Third Cycle of Speeches (22–27)

- By now, all three friends are completely at odds with Job. Everyone’s position has been staked out and the breach between them is complete.
- Job has attempted to express his honest opinions and has bared his heart to his friends. But the three friends still see Job as a naïve or dishonest person in dire need of repentance.
- If Job is right and he is indeed as blameless as he claims, then the theology of all three friends is wrong.
- No longer is Job’s theology on trial, theirs is. But they refuse to relinquish their reward-retribution theology. Job’s sufferings represent a threat to their self-righteous security.
Eliphaz (22)

- Eliphaz is not malicious as are the other friends, he is convinced Job is self-deceived. He is much less hostile than Bildad and Zophar. He presents three major points in his final appeal to Job:
  - Job 22:1-4. Why should God punish the righteous, when the righteous are already on God’s side?
  - Job 22:5-11. The sheer magnitude and scope of job’s punishments seem to prove that Job is wicked. Eliphaz now resorts to listing specific sins which he assumes Job must be guilty of.
    - Exploiting the innocent, leaving them destitute (22:6)
    - Withholding mercy from the hungry and thirsty (22:7)
    - Doing nothing for destitute widows and orphans (22:9)

Eliphaz (22)

- Such behaviors are condemned in the Law (Exod 22:26-27; Deut 10:18; 24:10 ff). Yet, nothing in Job’s background would suggest he had ever done such things (Job 24:9-10; 29:12-13; 31:16-28).
- Eliphaz ends by presenting the “plan of salvation” to Job:
  - Fear God (22:12-20).
  - Repent (22:21-30).
- Eliphaz is more evangelical than the others. Eliphaz seems to understand God’s plan of salvation. If Job had not already feared God and repented of his sin, Eliphaz’ message would be the best news in the world. But his words are irrelevant to Job’s situation.
Job’s Reply (23-24)

• 23:1-7. Job wants to be vindicated now.
• 23:8-17. Job lives with full confidence in his vindication, but God is intentionally withholding it.
• SOME (24:1-8) help themselves to resources that could have supported the weak and the innocent. (Sins of the heart, 10th Commandment.)
• OTHERS (24:9-12) steal directly from widows and orphans. (Transgressions against people, 5th - 9th Commandment.)
• OTHERS (24:13-24) rebel directly against God. (Transgressions against God, 1st - 4th Commandment.)
• CONCLUSION (24:15): Job understands these describe the wicked, but he isn’t wicked.

Job’s Soteriology (23-24)

• Soteriology is the doctrine of salvation.
• Innocence ≠ Sinlessness
• “For Job to concede that he had sinned would be to admit to deserving his suffering. [1 John 3:6; 5:18] For Job to deny sinning entirely would be claim a level of innocence attainable by no man. [1 John 1:8, 10] Job demands to see God, for only God can pronounce innocence on a righteous sufferer. [1 John 3:5] No one suffers as absolutely innocent.”

Christian (NT) Soteriology

- **Justification:** "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:23-24).
- **Sanctification:**
  - **Progressive Sanctification:** “So now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification” (Rom 6:19).
  - **Ultimate Sanctification:** “By His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption” (1Co 1:30).
- **Glorification:** “These whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified” (Rom 8:30).

Job’s Soteriology (23-24)

- **Justification:** 13:18. “I know.” Perfect tense verb. (End of first cycle.)
- **Sanctification:** 23:10. (During third cycle.) Translation:
  - three main verbs, three complete sentences:
  - He knows the way I am [the company I keep], [the path I’m on]. He has tried me. I will come out like gold. (ךְִי־יָדַע דֶּרֶﬠֶנְי בְּ֜חָנַנִי כַּזָּהָ֥ב אֵצֵֽא׃)
  - “He knows” perfect tense verb.
  - “He has tried” perfect tense verb (bachan, בָּחַן): to examine, scrutinize, prove, test. “When” is not in the original Hebrew or Greek.
  - “I will come out” imperfect tense verb.
- **Glorification:** 19:25. “I know.” Perfect tense verb. (End of second cycle.)
Job’s Soteriology (23-24)

- Job acknowledges the value of gold, not for its temporal worth, but as a simile of eternal reward.
- “In Job 19:23 ff., Job laments that his faithful deeds have not been written down, in which case he would bring them in as court evidence; but he knows that his vindicator will defend him regardless.”
- Job muses as to how God stores up or defers judgment (24:1). (This favors dispensationalism.)


