deals with man in this present life. God had focused his attention on Job. He scrutinized every step the patriarch made. He made note of every sin. All of Job’s transgressions were “sealed up in a bag” by the Lord, i.e., collected and preserved. Now God had brought down on Job the full force of his judgment. The present affliction is not due, then, to any one transgression, but is heaven’s response to Job’s sins collectively (14:16–17).

Man could not possibly survive this mighty outpouring of wrath. He must certainly perish. Even the greatest things in nature are eroded with the passing of time. Mountains eventually are shattered when their mighty rocks careen downhill. Turbulent waters eventually wear away the stones of the brook and wash away its banks. So God’s visitations wear down the hope of man. The “hope” here envisioned is the hope of survival and recovery from affliction (14:18–19).

In his contest with man God must forever prevail with the result that man passes from the scene. Job graphically describes death when he says, “you change his countenance.” At will God dispatches man to death. A father does not live to see his sons come to honor, nor brought low. Those in the abode of the dead know nothing of what is transpiring in the land of the living. Yet Job poetically depicts the dead man still suffering as his flesh rots away. In Sheol he knows only a mournful and dreary existence. Such was Job’s concept of what would happen to him after his death (14:20–22).

Thus concludes the first cycle of speeches which was triggered by Job's first complaint in chapter 3. The three friends saw in Job's lament an implied indictment of God. Each in his own way, the friends have tried to defend God. Eliphaz emphasized the moral purity of God and his universal goodness. Bildad insisted on the justice of God in his rule of the world. Zophar stressed the omniscience of God as it impacts on his dealings with men.

At first Job answered the arguments of his friends, for the most part, indirectly. Since his suffering was the silent refutation of all they said, the patriarch dwelled mainly on those afflictions. The words and demeanor of Zophar, however, drove Job to respond directly to the argument against him. He was not terrified to meet God. In fact, he yearned to present himself before the Almighty. He called upon God to make clear the sins for which he was being punished.

Job's fearless defense of his integrity even in the face of their arguments concerning the nature of God caused the friends to look elsewhere for arguments to silence him.

## chapter five

### The Second Cycle of Speeches

Job 15–21

The visitors have thus far failed to get Job to acknowledge the heinous sins which have called forth this terrible affliction from God. Their theological arguments, based on the attributes of God, have made no impression on the patriarch. Job has staunchly defended his innocence. He has accused his friends of being insincere partisans for God (13:4f.). They concluded, therefore, that any further arguments in this direction would be equally fruitless.

If the first cycle of speeches focused on God, the second focuses on man, especially the wicked man. History and experience provided ample proof of how such a man is treated in the providence of God. The nature of the argument causes the accusations of the friends to become more pointed. At the same time, Job begins to realize more keenly his alienation from the friends. They regarded all of his protestations of innocence as clever obfuscations. In his three responses to the friends, Job fights his way through self-pity to finally tackle head on the arguments which the three had raised.

### **SECOND SPEECH OF ELIPHAZ**

**Job 15:1–35**

As before, Eliphaz takes the lead. His speech sets the tone for the second round of the debate. His discourse builds on Job's last speech (chs. 12–14). Eliphaz first rebukes Job (vv. 2–16). Then he sets forth his understanding of the fate of a wicked man (vv. 17–35).

## **The Rebuke of Job**

### **Job 15:1–16**

The rebuke of Eliphaz alternates between accusing Job of pretentious boasting and charging him with irreverent reasoning.

#### **A. Attack on Job's Attitude (15:2–6)**

Eliphaz first attacks Job's contention (12:3; 13:2) that he had a wisdom beyond that of his friends. "Should a wise man make answer with knowledge of wind," i.e., empty and loud. A truly wise man should not need to "fill his belly with the east wind," i.e., puff himself up and then bring out of his mouth violent blasts of barren words. The east wind in the Near East was a figure for that which is violent and dry. A truly wise man would not attempt to reason with "unprofitable talk" or "speeches with which he can do no good" (15:2–3).

In the view of Eliphaz, Job had done worse than fill the debate with bluster. His words were impious. His conduct and logic tended to undercut the foundation of all devoutness and "fear," i.e., fear of the Lord. Job's outbursts hindered the quiet, scholarly and reverent meditation which normally characterized the interchange between scholars. Only a person who was inspired by deep evil within his own heart could speak in this fashion. Job had chosen to use the language of "the crafty." His protestations of innocence and complaints of unrighteousness in God were merely disingenuous pretenses put forward to divert attention from his own wickedness (15:4–5).

Job's utterances clearly proved his guilt. No other evidence was necessary. Eliphaz engages in a bit of circular reasoning regarding Job's wickedness. In v. 5 he argues that the patriarch's language and attitude are the result of his guilt. Then in v. 6 he argues that Job's guilt is proved by his language. Both verses support the contention of v. 4 that Job was undermining the foundations of religion (15:6).

#### **B. Rebuke of Job's Claim (15:7–11)**

Eliphaz returns to Job's claim of superior wisdom. He now interrogates the patriarch regarding the basis of that claim. Was Job the first man created? Such a man would naturally be endowed with preeminent wisdom as well as other superior attributes. Job, however, was not that man. Was Job that personified wisdom which was created before the earth? (cf. Prov 8:22ff.). Obviously not! Has Job been privy to the secret counsel of God? Was he a member of that divine council which surrounded God (Jer 23:22; Ps 89:7; Amos

3:7). Such a one would have full knowledge of the mysteries of God. Job obviously could not make a claim to this honor (15:7–8).

