

KEY

Archer = A Survey of Old Testament Introduction (Gleason Archer). Chicago: Moody Press, 2007.

Ash = Job: The Wisdom of the Cross (Christopher Ash). Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014.

BBC = The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament. Edited by John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews and Mark W. Chavalas. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

Bush = Bush, Frederick. Ruth/Esther in the Word Biblical Commentary, Vol 9. Edited by David H. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker. Dallas: Word Books, 1996.

Frame = John Frame, Systematic Theology, P&R Publishing, 2013.

Grudem = Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, Zondervan, 1994.

Harrison = Introduction to the Old Testament (R.K. Harrison). Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969.

K&D = Keil, C.F. and Delitzsch, F. in the Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol 2. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989.

Swindoll = A Man of Heroic Endurance: Job (Charles Swindoll). Nashville, TN. W Publishing Group, 2004.

Talbert = *Beyond Suffering: Discovering the Message of Job* (Layton Talbert). Bob Jones University Press, 2007.

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Walton = Old Testament Today. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004.

Basic English Structure

1 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered,
2 “How long will you say these things,
And the words of your mouth be a mighty wind?

3 “Does **God**
pervert justice?
Or does the **Almighty**
pervert what is right?

4 “If
your sons sinned against Him,
Then
He delivered them into the power of their transgression.

5 “If
you would seek **God**
And implore the compassion of the **Almighty**,

6 If
you are
pure and upright,

Surely now He would rouse Himself for you
And restore your righteous estate.

(7 “Though your beginning was insignificant, Yet your end will increase greatly.)

8 “Please inquire of past generations,
And consider the things searched out by their fathers.

(9 “For we are only of yesterday and know nothing, Because our days on earth are as a shadow.)

10 “Will they not teach you and tell you,
And bring forth words from their minds?

11 “Can the papyrus grow up without a marsh?
Can the rushes grow without water?

12 “While it is still green and not cut down,
Yet it withers before any other plant.

13 “So are the paths of all who forget God;
And the hope of the godless will perish,

14 Whose confidence is fragile,
And whose trust a spider’s web.

- 15 “He trusts in his house,
 but it does not stand;
He holds fast to it,
 but it does not endure.
- 16 “He thrives before the sun,
And his shoots spread out over his garden.
- 17 “His roots wrap around a rock pile,
He grasps a house of stones.
- 18 “If he is removed from his place,
 Then it will deny him, saying, ‘I never saw you.’
- 19 “Behold, this is the joy of His way;
 And out of the dust others will spring.
- 20 “Lo, God will not reject a man of integrity,
Nor will He support the evildoers.
- 21 “He will yet fill your mouth with laughter
And your lips with shouting.
- 22 “Those who hate you will be clothed with shame,
And the tent of the wicked will be no longer.”

TRANSLATION, OUTLINE AND CENTRAL PROPOSITION

ENGLISH TRANSLATION (NASB95):

1 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered, 2 “How long will you say these things, And the words of your mouth be a mighty wind? 3 “Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert what is right? 4 “If your sons sinned against Him, Then He delivered them into the power of their transgression. 5 “If you would seek God And implore the compassion of the Almighty, 6 If you are pure and upright, Surely now He would rouse Himself for you And restore your righteous estate. 7 “Though your beginning was insignificant, Yet your end will increase greatly.

8 “Please inquire of past generations, And consider the things searched out by their fathers. 9 “For we are only of yesterday and know nothing, Because our days on earth are as a shadow. 10 “Will they not teach you and tell you, And bring forth words from their minds?

11 “Can the papyrus grow up without a marsh? Can the rushes grow without water? 12 “While it is still green and not cut down, Yet it withers before any other plant. 13 “So are the paths of all who forget God; And the hope of the godless will perish, 14 Whose confidence is fragile, And whose trust a spider’s web. 15 “He trusts in his house, but it does not stand; He holds fast to it, but it does not endure. 16 “He thrives before the sun, And his shoots spread out over his garden. 17 “His roots wrap around a rock pile, He grasps a house of stones. 18 “If he is removed from his place, Then it will deny him, saying, ‘I never saw you.’ 19 “Behold, this is the joy of His way; And out of the dust others will spring. 20 “Lo, God will not reject a man of integrity, Nor will He support the evildoers. 21 “He will yet fill your mouth with laughter And your lips with shouting. 22 “Those who hate you will be clothed with shame, And the tent of the wicked will be no longer.”

