

Introduction:

In October of 2016 the New Yorker magazine and the New York Post both commented that the presidential debate was the darkest and nastiest Presidential debate in modern history. What really lingered from that debate, which took place at Washington University, in St. Louis, was the sense of the muddy depths to which the election had sunk. When it comes to negative debate and rhetoric today’s candidates don’t have anything on Job’s comforters. They were ruthless and the negative rhetoric they spewed was akin to a modern debate. Each round of speeches worsened to muddy depths.

I Job’s Comforters final Addresses - Chapters 15-27

1. As Job becomes more vehement, his friends become more severe. This section begins the second round of speeches. At first Eliphaz was gentle and courteous. Now his politeness diminishes, and he bluntly accuses Job of folly and irreverence in his second discourse. Eliphaz argued that he (job) did not know as much as he thought he did. He categorizes Job with the wicked deserving of and receiving judgment. How is it that you turn against God and say all these evil things? vv.13--- That thou turnest thy spirit against God, and lettest *such* words go out of thy mouth?

His main question is, ‘Why can’t you except the fact of your error and understand God send us to show you your mistake? This argument ends with Eliphaz describing horrible things that happen to people who don’t submit unto God.

2. Job replies for the second time **in chapters 16, 17** to Eliphaz. Job reminded his critic that all they gave him was the “conventional wisdom” the explanation of cause and effect to make sense of his suffering. Job’s friends said, “Everyone knows these things”. Job’s response was “It is what I have heard before. He accuses them of being heartless and miserable comforters. Job stated that if the shoe was on the other foot he would comfort them. **I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all. 16:2**

3. In **chapter 18** Bildad gives his second speech and suggests that Job look for words to justify him-self and nothing he speaks of makes sense. Bildad too describes the suffering that awaits the wicked like Job. So, again Job replies in **chapter 19:2**, “**How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words? How long will you torment my soul: Job answered Bildad with a familiar complaint, that his friends were unsympathetic tormenters. He complains that his friends have not understood him at all and that God has wronged him. He pleads for his friends to have pity. In verses 7-20 he complains how God has attacked him and that the hand of God has struck me’ (19:21).**” However, Job declares that regardless God will vindicate him and redeem him.

4. **Chapter 20** we have the final speech of Zophar who only got to debate him twice. The summary of this chapter conveys the message to Job that at first God allowed him to prosper but now he must pay the piper. (Vv23) **Chapter 21** Job gives his reply to Zophar. Because of

the way Job's friends kept repeating themselves and their arguments to him, it was easy for Job to feel that they simply were not listening to him. This is the reason for the overview approach of these chapters. Job wanted to prove that he had been listening. "In this closing speech of the second cycle, Job was determined to prove that he had listened to what his counselors had said. This he did by quoting or otherwise alluding to their words and refuting them.

5. **Chapter 22** begins a **third** (and abbreviated) round of discourses between Job and his three friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Elihu through to chapter 31. Eliphaz's third speech declares God isn't dependent upon man. Therefore if Job doesn't repent God isn't hurt only Job. Eliphaz attacks Job's character and asks, "What good are you to God?" "Can a man be profitable to God? Eliphaz describes Job's great wickedness (4-11). Judgment came because Job's wickedness was great and his iniquity was without end. Eliphaz calls Job to repent of these accusations.

6. Job replies now to Eliphaz's third speech; that is what **chapter 23 and 24** is all about. He protested the unfairness of this treatment (read with me verses 1-3). "If only I could go before God I could present so many arguments to verify my righteousness that he couldn't out argue me." But, no matter how hard he tries God is hiding and he can't find him. He asserts that God is wrong and he is right. Yet, God is determined to punish him no matter what. Job begins to question the justice of God. He declares that God doesn't deliver the widow and the oppressed while the wicked vexed them and God afflicts me a righteous man and not the wicked. He thinks God is on the side of the wicked and governs the universe unfairly.

7. Bildad third speech begins in **chapter 25**. He protested against Job's statement. He contrasts the greatness of God with man's frailty and limited. "How can Job speak to God in such a way?" Bildad remarks are totally useless in the present situation to solve the deep ancestry of human suffering. His final argument was based upon a misunderstanding of Job's words. He seemed to think that Job wanted to convince God that *He* was wrong, and therefore Bildad wanted to emphasize the proper relation between the glory of God and the humility of man.

II, Job's final reply to his Comforters - chapters 26-31

1. In **chapter 26** Bildad had struck a most sensitive nerve. . . . Job could not restrain himself. He leveled a sarcastic reply directly at the speaker. He had nothing but contempt for Bildad's wisdom." Then the dialogue grinds to a halt, and from there to the end of chapter 31 Job preaches in a long and loose- articulated presentation. Finally, there is the odd case of Elihu, the brand-new character introduced near the end of the book, who delivers what many readers feel to be the most long-winded, boring, and irrelevant discourse of all."

(TBC)