Eliphaz now abandons his biting sarcasm. In what specific respect did Job think that he knew more than his friends? Among those friends were men older than Job's father! Eliphaz probably is diplomatically referring to himself. Job has rejected the words of this graybeard even though his words contained "the consolations of God," i.e., comforting words from God. Eliphaz seems to be claiming that his first speech was inspired of God. He describes his previous words (ch. 4) as gentle and conciliatory. How can Job show such disrespect for the wisdom of one much older than he? (15:9–11).

### **C. Accusation of Job's Impertinence (15:12–16)**

Eliphaz next rebukes what he considers to be Job's violent and irreverent behavior towards God. Again the accuser resorts to questions to make his points. Why had Job allowed his heart to carry him away? The "heart" is the excited mind and strong emotion. Why did his eyes "wink" or flash with signs of violent emotion? How could he allow his spirit (i.e., anger) to be turned against God? How could he allow such words to go forth out of his mouth? The reference is not so much to the content of the words, but to the passionate manner in which they were uttered (15:12–13).

What was there in man to justify Job's passionate defense of his innocence? "What is man that he should be clean?" One born of woman has no righteousness. Even the "holy ones" (i.e., angels) do not deserve God's trust. The heavens are not clean in God's sight. If that is true, how much less could a lowly human being stand before God? Man is abominable and corrupt. His lust for evil is like that of a thirsty man for water (15:14–16).

## **Defense of Traditional Theology**

### **Job 15:17–35**

Having concluded his personal attack, Eliphaz next takes up the principles which Job had set forth regarding God. Perhaps emboldened by the destitute condition of Job, the Temanite assumed a lofty tone.

### **A. The Source of his Theology (15:17–19)**

"That which I have seen I will declare." Eliphaz attributed part of his first address to revelation (cf. 4:12ff.). It is not clear here whether the verb "see" refers to prophetic vision, or to natural observation. In any case, the doctrine set forth by Eliphaz was nothing new. What he has come to understand about God was the consistent theology of wise men throughout the generations. This theological tradition had never been corrupted by the

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inclusion of foreign philosophies. By rejecting such teaching, Job was showing disdain for the special tradition of his people, and he was espousing alien teaching (15:17–19).

### **B. The Essence of his Theology (15:20–24)**

According to the tradition of the ages, “the wicked man travails in pain all of his days.” The years of the “oppressor” are appointed by God, i.e., at the appropriate time such a one will be cut off from the land of the living. Eliphaz is suggesting that Job is being treated like a tyrant, one who strikes fear into the hearts of others. Divine justice, however, makes such oppressors imagine that they hear the sound of coming destruction. Eventually the day comes in the midst of his prosperity when “the spoiler” comes upon him and he is destroyed (15:20–21).

The wicked man anticipates a calamity from which he shall not escape. He feels that he is marked for the sword, i.e., the avenging sword of God. He anticipates the time when he shall be a hungry wanderer, roving about in search of bread. The shadow of calamity accompanies him wherever he goes ready at any moment to envelop him. “Distress and anguish” make the tyrant afraid. They prevail against him “as a king ready for battle,” i.e., fully prepared and therefore irresistible. Such is the foreboding of the wicked. Eliphaz here articulates what he believes happens to the most wicked of men. At the same time he argues that even wicked men themselves recognize the principle that disaster will befall them because of their oppression (15:22–24).

### **C. Justification of his Theology (15:25–28)**

Why do such terrible temporal judgments fall upon oppressors? First, because “he has stretched out his hand against God,” i.e., he has defied God. He has acted arrogantly toward the Almighty. Like a warrior making an assault, he has run upon God with a massive shield. Whereas Job accused God of warring against him, Eliphaz accused Job of warring against God. Second, the wicked oppressor is cut down because he is guilty of self-indulgence. His face and thighs were fat. In the Old Testament a corpulent person symbolizes selfish luxury and spiritual insensitivity (15:25–27).

Third, the wicked would be cut off because he “dwelled in uninhabited cities.” An uninhabited city was considered to be under the curse of God (cf. Josh 6:26; 1 Kgs 16:34). To occupy that which God had made desolate was considered extreme impiety (15:28).

### **D. The End of the Wicked (15:29–35)**

The wicked will not be permitted to retain their wealth. Their crops will not bend down to the earth because of abundance. They will not “escape from darkness,” i.e., the dreaded

calamity which ultimately befalls such people. Their crops will be devastated by “the fire,” i.e., drought. God’s breath will blow him and his possessions away (15:29–30).

If the a man trusts in “vanity,” i.e., emptiness, then that is what he ultimately will experience. “It shall be accomplished before his time,” i.e., his demise would come prematurely. His wealth would disappear like a flower dropping from an unripe olive tree or a grape falling from an unripe vine (15:31–33).

Eliphaz now drops the figures of speech to state in plain language the final fate of the wicked. “The company (i.e., households) of the godless shall be barren,” i.e., unfruitful. Under the curse of God they come to nothing. “Fire (i.e., judgment) shall consume the tents of bribery,” i.e., households built up by injustice. The wicked “conceive mischief” and “bring forth calamity (*’aven*).” The point is that suffering and disaster inevitably follow evil and wrong.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Smith, J. E. (1996). *The wisdom literature and Psalms* (Job 13:1–15:35). Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co.