PASSAGE OUTLINE:

Bible Knowledge Commentary

3. BILDAD’S FIRST SPEECH (CHAP. 8)
 - a. Bildad’s defense of God’s justice (8:1–7)
 - b. Bildad’s proof from history (8:8–10)
 - c. Bildad’s illustrations from nature (8:11–19)
 - d. Bildad’s slim offer of hope (8:20–22)

UBS Handbook Series

1. Bildad Advises Job to Plead with God and Have His Fortunes Restored Job 8:1–7
2. The Ancients Knew That the Godless Suffer Job 8:8–19
3. God Will Help Job If He is Faithful Job 8:20–22

The Outline Bible

I. Bildad's Denunciations (8:1-22)

- A. Your Words are a Blustering Wind (1-7)
 - 1. Confess your sins and be restored
- B. The Godless will Die (8-19)
 - 1. Past generations confirm that the godless wither and die like vegetation
- C. God Rewards the Righteous (20-22)
 - 1. Repent and be restored

Biblical Studies: Job (Sam Storms)

I. Bildad's First Speech (Job 8)

- A. Bildad proclaims God's justice—8:1–7
- B. Bildad proves God's justice—8:8–19
 - 1. by an appeal to tradition—vv. 8–10
 - 2. by an appeal to nature—vv. 11–19
 - a. the papyrus—vv. 11–13
 - b. the spider's web—vv. 14–15
 - c. the well-watered plant—vv. 16–19
- C. Conclusion and Application—8:20–22

BASIC OUTLINE:

I. Truism: The Immutable Character of God (1-3)

- A. Hello, I'm Bildad!
- B. Here's my Axiom!

II. Misapplication: Your Kids Died Because They Sinned (4)

- A. Sin = Retribution (4)
- B. You Still Can Save Your Life (5-7)

III. Shoddy Defense: Tradition Says . . . (8-10)

IV. Bad Illustration: Lesson from Nature (11-19)

- A. The Papyrus and Reeds (11-12)
- B. The Spider's Web (13-15)
- C. The Grounded Plant (16-19)

V. Faulty Conclusion (20-22)

- A. God will Not Reject a Blameless Man (20)

- B. God will Bless the Blameless Man (21)
- C. God will Curse the Blameless Man's Enemies (22)

SERMON OUTLINE:

I. Truism: The Immutable Character of God (1-3)

- A. Hello, I'm Bildad
- B. Here's my Axiom (Plumb Line)

II. Crooked Wall #1: Bad Things Happen to Bad People (4)

- A. Sin = Retribution and Retribution = Sin (4)
- B. Job Still Has a Chance to Live (5-7)

III. Crooked Wall #2: Tradition Says . . . (8-10)

IV. Crooked Wall #3: Lessons from Nature (11-19)

- A. The Papyrus and Reeds (11-12)
- B. The Spider's Web (13-15)
- C. The Grounded Plant (16-19)

V. Crooked Wall #4: A Faulty Conclusion (20-22)

- A. God will Not Reject a Blameless Man (20)
- B. God will Bless the Blameless Man (21)
- C. God will Curse the Blameless Man's Enemies (22)

VI. A Straight Wall: Our Closing Application

- A. Understand the Difference Between Retribution and Discipline
 - 1. Believers NEVER get retributive justice
 - 2. Believers ALWAYS get discipline
- B. There is No Necessary Correlation Between Personal Sin and Suffering
 - 1. Example of Jesus Christ
- C. If There is No Undeserved Suffering Then There is No Redemptive Suffering

PASSAGE SUBJECT/THEME (what is the passage talking about): The black and white world of Bildad

PASSAGE COMPLEMENT/THRUST (what is the passage saying about what it's talking about): Leaves no room for innocent sufferers.

PASSAGE MAIN IDEA (central proposition of the text): The black and white world of Bildad leaves no room for innocent suffering.

CENTRAL PROPOSITION (OR IDEA) OF THE SERMON: In a black and white world there is no room for the living color of the Gospel

SERMONIC IDEA/TITLE: The Black and White World of Bildad

HISTORICAL/CULTURAL/GRAMMATICAL CONTEXT

The first address of Bildad (the “middle child”).

