

## Righteousness

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**The Book Of Job  
 Righteousness  
 Job 22-25  
 Study Helps**

### Job 22

*God's uninterest in Job (22:1-5)*

22:1-3. Man's goodness is of no **benefit to God**; He would **gain** nothing if Job were **righteous** or **blameless**, as Job so vociferously affirmed. Since God is not affected by whether one person is prosperous and another poor (cf. 21:23-26), they must be that way because of their righteousness or lack of it. How else could one explain such seeming indiscriminate conditions? **Eliphaz** simply could not accept the idea that God would be responsible for any deviations from justice.

22:4-5. Therefore it was totally unreasonable, Eliphaz said, for Job to think that God would rebuke him for being righteous. Why would God bring **charges against** someone who was not guilty?

*b. Job's social sins (22:6-11)*

22:6-9. With no evidence, Eliphaz indicted Job for several social evils: (1) Job took **security** from others (**brothers** here, as in 19:13, means countrymen), **leaving them naked**. If a debtor gave his outer garment to a creditor as a pledge of payment, the garment was to be returned at night to protect the debtor from the cold (Ex. 22:26-27; Deut. 24:10-13). Failing to return such a garment was a sin. Later Job answered this false charge specifically (Job 31:19-22).

(2) Job refused to give **water** and **food** to people in need, even **though** he was **powerful** and **honored** and could obviously afford to give occasional meals to **hungry** travelers. Job also answered this false arraignment (31:16, 22).

(3) Abuse of **widows** and orphans, an atrocious felony (Ex. 22:22; Deut. 27:19; Jer. 7:6; 22:3; Zech. 7:10), was another indictment from Eliphaz. Again Job responded to this

accusation (Job 31:16, 21–22). Certainly Eliphaz’s theology was wrong when he lied in order to back up his position about Job’s conduct.

22:10–11. **Snares**, terrifying **peril**, darkness, and a **flood** result from mistreating others, according to Eliphaz. Such a wicked person’s life is hindered (“snares” is trans. “trap” in 18:9), he is frightened (cf. 18:11; 20:25; also cf. 4:5; 21:6; 23:15–16), in darkness he is confused and frustrated (cf. 15:30; 18:18; 20:26), and he faces devastating catastrophes such as a flood (cf. 20:28). Job, of course, was experiencing all these problems, but not, as Eliphaz presumed, as consequences of sin.

*c. Job’s spiritual defiance (22:12–20)*

22:12–14. Once again Eliphaz stressed God’s distance above man (cf. 4:17–19; 5:9; 15:14–16). Since **God** is so majestic, in **heaven** beyond the distant **stars**, how could Job be so insolent with **God**, questioning His knowledge and awareness of man and His ability to **judge** since He is separated from man by the **clouds**? But Eliphaz twisted what Job had said (21:22), thus again revealing the bankruptcy of his own airtight theological system. Job had said God *does* know, and that was the very thing that frustrated Job. Job had not said God cannot see man; in fact he affirmed just the opposite (7:17–20; 14:6).

22:15–18. The senior accuser then maligned Job for being a malicious sinner following the **path** (cf. 23:11) of **evil men** who **were carried off ... by a flood**, possibly the flood in Noah’s day. They defied **God**, telling Him to **leave** them **alone** (even though He blessed them), which was now what Job was wanting. This sneering quotation of what Job had just said (21:14–16) reveals Eliphaz’s hateful haughtiness. He then added, **I stand aloof from the counsel of the wicked**, an exact quotation of Job’s words (21:16), mockingly belittling Job for rejecting the wicked. Eliphaz wanted it known that *he* was rejecting the ideas of the wicked, but that he was doing so by **not** agreeing with wicked Job!

22:19–20. When sinners come to **their ruin**, then **righteous** people—Eliphaz and others—**rejoice** that justice is done. Job had said they could mock him (21:3), so now Eliphaz said he would gladly **mock** sinners (including Job!). Eliphaz, at first courteous (4:2), had now become unbelievably vicious. He even sounded like Bildad and Zophar, both of whom had spoken of the wicked person’s possessions being burned up (18:15; 20:26).

*d. Eliphaz’s appeal for repentance (22:21–30)*

22:21–30. Having conjured up homemade lies about Job and having twisted Job’s statements into falsehoods, Eliphaz again pleaded with Job to repent.

