

# This Is What Happens to Evil Men, Job!

February 4, 2018

Job 18

In our seemingly never ending, dragging on and on study of the book of Job, we come this morning to the second speech of Bildad, Job 18. It is not too long, it only briefly mentions Job. I would like to begin by reading it to you. As I do so, I ask you to just soak it in and see how it strikes you. Does it remind you of anything? Does it strike you as true? But know this, it is beautiful, rich poetry, dripping with meaning, but the subject matter is the worst imaginable. Be forewarned, the picture painted is not pretty! READ Job 18.

So, what do you think? If this were one of my Bible studies, I would ask you to give me your impressions and then we would run with them. But this is a sermon and there are too many here to do that. So, I'm going to give you my impressions. Bildad's speech here reminds me of a horror movie. As you read the text, I'm confident most of you instantly began comparing it to horror movies you have seen...and this is intentional by the author. Indeed, it is intentional by Bildad, but for different reasons.

The second thing that I see here is that it is describing a particular world, a particular place, a particular type of existence: hell, or in this case perhaps hell on earth. Indeed, this is the general message of horror movies: this is what hell is like.

The third thing I notice here is that every word of it is true. The picture presented is accurate, the terrifying impression rings true. This IS what hell is like. So, if the picture is horrific, if it paints a picture of hell, and it is accurate, then where does Bildad go wrong? Ahhh, we will hold off on that until the end. After all, in this particular genre, there must be an element of suspense, right?

But I pause at this point to declare to you that this image has been deeply ingrained in my mind. Like many of you, I grew up in a day and in a tradition that emphasized the horrors of hell as a way of motivating kids and people like

me to repent and go the other direction. I like many of you I suspect “asked Jesus into my heart” dozens of times as I left the church just to make sure for sure for sure for sure that I was not going to end up there. Right?

Now for some of you who are younger, you have no idea what I’m talking about. That is because I desire not to use or perhaps even manipulate through such negative motivation. While every word of such descriptions might be true and biblical, it ought not form the basis of our faith. Ours is not just a life to avoid the worst, but a life to gain the best. It IS both, but I’d rather emphasize one over the other. There, you have been warned of your pastor’s baggage. I am not nor ever will be a stereotypical fire and brimstone (both are in this passage) preacher.

Main point: Experiencing hell on earth does not indicate conclusively that you will experience eternal hell.

Oops! I’ve given you a glimpse of where we are headed. Oh well, I never was very good at suspense. You see, Bildad’s problem is that his worldview is too neat and tidy. In a world characterized by cause and effect, everything fits in neat and tidy boxes. When your worldview is that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people, then when we see bad things happening to someone, it tells us they are bad. Simple! That is the way things work. And even if they seem to be going the other way, you can be assured it will only be for the briefest of moments. We can rest assured that things will quickly change.

So, my intention this morning is to first look at the text, and then ponder where Bildad went wrong. And the lesson for us intended by the text is to ponder where Bildad went wrong so that we do not do the same thing ourselves.

I. The wicked will experience living hell. Job 18:1-21

It is quite true that this will be their experience.

v.1- Then Bildad the Shuhite replied: 2 “When will you end these speeches? Be sensible, and then we can talk. 3 Why are we regarded as cattle and considered stupid in your sight?

It sounds like they are trading jabs here. Job has brought animals into the discussion (12:7), they bring animals into the discussion (18:3). Job has mocked their wisdom (12:2, 17:10), they mocked Job’s wisdom (18:2-3). The general structure of these speeches is to address each other with sarcasm and insult, and then delve into the substance of the next argument. Yet in the next verse (still in the insult section) we have clues to Bildad’s perspective.

4 You who tear yourself to pieces in your anger, is the earth to be abandoned for your sake? Or must the rocks be moved from their place?

I see two things here. The first is their perspective that Job is doing all of this damage to himself. This could be a reference to Job’s passion in his lament, like tearing his clothes and getting angry. But perhaps his message here is that the calamity that has come upon Job is really self-inflicted. It is due to Job’s sin. If it is due to his sin, then in essence, Job has done this to himself. He is suffering the wounds of his own temper tantrum.

The next thing I notice is the perspective of Bildad that Job is asking for the earth to be made void of its principles, or the rocks moved on his account.