Bildad (25)

- Bildad’s third speech is the shortest in the book (six verses).
- Zophar doesn’t even give a third speech.
- Job’s friends have now run out of fuel.
- Bildad merely repeats some feeble arguments that have already been heard. In 25:4, Bildad recycles Eliphaz’ original question, “how can mankind be just before God?” (4:17), which Job had also posed (9:2).
- All three men had used the Hebrew word צדיק (tsadeq), meaning “righteous.”
- This inquiry relates to justification, but Job asked how God forgives sin. Eliphaz didn’t ask how, and Bildad sees only that God is great and infinite compared to man (25:2), therefore there Job has no hope left.
Bildad (25)

• Eliphaz had originally posed the question, and it was addressed twice more in the book of Job. Consider each:
  • Eliphaz: “Can a man be righteous before God (4:17)?” The context suggests that Eliphaz is asking a rhetorical question, anticipating the answer to be, “No.”
  • Job: “How can man be righteous before God?” (9:2). Job restated the question but added the interrogative “how (מָה, mah).” Unlike Eliphaz, Job believes the affirmative, but can’t explain it theologically.
  • To Eliphaz, being justified by God was a doubtful proposition, but to Job, it was a matter of lack of understanding. Job believed in his own personal salvation even though he didn’t understand “how” God did it. The men lived thousands of years before the incarnation of the Second Person, and of course knew nothing of 2 Corinthians 5:21.
  • Job had hope, which Eliphaz and Bildad lacked.

Bildad (25)

• Bildad: “How then can a man be justified with God?” (25:4). He simply restates Job’s question.
• What Bildad says in the next two verses provides the answer. As far as Bildad is concerned, God isn’t in the business of making people righteous. In his view, Job is a hopelessly lost sinner.
• Bildad’s logic is expressed poetically in the form of a chiasm:
  A  Heavenly creatures behold God’s perfection (25:3).
  B  Earthly creatures are sinful and unclean (25:4).
  A’ Heavenly bodies are somewhat less than perfect (25:5).
  B’ Man is even less clean than the creation (25:6).
Bildad (25)

• In 25:6 Bildad compares men to worms and maggots. Psalm 22, “I am a worm and not a man” is actually a statement about myself compared to other human beings.

• But Bildad says that all men are worms before God. This is the hatred that comes from viewing the whole world according to the doctrine of retribution.

Job’s Response (26)

• Job rebukes Bildad in 26:1-4 for his lack of help and lack of concern and lack of wisdom. The “you” pronouns in this section are all singular, directed at Bildad. Job believes that a demonic spirit has given Bildad these ideas, perhaps the same spirit or vision that had influenced Eliphaz earlier in 4:12-21. Job makes that accusation in 26:4, “To whom have you uttered words? And whose spirit or “breath” (נְשָׁמָה) was expressed through you?” He then reminds Bildad that the dwelling place of fallen spirits is in hell (Job 26:5-6). Job clearly believes Bildad is under demonic influence.

• 26:5-6. The counsel of departed spirits is unworthy of mention. These spirits may have planted their demonic worldview in Bildad’s mind. God observes everything that goes on in Sheol (the nether world) and Abaddon (the place of destruction).

• 26:7-14. Job opines on the greatness of God, who rules over creation.
Job’s Response (26)

• 26:7. God stretched out the heavens, a cosmological reference to the firmament or expanse, and its influence upon the earth. Refer to Job 9:8.
• 26:8-9. Job is intrigued by the accumulation of water vapor in clouds, as well as their shadowing effects. Clearly, these must have been new phenomena of the post-Flood world in which he lived, otherwise it would not seem noteworthy.
• 26:10. Job describes the earth as a globe. Perhaps there was once a question as to the shape of the earth, but worldwide exploration was taking place during Job’s lifetime which revealed the earth has a spherical shape.
• 26:12. Rahab is probably the name of a large animal which survived for a time after it came off Noah’s ark. Later during Job’s lifetime, Rahab may have been a ferocious and untamable animal. The point being made here is God’s power over created beings.