Some commentators claim that Bildad is more congenial than Eliphaz. However, it seems that he is already “loaded for bear,” to so speak.

Bildad lives in a black and white world. No room for living color.

VERSES 8:1-7

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

1 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered, 2 “How long will you say these things, And the words of your mouth be a mighty wind? 3 “Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert what is right? 4 “If your sons sinned against Him, Then He delivered them into the power of their transgression. 5 “If you would seek God And implore the compassion of the Almighty, 6 If you are pure and upright, Surely now He would rouse Himself for you And restore your righteous estate. 7 “Though your beginning was insignificant, Yet your end will increase greatly.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

1 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered and said: 2 “How long will you say these things, and the words of your mouth be a great wind? 3 Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert the right? 4 If your children have sinned against him, he has delivered them into the hand of their transgression. 5 If you will seek God and plead with the Almighty for mercy, 6 if you are pure and upright, surely then he will rouse himself for you and restore your rightful habitation. 7 And though your beginning was small, your latter days will be very great.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

1 Then Bildad the Shuhite replied: 2 How long will you go on saying these things? Your words are a blast of wind. 3 Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right? 4 Since your children sinned against Him, He gave them over to their rebellion. 5 But if you earnestly seek God and ask the Almighty for mercy, 6 if you are pure and upright, then He will move even now on your behalf and restore the home where your righteousness dwells. 7 Then, even if your beginnings were modest, your final days will be full of prosperity.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

1 Then Bildad the Shuhite replied: 2 “How long will you say such things? Your words are a blustering wind. 3 Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right? 4 When your children sinned against him, he gave them over to the penalty of their sin. 5 But if you will seek God earnestly and plead with the Almighty, 6 if you are pure and upright, even now he will rouse himself on your behalf and restore you to your prosperous state. 7 Your beginnings will seem humble, so prosperous will your future be.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

1 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered,

On Bildad see introduction to Job’s 3 friends (2:11).

SHUAH (Shū’ ah) Personal name, perhaps meaning “sunken.” 1. Son of Abraham (Gen. 25:2) and possibly thought of as original ancestor of the Suhu mentioned in Assyrian

sources as living on the Euphrates River below the mouth of the Chabur. 2. Home of Job's friend Bildad (Job 2:11), possibly to be identified with people mentioned in 1. or with an otherwise unknown tribe in the Syrian and Arabian Deserts, perhaps an offshoot of 1. [Chad Brand et al., eds., "Shuah," *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1496.]

Of him R. Gordis said, "Bildad is a traditionalist who contributes little more to the discussion than a restatement of accepted views."¹ That assessment is based on this and his other speeches and is particularly well illustrated by 8:8, "Ask the former generations." [Robert L. Alden, *Job*, vol. 11, *The New American Commentary*]

We may suppose him to have been younger than Eliphaz and older than Zophar. He does little more than repeat the arguments of Eliphaz, stating them, however, more bluntly, and with less of tact and consideration. The chief novelties of his discourse are an appeal to the teaching of past ages (vers. 8–10), and the employment of new and forcible metaphors (vers. 11–19). [H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Job*, *The Pulpit Commentary* (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 139.]

Bildad asks 3 questions (vv. 2-3):

2 **"How long will you say these things, And the words of your mouth be a mighty wind?"**

Beginning abruptly and bluntly, Bildad asked two questions, one pertaining to Job's windy words and the other pertaining to God's upright management of the moral universe (v. 3). Accusing Job's words of being a blustering wind, Bildad probably was picking up on Job's own reference to wind (6:26). The Hebrew word translated "blustering" is unusual; it means strong and abundant; thus Job's words, to Bildad, were like a forceful, continuous windstorm. Perhaps Bildad also was hinting that Job's rash, wild words were destructive, like the windstorm that killed his 10 children (1:19). [Bible Knowledge Commentary]

Wind and words, cf. 6:26; 16:3.

Cf. 18:2 "how long?"