Eliphaz set forth what Job needed to do: (a) **Submit to God**, rather than questioning and accusing Him; (b) **be at (make) peace with Him**; (c) **accept** God’s teachings (as if Job were not willing to do that!); (d) assimilate and live out **His words**; (e) **return to the Almighty**;

(f) get rid of **wickedness** (again assuming that Job was a secret sinner); and (g) quit trusting in wealth (**assign your nuggets to the dust, your gold of Ophir**; 28:16; Isa. 13:12; on the southwestern Arabian coast, **to the rocks in the ravines**). This last point was another false insinuation. How could Eliphaz prove that Job trusted in his material things? In fact he now had no gold in which to trust!

If Job would meet those conditions, Eliphaz proposed, God would then restore him and give him these blessings: (a) **prosperity** (Job 22:21), (b) restoration (v. 23) to fellowship with God, (c) trust in God (v. 25, **the Almighty will be your gold and silver**), (d) **delight in the Almighty** (the fifth time Eliphaz referred to God by that title in this chapter: vv. 3, 17, 23, 25–26), (e) fellowship with **God** (v. 26), (f) answered prayers (v. 27), (g) desire to **fulfill his vows** (v. 27), (h) success (v. 28), (i) help to other people who were **low** and discouraged (v. 29), (j) deliverance of others through his intercessory prayers offered from a clean life (v. 30).

Eliphaz's point seemed to be that though Job's piety would not affect God one way or the other, it would affect Job.<sup>1</sup>

### THIRD SPEECH OF ELIPHAZ

#### Job 22:1–30

Eliphaz takes up the argument made by Job that no moral principle could be detected in God's treatment of man (cf. 21:23–26). His speech moves through five phases.

#### A. God's Disinterest in Job (22:1–5)

As Eliphaz sees it, God's treatment of men cannot be due to any respect which he has to himself, for he is too lofty to be affected by anything human. Neither the "vigorous man" nor the "wise man" can be of any use to him. God receives no pleasure from man's righteousness, nor profit from his integrity. Eliphaz viewed God as largely disinterested in mankind (22:2–3).

God's treatment of men is for their sakes and according to what they are. Eliphaz did not think it possible that God would chastise men for their piety. Therefore, if Job has been afflicted, it must be for his sins. God's only concern was with justice. Therefore, he needed only to interact with man when retribution was required by man's sin (22:4–5).

<sup>1</sup> Zuck, R. B. (1985). Job. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 745–746). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

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**B. Social Accusations Against Job (22:6–11)**

What specific sins had Job committed? Eliphaz now begins to enumerate them. They are such sins as a powerful Eastern ruler might naturally be expected to commit. First, he accused Job of inhumanity toward the poor. He had required collateral from destitute brothers who needed help, even taking their outer garments for such purposes (22:6).

Second, he had been inhospitable. He had not given water to the weary nor bread to the hungry. The duties of hospitality were very stringent in the ancient Near East. Job's stinginess was all the more inexcusable since he was a "mighty man" and highly respected. Third, Eliphaz accused Job of cruelty. When widows came seeking his help, he sent them away empty. The "strength" (lit. arms) of orphans had been crushed (22:7–9).

Because of his inhumanity and heartlessness, Job is surrounded by the snares and terrors of God. He finds himself in darkness, overwhelmed by a flood of affliction (22:10–11).

**C. Spiritual Accusations Against Job (22:12–20)**

Eliphaz has suggested what Job's offenses must have been. Now he imagines what attitudes toward God were reflected in such actions. Job must believe that God is so far removed from earth that he could not possibly know what was happening here. From the perspective of the infinitely high heavens, how was it possible for him to distinguish the actions of one person from that of another? Furthermore, thick clouds block his view of earth as he walks about the circle of the heavens (22:12–14).

According to Eliphaz, Job's attitude toward God resembled that of the great sinners before the Flood. Does Job wish to follow in those notorious footsteps? Those people were snatched away in judgment before their time. Their false foundation of beliefs was swept away by a river. The reference is probably to the Deluge (22:15–16).