Job’s Response (26)

• 26:13. Job mentions the spirit or breath of God, a reference to His work during Creation Week. The fleeing serpent may refer to the idea that “God brought all constellations into subjection under His authority (cf. 26:12), and the ‘serpent’ could be translated ‘crooked’ and refer to any wayward stars or planets being brought under control by His mighty power.” (Ref: The MacArthur Study Bible, ed. John MacArthur, 723)
• Rahab is mentioned only twice in the book: 9:13 and 26:12, both times by Job. In both contexts, Rahab refers to someone or something other than Rahab the harlot. This could have been the name of a great and mighty creature (living during Job’s time but now extinct) such as Leviathan or Behemoth. Job’s reference to Rahab in 9:13 was part of Job’s early statement in the first cycle. Job now closes the third cycle by returning to Rahab in 26:12. Both at the beginning and at the end of Job’s argument, as well as from time to time throughout the book, Job employs large animals as metaphors for forces which man cannot tame, but which God can (cf. 3:8; 7:12).
Job’s Response (26)

- The two verses in 26:12-13 form a bicolon. The first states a cosmic act of God, the second demonstrates His power over living creatures. Three perfect tense verbs: “quieted, shattered, cleared or cleansed.”
  
  A. 12 He quieted the sea with His power,  
  B. And by His understanding He shattered Rahab.  
  A’. 13 By His breath the heavens are cleared;  
  B’. His hand has pierced the fleeing serpent.

- Quieting the sea is a demonstration of divine power (Mark 4:39). The “serpent” (nachash, נחש) is the word first used in Genesis 3:1. What is the meaning of this? Job describes God’s constant care of taming both natural forces and spiritual forces, in order to provide for the stability of the earth and for protection of the human race. Job’s inferences are both naturalistic and moralistic.

- 26:14. Job concludes this list of God’s great acts of creative power with a summary statement which expresses the irony that God has unlimited power, but most of the time He remains silent.

Job’s Closing Discourse (27)

- Job has endured much physical suffering, but his friends have been of no help to him. They have contributed no divine truths, no divine insights into what is going on between him and God.

- They have given Job no emotional support. Instead, they have made accusations against him which did not correlate to the truth. They piled false accusations on top of him that only compounded his suffering. They furnished no proof for their many allegations against him and contradicted nothing about what Job told them (24:25).

- Their accusations were so great that they could not find any common ground on this issue. Job did not strike back at them in anger, his response was that of lament. Job has examined the situation, couldn’t agree with them, and says “far be it from me that I should declare you [plural] right” (27:5). In 21:34 he asked, “How then will you [plural] vainly comfort me, for your [plural] answers remain full of falsehood?”
Job’s Closing Discourse (27)

• Job is counting on God’s justice to prevail in his life. He uses this section to affirm two truths:
  – Job’s righteousness, and
  – God’s justice.

• Somehow, these two things seem at odds. Job has not had the benefit of witnessing the incarnation of the Son of God, who became both the righteousness of God and the justice of God rolled into one.

• Of Jesus it is written, “In the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:25-26). See 2 Corinthians 5:21.

• If Job is not righteous, he stands condemned. If God is not just, Job has no hope. This is not a theoretical pursuit, it’s very personal. Job needs both righteousness and justice to prevail in his life.

Job’s Closing Discourse (27)

Job’s Righteousness (27:1-6)

• Job re-asserts his moral innocence. His life has been characterized as righteous. He uses the word “righteous” in 27:6 (tsedeqa, צְדָקָה). Not that he was sinless, but that he has been living a life loyal to God (cf. 23:10; “Job’s Soteriology” in chapter 24.) But God has, at least temporarily, denied him justice (27:2).

God’s Justice (27:7-23)

• Some secular theologians have proposed this section was actually Zophar’s lost third speech. There is no basis for such a proposition, it doesn’t fit the context or the flow of thought. Job is clearly the speaker (27:1).

• Job and his friends all know that God is just and His justice will prevail against wicked men. Job did not disagree with their generalizations concerning retribution-reward theology, and affirms that area of agreement. The disagreement is that his friends have wrongly applied wickedness to Job. More that that, Job is counting on God’s justice and needs God’s justice to ultimately prevail in his own life and circumstances.

• In 27:7, Job condemns his “enemy” and his “opponent.” This would be Satan, even though Job never identifies him as such, nor does Satan ever enter into the dialogues.

• In 27:8-12, Job states that the righteous person must constantly be looking to God for help.

• In 27:13-23, Job characterizes the lives of wicked men.