2–7 Bildad, like the other friends, believes firmly that suffering is punishment. But in the way he applies that belief to Job's case he differs from the other friends. Eliphaz takes it for granted that Job is essentially a righteous man (4:6), and only temporarily chastised by God (5:17–18) for some imperfection inevitable in any mortal (4:17). Bildad, on the other hand, leaves the matter of Job's righteousness more in doubt when he rests the whole of his encouragement to Job upon the condition "if you are innocent and upright" (v 6). Job's continued existence is *prima facie* evidence of his innocence, indeed, and Bildad wants to offer Job hope (cf. vv 6–7, 21–22); he is far from hostile to Job, despite the reproachful opening of his speech (v 2) (cf. M. Loehr, "Die drei Bildad-Rede im Buche

Hiob,” BZAW 34 [1920] 107–12 [108]). [David J. A. Clines, Job 1–20, vol. 17, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 201.]

3 “Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert what is right?”

A negative way to state the positive (obvious). Moses said as much at the end of Deuteronomy:

“The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He. Deuteronomy 32:4

Job 34:12 “Surely, God will not act wickedly, And the Almighty will not pervert justice.

Note “God” and “Almighty” - cf. v. 5 for same double use. El (God) and Shaddai (Almighty). God’s power / omnipotence.

Word translated “pervert” means “to bend or distort” and is used of falsifying scales in Amos 8:5. G. is t/standard for justice and what’s right.

“Justice” translates *mišpoṭ*, a juridical term used frequently in Job and meaning justice or legal equity, 8:3; 9:19; 19:7; 27:2; 31:13; 34:5, 12; 37:23; 40:8, litigation, 9:32; 14:3, legal charges, 22:4, or a court case, 13:3, 18; 23:4.

For all his lack of polish, Bildad did, in this verse, come to the heart of the issue. His two questions remarkably approximate God’s questions of Job in 40:8, both verses including the widely used pair of roots, *mišpāṭ* and *ṣedeq*, “justice” and “right.”² They also sound like Abraham’s question about the destruction of Sodom in Gen 18:25: “Will not the Judge of all the earth do right [*mišpāṭ*]?”³ [Robert L. Alden, Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary]

It’s one thing to affirm that G. is sov., that suffering is ultimately in his counsel (6:4). It’s another to blame it on God’s injustice, as Job seems to do in chapter 7 (cf. 20-21).

Thus Bildad establishes the basis for his assertions in vv. 4-6: Job’s children died because they sinned and Job was dying for the same reason. This is a reoccurring theme among the three friends.

4 “If your sons sinned against Him, Then He delivered them into the power of their transgression.”

This is an “if” of assumption. Cruel! Cf. Job’s sacrifices on his children’s behalf (1:5). Bildad has no room in his theology for grace or sacrificial death bc for him all suffering is retributive. No room for redemptive suffering. Ultimately no room for the Cross.

What of the, “if’s” in vv 5, 6? Are they hypothetical, or are they too equivalent to “since,” as if to say “since you are a devout man, since you are upright ...”? Job is left to be the judge of that himself; Bildad is covering himself, and at the same time opening up Job’s

innocence to question. [David J. A. Clines, Job 1–20, vol. 17, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 203.]

“Into the power of their transgression translates what is literally ‘He sent them away in the hand of their transgression.’ [UBS Handbook Series, 164]

Bildad explains the sudden death of Job’s children as a divine judgment. He could not have sent a more wounding dart into Job’s already broken heart; for is it possible to tell a man anything more heart-rending than that his father, his mother, or his children have died as the direct punishment of their sins? One would not say so, even if it should seem to be an obvious fact, and least of all to a father already sorely tried and brought almost to the grave with sorrow. Bildad, however, does not rely upon facts, he reasons only à priori. He does not know that Job’s children were godless; the only ground of his judgment is the syllogism: Whoever dies a fearful, sudden death must be a great sinner; God has brought Job’s children to such a death; ergo, etc. Bildad is zealously affected for God, but without understanding. He is blind to the truth of experience, in order not to be drawn away from the truth of his premiss. [Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 4 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 322.]

Bad things happen to bad people! Cf. Eliphaz (4-5): The First Address of Eliphaz: Bad Things Don’t Happen to Good People!

5 “If you would seek God And implore the compassion of the Almighty, 6 If you are pure and upright, Surely now He would rouse Himself for you And restore your righteous estate.

Two “If’s” and a “then.”

“Verses 5 and 6 take the form of a long conditional sentence in Hebrew. The “if” clause runs from 5a to 6a, with the consequence in 6b and 6c.” [UBS Handbook Series, 165]

“Seek” lit. “go early” (comes from the word for “dawn”); sense of urgency. First thing in the morning.