Eliphaz next twisted Job's words. He turns the patriarch's sentences around to make it appear that he was a flagrant sinner who ordered God to depart from his life even though the Lord had caused him to prosper. Such was the attitude of those who lived before the Flood. So Eliphaz distanced himself from such arrogant defiance of deity and ingratitude. "The counsel of the wicked is far from me," he declared (22:17–18).

Righteous people see the judgment that comes to sinners "and are glad," Eliphaz asserts. The "innocent" mock them. The cutting off of those adversaries would be an occasion of great joy. To see their abundance destroyed in the fire of God's judgment would vindicate their belief in the justice of God (22:19–20).

**D. Appeals and Incentives (22:21–25)**

Eliphaz urges Job to reconcile himself with God, assuring him of restoration and peace if he will do so. Three exhortations, each accompanied by a promise, are directed to the sufferer. First, Eliphaz asked Job to “yield” to the Lord, and receive God’s words into his heart. Should he do so he would he have peace and good would come to him (22:21–22).

Second, he should return to the Almighty by putting away his evil. Should he do so he would be restored to his former state. Third, he should renounce his worldly wealth by flinging it to the dust or to the pebbles of a brook. If he should do so, the Almighty would be his gold and silver (22:23–25).

### **E. The Rewards of Repentance (22:26–30)**

Following his appeals for repentance and accompanying incentives, Eliphaz lists four promises of what would follow upon Job’s restoration. First, again Job would delight in the Almighty and lift up his face in confidence, unashamed by afflictions. Second, Job would be able to pray unto God with assurance of being heard. Since his prayers would be answered, he would have occasion to pay the vows which he made to the Lord (22:26–27).

Third, Job’s plans for the future would stand and be realized, for the light of God would be on his ways. Fourth, any future casting down which he might experience would speedily be turned by God to an up-rising, because of his humility. Finally, Job’s intercessory prayers on behalf of others who had sinned would be effective because of his own “clean hands,” i.e., innocence. They would be delivered from judgment through his availing prayers (22:28–30).

The charges of unrighteousness (vv. 5–11) and ungodliness (vv. 12–17) illustrate how far men will go in the heat of debate to defend their religious theories. The concluding words of Eliphaz (vv. 21–30), however, are conciliatory and appropriate to one who is both aged and devout.<sup>2</sup>

## **Job 23-24**

‘Who will prove me a liar?’

(Job 23:1–24:25)

Job ignores the wonderful prospect that Eliphaz holds out to him because it rests on the condition that he must repent of his many great sins and submit to God. Job replies to Eliphaz in two ways. First, demonstrating his piety, he seeks God as a plaintiff, or suppliant, but not as a penitent (23:1–17). Secondly, he explores the apparent strangeness of God’s

<sup>2</sup> Smith, J. E. (1996). *The wisdom literature and Psalms* (Job 22:1–30). Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co.

ways (24:1–25). He is perplexed, first by God’s ways with the righteous—namely himself—and then by God’s ways with the wicked.

‘Oh that I knew where I might find him!’ (23:1–17)

23:2–7

Today also my complaint is bitter;

my hand is heavy on account of my groaning.

Oh, that I knew where I might find him,

that I might come even to his seat!

I would lay my case before him

and fill my mouth with arguments.

I would know what he would answer me,

and understand what he would say to me.

Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power?

No, he would pay attention to me.

There an upright man could argue with him,

and I would be acquitted for ever by my judge.

In Job’s speeches after chapter 19 we do not find him addressing God directly as he did before. Instead of accusing God, he talks about him, but he does so with complaints. In 23:2, for example, he does not refer to God at all, but what he says must include God’s dealings with him. He is describing how his trouble feels to him. It is bitter and it is burdensome—so much so that he takes up a lament. He no longer has the light and strength that were his at the end of chapter 19, but this does not mean that his testimony there amounts to nothing. It is just that his sorrow and grief have eclipsed his joys and triumphs.

His desire is to find God again, but not just to find him somewhere, but specifically at his ‘**seat**’—that is to say, at his throne (23:3). This is because he has a case that must be settled, one way or the other. Job will present it and he will listen to what God has to say by way of reply. It is important to note that Job does not stand in dread of such an encounter any more, nor does he ask for someone to make God ‘bearable’. That is now settled for Job, as he knows he has an Advocate, and so he specifically excludes the possibility that God would

terrify him or be unjust to him (23:6–7). On the contrary, Job expects attention to be paid to him, and to be vindicated.