In other words, the world is as it is. The way the earth operates is set, and Job is trying to change it. This gives us an insight into Bildad's guiding philosophy. There are certain laws, certain given facts upon which this world operates. To challenge them is to challenge that which cannot be challenged. It would be like arguing for the end of gravity. It is not going to happen. So it is with Job. He is arguing against the laws of how this world operates, namely that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people. Job, you can't change things. You can't move the goal line. The playing field is set. You can't change it. He then goes on to describe the world of the wicked. Again, as we delve in, remember that there is a sense in which every statement is true. These are not lies, they are not half truths, they are not distortions.

5 "The lamp of the wicked is snuffed out; the flame of his fire stops burning. 6 The light in his tent becomes dark; the lamp beside him goes out.

The first characteristic of this world of the wicked is that it is dark. Notice how many times light or instruments of light are mentioned. Job himself has mentioned several times that he was in a dark place (remember when we had the whole sermon in the dark?). Indeed, he ended his last speech talking about death as a bed in darkness. Again, our visual image is of the typical horror movie, always set in darkness.

7 The vigor of his step is weakened; his own schemes throw him down. 8 His feet thrust him into a net and he wanders into its mesh. 9 A trap seizes him by the heel; a snare holds him fast. 10 A noose is hidden for him on the ground; a trap lies in his path.

The next characteristic is that there are traps everywhere. Notice how many times traps are mentioned here: tripping, nets, trap, snare, noose, trap. The sense is that it is hidden, debilitating, terrifying.

11 Terrors startle him on every side and dog his every step. 12 Calamity is hungry for him; disaster is ready for him when he falls. 13 It eats away parts of his skin; death's firstborn devours his limbs. 14 He is torn from the security of his tent and marched off to the king of terrors.

The next characteristic is terror. Out of the blue, disastrous things happen. "Don't open the closet door!" "Don't go in the basement!" "Stay in the car!" "Don't peer into the abyss!" Notice the terms we have borrowed for the modern horror movie: "It eats away parts of his skin," his limbs are devoured, he is kidnapped from the safety of his tent and dragged to the place of evil. I'm sorry if I'm scaring you, but Bildad is painting a picture we instinctively recognize and we must look at it. It just so happens that we live in a society that sees such things as entertainment. Disgusting, isn't it?

15 Fire resides in his tent; burning sulfur is scattered over his dwelling.

Fire and brimstone come raining down. Can you see how all of these images are intended to remind Job of exactly what has happened to him? He is not mentioning Job by name, but the implication is clear. Job has been living this punishment of the wicked. His world has become dark, he has been tripped up at every turn, everything he thought most precious has been destroyed, his whole body has been covered in sores. Job, wake up! You're living the life of the wicked being punished!

16 His roots dry up below and his branches wither above. 17 The memory of him perishes from the earth; he has no name in the land. 18 He is driven from light into darkness and is banished from the world. 19 He has no offspring or descendants among his people, no survivor where once he lived.

He has lost his identity. There is no memory of him. There is no one to carry on the family name. He is wiped off the face of the earth. He has disappeared and no one mourned. There is no evidence that he has even been there. The earth has swallowed him up.

I'm not a lover of such movies, but I am confident enough of you are that we could put movie titles by each of these images: last man alive gets swallowed up, mystery virus eats human flesh, injured chased man drags himself along missing some of his limbs, fire and brimstone comes raining down burning every building you go into, monster behind a mask reaches into the bedroom and drags out the screaming victim, terror with every step, hidden traps everywhere, feeling your way through pitch black. I think you get the picture. Hollywood has exploited this genre well. We all know this picture.

20 Men of the west are appalled at his fate; men of the east are seized with horror.

People look at you in shock. They hide their faces. They do not recognize you. Just the sight of you horrifies them. I hate to do this, but this is the text, not me. This is the picture Bildad is painting. And then he makes sure Job doesn't miss the point.

21 Surely such is the dwelling of an evil man; such is the place of one who knows not God.”

This is the place of the wicked, Job. This is what awaits the evil man, Job. This is a description of the man who does not know God. The wicked end up here, Job! He never mentions Job by name, He never says that Job is that guy, but the conclusion is inescapable. You could insert Job's name into every description. Job has been living out what happens to the wicked man. This is what it looks like!

In fact, Bildad might be hoping that Job would be seen and known by all. Like holding hangings in the public square as a message to everyone, Job's life stands as a stark warning for everyone to see. Hey world, this is what happens when you do not know God and live a wicked life. This is how it all turns out. You might be deceived for awhile by all the trappings of success and wealth and luxury and privilege. But as you pine away for such things, keep the image of Job in your mind. This is how it will all turn out. You will end up like Job, losing everything, sitting on a pile of ashes, scraping your wounds with a broken piece of pottery.