“Look” and “plead” are the two actions Bildad recommended. The former, šāḥar, as a noun means “morning,” so several versions add some adjective such as “betimes”⁴ (KJV, NEB), “diligently” (RV, MLB,), “earnestly” (NKJV, AAT), “eagerly” (Hartley). The second verb, ḥānan, is the root of “grace.” In the reflexive stem, as here, it means to “seek grace/implore favor.” The same pair of divine names as in v. 3 recurs here. [Robert L. Alden, Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 117]

Note that Job had pleaded with (or sought) God (cf. 7:20-21).

“If you are pure and upright makes up the third clause. . . . In 1:1 Job is described as being ‘blameless and upright,’ where the same term occurring here is translated ‘upright.’ In 16:17 Job says his ‘prayer is pure.’ [UBS Handbook Series, 165]

A third condition introduces v. 6. In addition to looking and pleading, Job also had to be “pure and upright.” “Pure” is not a frequent word but is common enough in the Bible to show that usually it refers to moral purity as opposed to things physically clean or hygienic. “How can a young man keep his way pure?” the psalmist asked (Ps 119:9); “by living according to your word,” he answered. “Upright” has already described Job three times (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3). [Robert L. Alden, Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman] Publishers, 1993), 117.

Cf. application of this mindset to my situation. Giana must have been a bad sinner, beyond hope. Her life was taken. But I am still with some hope, if I only repent.

If Job fulfilled these conditions there was still hope for him. God would do two things: He would rouse (Heb. ya-ir = wake up, stirred up) and restore. Cf. 8:20-22. Cf. use in Psa. 44:24.

7 “Though your beginning was insignificant, Yet your end will increase greatly.

Hard to say what Bildad is talking about here. Insignificant? May be a comparative. Or Bildad may be referring to Job’s present situation which he had been in for months (“you had an insignificant start with all these calamities”).

Cf. chapter 1:1-3 on Job’s prior greatness. Of course, Job restored Job’s fortunes in the end (42:10), but not under the conditions Bildad and the others demanded from him.

Bildad speaks more truly than he knows, for in 42:12 Yahweh will bless the “end” of Job more than his “beginning” (תִּישָׂא, תִּירַחֵא, the same terms as are used here). [David J. A. Clines, Job 1–20, vol. 17, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 205.]

VERSES 8:8-10

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

8 “Please inquire of past generations, And consider the things searched out by their fathers. 9
“For we are only of yesterday and know nothing, Because our days on earth are as a shadow. 10
“Will they not teach you and tell you, And bring forth words from their minds?”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

8 “For inquire, please, of bygone ages, and consider what the fathers have searched out. 9 For we are but of yesterday and know nothing, for our days on earth are a shadow. 10 Will they not teach you and tell you and utter words out of their understanding?”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

8 For ask the previous generation, and pay attention to what their fathers discovered, 9 since we were born only yesterday and know nothing. Our days on earth are but a shadow. 10 Will they not teach you and tell you and speak from their understanding?”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

8 “Ask the former generation and find out what their ancestors learned, 9 for we were born only yesterday and know nothing, and our days on earth are but a shadow. 10 Will they not instruct you and tell you? Will they not bring forth words from their understanding?”

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

8 “Please inquire of past generations, And consider the things searched out by their fathers. 9 “For we are only of yesterday and know nothing, Because our days on earth are as a shadow. 10 “Will they not teach you and tell you, And bring forth words from their minds?”

It is true that there is value in accumulated knowledge. We learn from the past (esp. as it relates to Xnty - we stand on the shoulders of those who have lived in the past). To think that we are the measure of all truth is to forget how transient our generation is (cf. days like a shadow and parallels, 1 Chron. 29:15; Psa. 144:4).

However, there doesn't seem to be anything objective that Bildad is referring to. “People say” sort of thing. An argument from history, but with an unnamed source. Who? On what basis?

Job predates the O.T. canon, but there were, no doubt, oral traditions which may have been a mixture of worldviews. But we do know that retributionism was the thought of the day (cf. Introduction).

Pope sagely comments that “Bildad’s assertion that the wisdom of the ancients is in accord with his doctrine and counsel is quite correct, as confirmed by much of Mesopotamian Wisdom Literature.” [Cited in David J. A. Clines, Job 1–20, vol. 17, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 206.]