23:8, 10

Behold, I go forwards, but he is not there,

and backwards, but I do not perceive him ...

But he knows the way that I take;

when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold.

But where might such a hearing take place? Here Job knows that he has immense problems because God is as invisible to him as his ways are inscrutable (23:8–9). God is simply inaccessible to him, but he is not without all hope because he knows that God knows where he is and what he is doing (23:10). He also knows that God is refining him, a process that by definition cannot go on for ever (23:10). Job is therefore determined to persevere in obedience to God's commands, which he delights in and which sustain him (23:11–12). God can therefore find Job with great ease whenever he wants to, but Job has no hope of forcing God to change his purpose.

Finally, in verses 15–17, Job feels overawed but not cowed. He will not give up his case or hope although his frailty disables him. He will continue to trust.

Who will prove me a liar? (24:1–25)

24:1

Why are not times of judgement kept by the Almighty,

and why do those who know him never see his days?

Eliphaz had sidestepped Job's argument that the wicked are not always judged (see chapter 21). Realizing that this issue is fatal to the Friends' case against him, Job now restates it, and he does so at some length and with considerable vigour. He begins by asking why the righteous do not see days of divine judgement following inexorably on from days of human wickedness (24:1). He expands this point in two stages. First, he describes the wicked and their treatment of the poor (see 24:2–8, 9–12) and in the remainder of the chapter points out that the wicked are not singled out for judgement.

*'Yet God charges no one with wrong'* (24:2–12)

24:12

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From out of the city the dying groan,  
and the soul of the wounded cries for help;  
yet God charges no one with wrong.

In this little section we have an account of ‘man’s inhumanity to man’, twice over! First, Job describes those who act in a lawless and tyrannical manner (24:1–4). They ignore boundary markers and appropriate others’ land (cf. Deut. 19:14; 27:17). They seize livestock, and even the last defence of the weakest against disaster, and they deprive the needy of the protection of the law courts. He then describes the effects of such inhumanity (24:5–8). The poor live in the desert and subsist on animal fodder (24:5–6). Deprived of outer clothing, they are exposed to cold, wind and rain (24:7–8; cf. Deut. 24:10–15).

Verses 9–12 present a second catalogue of such unfeeling cruelty. The fatherless infant is seized (presumably for slavery) and the poor man is made to serve as a forced labourer by taking away his outer garment as a pledge—that is, promising to return it to him at the end of the day’s work in the fields or at the wine or oil press. The victims are reduced to the most heartfelt groans for help—but God does not intervene immediately on their behalf and against the wicked!

*‘They are ... gathered up like all others’ (24:13–25)*

*24:22, 24–25*

Yet God prolongs the life of the mighty by his power;  
they rise up when they despair of life....  
They are exalted a little while, and then are gone;  
they are brought low and gathered up like all others,  
they are cut off like the ears of the corn.

If it is not so, who will prove me a liar  
and show that there is nothing in what I say?

Job here lists further sins that the wicked perpetrate, all of which are carried out under cover of darkness. There is the murderer (24:14), who is also a thief. Then there is the adulterer (24:15), who, not content with the cover of darkness, disguises his face. The light is hated and feared. ‘You shall not commit murder’, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not steal’ and ‘You shall not covet’ (see Exod. 20:13–15, 17) are all treated with disdain.

Verses 18–24 do present several difficulties. Chief among them is the fact that they seem to contain two differing accounts of the fate of the wicked. In verses 18–20 a swift judgement is described, whereas in verses 21–24 their life is prolonged, and even prospered—and that by God. The simplest solution of this question is to read the first of these accounts as a summary of the view of the Friends, which Job proceeds to debunk most effectively. The ESV therefore inserts the words ‘You say’, as it does in 21:19 (but not in 21:28, where the words are found in the original text).

Reading the text in this way is in keeping with the drift of the whole chapter because Job is here subjecting the Friends’ argument to thorough scrutiny. It also involves making no amendment to the text, for there are no marks of direct speech in Hebrew, and a conversation is proceeding in which the Friends would have known what Job was doing. The problem is ours rather than theirs!