Once more, is this true? Yes! It is true. This is what hell looks like. This is what will happen to those who do not know God. The description is horrific, disgusting, terrifying, eternal. Scripture is clear, the fate of the wicked is the worst thing imaginable. This is all true.

So, what's the problem? If every word of this is true (or perhaps even worse), then where is Bildad wrong? He is wrong on the level of unstated application. Since Job is living out this horror movie type life, he **MUST** be wicked.

II. Some righteous people live through such horrors here on earth.

The point of this passage comes from the information we know that neither Job nor his friends knew: Job was not wicked. Job was not being punished. There was more to this situation than it appeared. Now, we struggle with this, we cringe at what Job had to endure, but it is the truth. Job had done nothing to earn this treatment. Yes, he certainly was experiencing hell on earth,

but it was not as a result of anything he had done. He was not being punished. Indeed, he was suffering unjustly. We must remember that this is true. This is the proper perspective.

So, Bildad's description is accurate and true, but it did not apply to Job. Or, to borrow from Bildad's images here in chapter 18, the world was NOT operating according to some tidy principles, there were rocks here that HAD been moved. There IS such a thing as unjust suffering. As we will see in a few chapters, many times the wicked DO prosper. This world is not quite so simple as we imagine it to be.

And on this point, we would do well to get rid of this cookie cutter approach to the human experience. There are far too many people who have given up on God because their lives have not gone according to plan. Many solid people who have had solid teaching and good models suddenly give it all up because they become disillusioned or cynical after God fails to meet their expectations. Whether they will admit it or not, the truth is that they have put God in a box where He proves Himself by doing what we want Him to do. Or we become disillusioned when we commit ourselves to doing things His way and something goes wrong in our world. All of a sudden, God's sovereignty, God's goodness, or perhaps even God's existence comes into question. "How could a good God allow such a thing to happen?"

The truth is that such a perspective is borne out of a simplistic theological understanding. The truth is that God's world is much more complex, His purposes are much higher, His plans are beyond us. Who would have pictured the conversation with Satan in heaven? No one. And yet, this is what happened. This is what you would have had to know to make sense out of Job's predicament. The truth is Job's friends did not know God. Job knew Him but was frustrated with Him. Job's friends only thought they knew Him, but their view of Him was far too simplistic. This is a central message in the book of Job. Far too many people, good people, godly people, serious about their faith people, do not understand nor leave room for God to be God. We say we believe His ways are beyond us, but the first time things do not operate according to our simplistic pattern, we call Him into question. I hope the book of Job has taught us not to confine God to our box. He does not conform to

our simplistic view of Him. He does not operate by our standards. His world operates by His standards, as He sees fit. And in our setting today here in chapter 18, His world includes a place for unjust suffering. In His world, under His authority, without jeopardizing His attributes, good and godly people sometimes suffer as though they were wicked but they were not. Sometimes, to suit His purposes, good and godly people bear the consequences of sin not their own. Sometimes, His people look like they have just lived through a horror movie, but it is not because they were wicked.

And that leads us to the other lesson we have been learning throughout our study and we see it clearly in this passage. There is One person, who has uniquely lived out this passage here on earth through no fault of His own. He bore the consequences of this wicked and sinful world, yet none of it was His fault. Indeed, Scripture says He was beaten beyond recognition, He bled until He died, He had the sort of face that men turn from, just like the text here describes. Though He had done nothing wrong, He was ensnared, His light went out, He was stricken as if cursed by God, mocked, scorned, torn from the security of His quiet place in the middle of the night. Yes, it is true. In the world described by Bildad in Job 18, there would be no room for Jesus. He endured hell on earth. He did suffer to the point of death. If there was anyone who would fit the profile of the wicked man because of what He suffered, it would be Jesus. But He had done nothing wrong. He was innocent, blameless, righteous. And yet He lived the nightmare, for a purpose, according to God's plan. And yes, the rocks did move!

If we believe this passage is the Word of God, then what should be different about our lives?

1) Yes, we will remember the horrific picture here that is hell, the destination for the wicked.

2) Yes, we will use it as a motivation to know God so we don't end up there.

3) But no, we will not assume that suffering hell on earth indicates a person's status before God.

4) We will leave room in our theology for unjust suffering, for God's plans not to fit our tidy little box.

5) We will lift up the name of the One who unjustly lived the horror movie for us.