Danger of traditionalism. This was Bildad.

Cf. legal sta·re de·ci·sis (sterē də'sīsəs) - the legal principle of determining points in litigation according to precedent.

The truth is knowledge, not experience. Job knows the force of traditional doctrine (9:2a; 12:3; 13:1–2; 16:4), but his own experience is every bit as real to him as the learned dogma, and it contradicts the dogma. In appealing to knowledge rather than to personal experience Bildad talks straight past Job, and deserves the name of “traitor” that Job has already applied to the friends (6:15). [David J. A. Clines, Job 1–20, vol. 17, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 207.]

VERSES 8:11-19

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

11 “Can the papyrus grow up without a marsh? Can the rushes grow without water? 12 “While it is still green and not cut down, Yet it withers before any other plant. 13 “So are the paths of all who forget God; And the hope of the godless will perish, 14 Whose confidence is fragile, And whose trust a spider’s web. 15 “He trusts in his house, but it does not stand; He holds fast to it, but it does not endure. 16 “He thrives before the sun, And his shoots spread out over his garden. 17 “His roots wrap around a rock pile, He grasps a house of stones. 18 “If he is removed from his place, Then it will deny him, saying, ‘I never saw you.’ 19 “Behold, this is the joy of His way; And out of the dust others will spring.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

11 “Can papyrus grow where there is no marsh? Can reeds flourish where there is no water? 12 While yet in flower and not cut down, they wither before any other plant. 13 Such are the paths of all who forget God; the hope of the godless shall perish. 14 His confidence is severed, and his trust is a spider’s web. 15 He leans against his house, but it does not stand; he lays hold of it, but it does not endure. 16 He is a lush plant before the sun, and his shoots spread over his garden. 17 His roots entwine the stone heap; he looks upon a house of stones. 18 If he is destroyed from his place, then it will deny him, saying, ‘I have never seen you.’ 19 Behold, this is the joy of his way, and out of the soil others will spring.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

11 Does papyrus grow where there is no marsh? Do reeds flourish without water? 12 While still uncut shoots, they would dry up quicker than any other plant. 13 Such is the destiny of all who forget God; the hope of the godless will perish. 14 His source of confidence is fragile; what he trusts in is a spider’s web. 15 He leans on his web, but it doesn’t stand firm. He grabs it, but it does not hold up. 16 He is a well-watered plant in the sunshine; his shoots spread out over his garden. 17 His roots are intertwined around a pile of rocks. He looks for a home among the stones. 18 If he is uprooted from his place, it will deny knowing him, saying, “I never saw you.” 19 Surely this is the joy of his way of life; yet others will sprout from the dust.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

11 Can papyrus grow tall where there is no marsh? Can reeds thrive without water? 12 While still growing and uncut, they wither more quickly than grass. 13 Such is the destiny of all who forget God; so perishes the hope of the godless. 14 What they trust in is fragile; what they rely on is a spider’s web. 15 They lean on the web, but it gives way; they cling to it, but it does not hold. 16 They are like a well-watered plant in the sunshine, spreading its shoots over the garden; 17 it entwines its roots around a pile of rocks and looks for a place among the stones. 18 But when it is torn from its spot, that place disowns it and says, ‘I never saw you.’ 19 Surely its life withers away, and from the soil other plants grow.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

3 illustrations—two from plant life and one from the insect world.

11 **“Can the papyrus grow up without a marsh? Can the rushes grow without water?”**

Bildad may be referencing two plants or just one (“rushes” being the same as “papyrus”).

Two rhetorical questions . . .

Papyrus is an aquatic (water) plant of the sedge family that grew in the shallow waters of the Nile river. It was used for making an early form of paper, among other things (the word “paper” is derived from “papyrus”). Marsh translates a word which occurs only in 40:21 and in Ezekiel 47:11. Marsh is another name for swamp. Reeds flourish where there is no water? Reeds are like papyrus, tall grassy plants that grow near water. The same Hebrew term is found in Genesis 41:2, 18. [UBS, 169]

Bildad’s point in citing this proverb was that certain conditions must prevail in order for specific results to follow. . . . A second lesson from these swamp grasses is that they are short-lived. They seem to die in midlife and for no cause. On this point too Bildad was subtly making an application to Job. [Robert L. Alden, Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 119.]

