

March 24

Scriptures: Read Job 14 & 15

Key Verse: “If a man dies, shall he live again?” (Job 14:14a)

Overview

Job laments that his last days, which are only a few, are fleeting and so full of trouble. He wonders again why God would watch over such a rotten (13:28) and unclean thing (14:4) as mankind. He affirms that man’s days are numbered by God; He is in control of every person’s life-span. Since God knows Job’s appointed time of death, Job wishes that God would remove His wrath from him so he might have some rest before his life is over (14:6).

Just as there was a limited knowledge of God in Job’s day, there was also a limited knowledge of life after death. They were unaware of God’s later revelations which made it more clear in New Testament times. Job believed that after death there was a type of existence in Sheol (a place of darkness for both the good and the bad), but this was not thought of as “life.” Job expressed his sadness and despair that man had no hope, unlike a tree that appears to be dead but will sprout anew “at the scent of water” on its roots (14:9). Then Job began to ponder the question of death more deeply. Was there really no hope for life after death? Job asked God to hide and protect him in Sheol until His wrath had passed. Then he longed for God to remember him (14:13), that there might be a change in him (14:14b) and that God would find pleasure in him (the work of His hands), so that they might commune together (14:15).

Job’s thinking and logic came from a heart of deep despair and a life full of many trials, a life which he felt was hopeless. Not only was Job’s life of turmoil a mystery to him but so was death; it was dreadful and fearful, so he longed for God’s comfort. Even in New Testament times, death was considered to be like a defeat by an enemy, (1 Corinthians 15:26, 51-55).

Job’s question about man living after death was not answered until centuries later by Jesus Christ: “I am the resurrection and the life, He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die” (John 11:25-26). In Jesus we have the hope of glory, security, and assurance. He brings light in the midst of darkness (2 Timothy 1:10). Through Him we can have a more glorious life and eternal fellowship with God. Only He who created life can also give life (John 1:3-5), and since He is alive, we who believe in Him have the assurance that we will live with Him (John 14:19).

If Job had understood eternal life, then he would have realized how very short life on earth was, and how temporal his trials were. Even if one lives to be 969, like Methuselah (Genesis 5:27), it is still a short time compared to eternity. Job, however, needed God’s compassion while he still lived, and he could not understand the severity of God which was destroying any hope he might have had (14:19b).

Eliphaz’s second speech was not as friendly as his first. He was frustrated by Job’s persistent plea of innocence and rejection of their theological interpretation of events. Eliphaz insinuated that Job was both unwise and proud, and that his speeches were useless. A more serious charge against Job was that he was a heretic who would not only harm himself but others by his

erroneous views of God which would lead to the depreciation of the fear of God, and thus undermine prayer to God (15:4).

Eliphaz had formerly believed Job was sincere but sincerely wrong. Now, since he has heard Job's speeches, he believes Job has presumptuously chosen iniquity and turned his spirit against God (15:13). But since Eliphaz does not have proof, he says Job's words testify against him (15:6).

Eliphaz rebuked Job's justification and claims to innocence by emphasizing the total depravity of man, and once again he strongly proposes the orthodox theory, based upon his own observation and tradition, that God only punishes the wicked and the righteous receive only blessings. Since Job had asserted that God allows the wicked to prosper (12:6), Eliphaz responded by saying that their prosperity was only temporal, and the rest of their days (including Job) would be lived out in darkness and futility (15:21-22, 29-31). Both Job and Eliphaz were concentrating on the present life, since they did not see as God sees. Yes, it is true that God punishes sin, but often it is only visible in the life hereafter.

Prayer

Father God, thank You that we know the answer to the question in our key verse: "Yes!" Because of the resurrection of Jesus, we have this best news of all. Help us not to fail in proclaiming this glorious fate every day.