In no uncertain terms Job here throws down the gauntlet to his friends. He invites them to contradict what he has said by showing that his claim and the facts he has cited in support of it are not true.<sup>3</sup>

#### *a. Job’s desire to find God (23:1–9)*

23:1–7. In his bitterness (the fourth of five times he spoke of it; cf. 3:20; 7:11; 10:1; 27:2) and groaning Job still sensed that God’s **hand** of affliction was weighing him down (cf. 13:21; 33:7). (**Heavy in spite of my groaning** should read, as in the niv marg., “heavy on me in my groaning.”) Job certainly wanted to turn to God (as each debater had advised, 5:8; 8:5; 11:13; 22:23), but he could not **find Him** (cf. 13:24). If God could be found then Job would present his **case** (23:4, *mišpoṭ*, another court term used frequently in the Book of Job), arguing persuasively (cf. 10:2) and weighing God’s reply (23:5). Faced with the facts of Job’s innocence, God would no longer **oppose** Job with His awesome **power** or **press charges** (*rîb*, lit., “contend, or bring a court litigation”) **against** him. Earlier Job had stated that it would be pointless to present his case before God (9:14–16), but now he was certain that **an upright man**, meaning himself, **could present his case** (*yākah* “argue, debate in court”) and the **Judge** (cf. 9:15) would acquit him and his troubles would terminate.

23:8–9. If a judge does not appear in court, cases cannot be presented to him. Because of that problem, Job searched in all directions for God, but in vain. God continued to be silent, to elude Job.

#### *b. Job’s declaration of innocence (23:10–12)*

<sup>3</sup> Jones, H. R. (2007). *A Study Commentary on Job* (pp. 184–188). Darlington, England; Webster, New York: Evangelical Press.

23:10–12. Job felt that God was evading him, because if He did show up, He, knowing **the way** of godliness Job followed, would have to declare him not guilty. Yet the sufferer perceived that when God finished with him in court, he would **come forth** (or, in view of Ugaritic and Akk. parallels, “shine” [H.H. Rowley, *Job*, p. 202]) like **gold**. Finishing with Job’s trial in court may be the meaning of verse 10, rather than the more common view that God was putting him through a test so that he would be more pure than before. Job could lay claim to gold-like purity all along—before and during the trial—because he had **followed** the Lord closely, keeping to **His way** (in contrast with Eliphaz’s accusation that Job followed “the old path” of “evil men,” 22:15) **without** deviating and while obeying Him (cf. 22:22) and relishing every word of **His**. This is another of Job’s many affirmations of his nonguilty status.

*c. Job’s exacerbation with God’s sovereignty (23:13–17)*

23:13–14. Again Job recoiled from the idea of confronting God in a court hearing. How could he dare counter God (cf. 9:3, 14, 17) who is unique (**He stands alone** is lit., “He is in one,” i.e., He is in a class by Himself) and **does** what **He** wishes (cf. Ps. 115:3), including what He had in mind for Job (cf. Job 10:13).

23:15–17. Since God was so elusive (vv. 3, 8–9) and sovereign (vv. 13–14), Job was **terrified** (*bāhal*, “disturbed, dis-mayed,” 4:5; 21:6; 22:10; 23:15–16) and weakened (**faint**). Terror came not because of his sinful nature, as Eliphaz suggested (22:10), but because of the Lord’s awesome nature. Even so, Job would **not** be **silenced by the darkness** (*hōšek*; cf. 3:4) or **thick darkness** (*ōpel*; cf. 3:6) of trouble that weighed him down.

*d. Job’s concern over God’s indifference (24:1–17)*

(1) God’s indifference toward judging overt sinners (24:1–12).

24:1–8. If God would post on a universal bulletin board His schedule for judging, people would be less frustrated over His seeming lackadaisical attitude toward sin. People steal land (by moving **boundary stones** to take in part of a neighbor’s field) and **flocks**, orphans’ and widows’ animals (a patent reply to Eliphaz’s charge that Job mistreated the needy, 22:9), and **force ... the poor** off the road so they cannot even beg. So the victimized hide for fear and wander about **in the desert**, gleaning what little they can in **fields** and **vineyards**, while going about unclothed (cf. 24:10), **cold**, and wet.