12 **“While it is still green and not cut down, Yet it withers before any other plant.**

13 **“So are the paths of all who forget God; And the hope of the godless will perish, 14 Whose confidence is fragile, And whose trust a spider’s web.**

In Hebrew, as in Arabic, a spider’s web is literally “spider’s house.” [UBS, 171]

15 **“He trusts in his house, but it does not stand; He holds fast to it, but it does not endure.**

Like the spider’s house (v. 13). Implication is this is who Job is now . . .

For the image, cf. 27:18; Isa 59:6; also in the Koran, 29.40 “Those who take for themselves a protector other than God are like the spider that builds a house for himself; surely the spider’s house is the weakest of all houses”; the phrase “weaker than a spider’s house” has become proverbial in Arabic literature. [David J. A. Clines, Job 1–20, vol. 17, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 208.]

16 **“He thrives before the sun, And his shoots spread out over his garden. 17 “His roots wrap around a rock pile, He grasps a house of stones.**

Gordis’s suggestion that vv 11–20 depicts two plants, representing the wicked (vv 11–15) and the righteous (vv 16–19) to whom God’s reaction is spelled out in v 20a and v 20b

respectively is at best ingenious, and fails to note the structural significance of the summary appraisal form in v 13 which enables a fresh set of imagery to be employed in the lines following v 13. W. A. Irwin, "The First Speech of Bildad," ZAW 51 (1933) 205–16, had a similar idea, but was compelled to reconstruct the text ruthlessly to prove it (see e.g., n. 8:14.a). [David J. A. Clines, Job 1–20, vol. 17, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 207.]

Bildad left the illustration about the spider's web and pictured in this and the following three verses a healthy plant soon to be uprooted. Metaphorically the wicked are a *rāṭōb*, "a well-watered plant," a definition based almost entirely on this context and 24:8, its only other occurrence. Perhaps, by analogy, the shoots represent the offspring of this evil man (cf. Ps 128:3). [Robert L. Alden, Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 120.]

The image of the two plants which was introduced in verses 11–12 is brought back, but now they are in a garden, not a marsh. Here evil people are like a well-watered plant that spreads throughout a garden but is soon destroyed. He thrives before the sun: thrives translates a word meaning "moist" or "sappy" and is found only here. The verb form is found in 24:8, where RSV renders it "They are wet." This line may be taken to mean "He is watered before the sun rises." The watering may be the work of the owner of the garden or may be the result of the early morning dew. In some languages it will be necessary to adjust the third person singular he, which goes back to the godless man in verse 13, and shift to a simile; for example, "They are like plants that are watered before the sun rises." If the passive voice must be avoided, we may translate, for example, "They are like plants which a gardener waters before the sun rises."

His shoots spread over the garden does not parallel the first line but is its consequence. Shoots are the new growth that spreads out from the parent plant. TEV has "weeds"; however, the reference is not to individual weeds, which would have separate roots from the main plant. His garden is changed by some editors who feel that, since the evil person is compared to the plant, the garden is not meant to refer to the same person. However, the meaning is not that he is the owner of the garden, but simply that the garden is the place where he grows. We can translate line b, for example, "and their shoots come up everywhere in the garden." [UBS, 172]

He lives among the rocks translates the Hebrew text, "He sees the house of stones." The Septuagint has "He lives in the midst of stones," which involves making two changes in the Hebrew and is the form of RSV. The RSV footnote says "Hebrew uncertain." TEV follows a widely-supported textual change giving the meaning "They grasp it," and so has "holds fast to every rock." Both TEV and RSV follow a change from Hebrew BeTh "house" to Ben "among" in the expression "house of stones." HOTTTP considers "he sees" to be a "B" reading but gives it the meaning "to investigate" or "to break through." It is possible to interpret the Hebrew text as presenting a picture of spreading roots from

garden to rock pile in 16b and 17a and then to the house in 17b, in which the house of stones is ripped apart. In this way the poetic effect is built up in 17b. We may then render the Hebrew of verse 17 “His roots entangle themselves in the rock pile, and his stone house is ripped apart.” [UBS, 173]

18 “If he is removed from his place, Then it will deny him, saying, ‘I never saw you.’