24:9–12. Oppressors even yanked young babies from their widowed mothers to pay off debts. Again Job said **the poor** were unclothed and **hungry**, and were forced to **carry the sheaves** of grain from the fields, to **crush olives** (**among the terraces** may mean between the rows of olive trees), and **tread** grapes in **the winepresses** while thirsty. Even in cities, people were **wounded** and **dying ... but God** seemed oblivious to it all. This disturbed Job

because he was suffering for no specific **wrongdoing**, while others, who sinned openly and deliberately, went off scot-free.

(2) God's indifference toward judging secret sinners.

24:13–17. Murderers, burglars, and adulterers work at **night**, thinking their crimes will go undetected. They refuse to operate in **the light** (cf. John 3:19–20); they love the **deep darkness** (*šalmāwet*; cf. comments on Job 3:5, “deep shadow.” God seems to be apathetic toward them too.

*e. Job's certainty over the wicked's eventual punishment (24:18–25)*

These verses seem to contradict what Job had just said (vv. 1–17), for here he stated that God *does* punish the wicked. Therefore some scholars assign these words (vv. 18–24) to Zophar, others to Bildad, and still others to Job in quotation marks as if he were quoting one of the three in order to rebut them (v. 25). However, these could just as well be Job's words, in which he affirmed his confidence that though the wicked live on and get away with sin, *eventually* they are punished. This would oppose Zophar's view that the wicked die young (20:5) and would confirm Job's previously stated position that “the wicked live on” (21:7). Job's position was that *both* the righteous and the wicked *suffer* and *both* prosper. This differs drastically from the insistence of the three disputers that only the wicked suffer and only the righteous prosper.

24:18–25. Oppressors, Job argued, are unstable like **foam on ... water**. Their **land is** under a curse and therefore unproductive (**so that no one goes to the vineyards** to glean grapes; cf. Lev. 19:9–10; 23:22). When they die, even their mothers (their wombs) forget them, worms eat their bodies (cf. Job 17:14; 21:26), and they **are broken like a tree**. People who mistreat widows (cf. 24:3) will be judged by **God in His power**. Such sinners may **become** settled, but God is fully aware (cf. 34:21) of their **feeling of security**.

Though they are in high positions for some time, God eventually debases them and they join **others** in the grave. Once prosperous, like **heads of full-grown grain** of barley or wheat, **they are cut off** just as sheaves are cut. They are not destroyed immediately, as the three maintained, but eventually. Why they should even prosper at all, while nonchalantly going about their sins, was Job's enigma. But he remained unmoved in his viewpoint, for it fit the facts, whereas the opinion of his colleagues did not.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Zuck, R. B. (1985). Job. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 746–748). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

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## Job 25

### THIRD SPEECH OF BILDAD

#### Job 25:1-6

Bildad perhaps felt himself unable to reply to Job's arguments. Yet he will not retire from the field without at least uttering one more protest against the spirit of his adversary. The facts of history and experience may support Job's contentions. Yet the spirit in which he has presented his arguments and the conclusions in respect to God which flowed from those arguments must be labeled false. Bildad repeats here the thoughts expressed earlier by Eliphaz and this is a sure indication that the controversy has exhausted itself.

To God belongs "dominion" and rule, and his majesty inspires terror. He dwells in the "high places," i.e., the heavens. There he "makes peace," i.e., brings calm to storms, through his awesome power. The armies which obeys Yahweh's commands are innumerable. The reference here may be to the angelic host or to the stars themselves (cf. Isa 40:26). He commands the light of day as well. By the light which he sends forth, God reaches all, and brings all under his sway (25:1-3).

In view of the majesty and universal power of God, how can a man be righteous before him? Here Bildad is repeating the earlier words of Eliphaz (cf. 4:17a) and of Job himself (cf. 9:2b). Human beings are unclean by virtue of the sin they commit in their lives (cf. 4:17b; 15:14). Since Job was a member of the human race, he must be unclean before God (25:4).

Before the great creator, the moon and stars are only insignificant luminaries. Surely then, man—the Hebrew word points to man in his creaturely weakness—is puny before him. The "son of man," i.e., one born of man, is a weak and putrid maggot spiritually speaking. The moon "has no brightness," i.e., it only reflects light. The stars "are not pure in his sight," i.e., they are not bright in comparison with God. Eliphaz had contrasted man with the angels (cf. 4:18-19; 15:15-16), and here Bildad contrasts man with the moon and stars (25:5-6).

Bildad is aiming to get Job to face up to his worthlessness in the big scheme of things. The majesty of God, however, was not at issue in the debate. Therefore, Bildad's third speech was pointless. It offered no hope for the vindication which Job craved, and no hope for purification which Job already had said he did not need. This final word from Job's friends is disgusting in its evasiveness, heartlessness and hopelessness.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Smith, J. E. (1996). *The wisdom literature and Psalms* (Job 25:1-6). Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co.

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**25:1–6 Bildad's third speech: 'How can a man be righteous before God?'**

Something seems wrong with the text at this point. Bildad's speech begins without the usual address and is only five verses long. There is no speech from Zophar at all, and there are three speeches of Job in a row (chs. 26, 27–28, 29) without any words from the friends. Some of the passages in Job's speeches here do not sound like him at all. Perhaps Bildad's speech was originally 25:2–6 plus 26:5–14. As Bildad's speech now stands, it is rather like some of the thoughts of Eliphaz, especially the idea that as compared with God there is nothing in the world that is perfectly clean (4–6; cf. 4:17–19). The gulf that separates humans from God is highlighted by Bildad's opening words about the power of God, whose armies are without number (2–3). The same theme of God's all-powerful rule is continued in 26:5–14, if these verses also are really Bildad's.<sup>6</sup>

**3. bildad's third speech (chap. 25)**

Bildad's brief lecture shows he was running out of arguments with which to answer Job. Like Eliphaz in his third speech (chap. 22) and unlike his own previous speeches (chaps. 8; 18), Bildad said nothing about Job's windy words. The majesty of God, in contrast with the insignificance and iniquity of *all* men, not just of Job and the wicked, is the theme of this speech. Possibly this was a last-ditch effort to get Job to see how useless it is for an impure human to try to schedule a court hearing with the majestic God.

25:1–3. Since **God** rules (has **dominion**) He should be respected (**awe**), and Job, **Bildad** may have hinted, was not doing that. In His greatness God **establishes order** or harmony in **heaven** (so He is just; cf. 8:3). He rules over countless **forces**, probably referring to angels (so He is omnipotent). Also **His light** (the light of the sun) pervades everything, picturing His omniscience.

25:4–6. Here Bildad, rather than responding to Job's concerns about injustice (chaps. 23–24), simply repeated Eliphaz's twice-trumped-up theme (4:17–18; 15:14–16) that **man** ('*ěnôš*, "weak, mortal man"; cf. 25:6 with comments on 4:17) cannot possibly be **righteous** or **pure**. (In using the phrase **one born of woman** as a synonym for weak man, Bildad intentionally picked up Job's wording in 14:1; cf. 15:4.) As Eliphaz had said (15:15), "Even the heavens" in all their brilliance "are not pure." **The moon** only reflects light, **and the stars** (cf. 22:12) lack purity before God because, in comparison with His glory, they are dim. How then could puny **man** ('*ěnôš*; cf. 25:4) or **a son of man**, suggesting man's creation from mere dust, hope to stand before God? Man is so much smaller than the starry universe

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<sup>6</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., p. 475). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

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and is only **a maggot** and **a worm**. This disgusting suggestion may have intentionally harked back to Job's words about his many sores being covered with worms (7:5).

Bildad sought to humiliate Job, to awaken him to his own unworthiness. But this unkind speech accomplished nothing because Job had already admitted the facts of God's majesty and of universal sin.

A review of the speeches of Job's associates shows that they were poor counselors. They failed in several ways: (1) They did not express any sympathy for Job in their speeches. (2) They did not pray for him. (3) They seemingly ignored Job's expressions of emotional and physical agony. (4) They talked too much and did not seem to listen adequately to their advisee. (5) They became defensive and argumentative. (6) They belittled rather than encouraged Job. (7) They assumed they knew the cause of Job's problems. (8) They stubbornly persisted in their views of Job's problem, even when their ideas contradicted the facts. (9) They suggested an inappropriate solution to his problem. (10) They blamed Job and condemned him for expressing grief and frustration. Counselors today do well to be sure they do not fail in similar ways.

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<sup>7</sup> Zuck, R. B. (1985). Job. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 748). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.