However firmly rooted the plant that images the godless may seem, it can be uprooted and annihilated. Perhaps the one who uproots (“he”) is God (as Ehrlich, Fohrer), or it may be an indefinite subject. So final is the extermination that “its place,” viz. “its garden”(v 16), loses all memory of it (cf. 7:10) and, in the formal language of repudiation (see Deut 33:9) says, “I have never seen you” (cf. Matt 7:23). There is an especial bitterness in the denial of any memory, for in Hebrew thought a memorial that survived one was, like one’s children, the only kind of immortality conceivable. [David J. A. Clines, Job 1–20, vol. 17, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 209.]

Psalm 103:15–16 15 As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. 16 When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, And its place acknowledges it no longer.

19 “Behold, this is the joy of His way; And out of the dust others will spring.

Cf. NIV: 18 But when it is torn from its spot, that place disowns it and says, ‘I never saw you.’ 19 Surely its life withers away, and from the soil other plants grow. 20 “Surely God does not reject one who is blameless or strengthen the hands of evildoers.

Verse 19?

. . . this verse is problematic. Many scholars believe the Hebrew word translated joy makes no sense in the context. Consequently Dhorme drops one consonant and gets a word meaning “rotting” and translates “Behold him rotting on a path.” NEB seems to follow this proposal as well and translates “That is how its life withers away.” Others make far-reaching changes. Gordis suggests a change that means “depart” and translates “Behold, it goes on its way.” Habel prefers to keep the Hebrew text as it is and accepts the tone of the speaker as ironic, with a meaning suggesting that the root “rejoices in the earth that swallows it.” If the translator accepts the Hebrew text and the ironical force of the statement, the meaning is as in TEV, “that’s all the joy evil men have,” or “the joy of evil people does not last long,” or “evil people are not joyful long.” [UBS, 174]

The NIV footnote points to the problem of translating the first line of v. 19. The word *māsôs* means “joy” in its sixteen other occurrences, but that meaning does not fit well here. The LXX has *katastrophe*. Driver said Bildad used it ironically.¹⁸ Jastrow said it was sarcasm.¹⁹ Tur-Sinai emended it to mean “renew.”²⁰ Dhorme by an ingenious route arrived at “rotting.”²¹ Gordis has “goes on its way.”²² “Withers away” (NEB, NIV) comes by reading the Hebrew letter *samek* for *sín*, a well-attested exchange.²³ Bildad’s

message to Job was that he would soon be gone, and someone else would own his wealth, occupy his house, and replace him at the city gate. Such pessimism is reminiscent of Eccl 1:3–4. [Robert L. Alden, Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 121.]

The godless man's fate is to be exterminated; not only will what is dear and meaningful to him ... forget him, it will forget that it has forgotten him. [David J. A. Clines, Job 1–20, vol. 17, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 209.]

VERSES 8:20-22

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

20 “Lo, God will not reject a man of integrity, Nor will He support the evildoers. 21 “He will yet fill your mouth with laughter And your lips with shouting. 22 “Those who hate you will be clothed with shame, And the tent of the wicked will be no longer.”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [ESV]:

20 “Behold, God will not reject a blameless man, nor take the hand of evildoers. 21 He will yet fill your mouth with laughter, and your lips with shouting. 22 Those who hate you will be clothed with shame, and the tent of the wicked will be no more.”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

20 Look, God does not reject a person of integrity, and He will not support evildoers. 21 He will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with a shout of joy. 22 Your enemies will be clothed with shame; the tent of the wicked will exist no longer.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

20 “Surely God does not reject one who is blameless or strengthen the hands of evildoers. 21 He will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy. 22 Your enemies will be clothed in shame, and the tents of the wicked will be no more.”

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

20 **“Lo, God will not reject a man of integrity, Nor will He support the evildoers.**

Lit. a “blameless” man - same adj. G. used of Job in 1:8; 2:3.

21 **“He will yet fill your mouth with laughter And your lips with shouting.**

22 **“Those who hate you will be clothed with shame, And the tent of the wicked will be no longer.”**

Throughout the Old Testament we notice a certain joy at the downfall of enemies, what the Germans call *schadenfreuden*. Proverbs 24:17 admonishes, “Do not gloat when your enemy falls; when he stumbles, do not let your heart rejoice.” Nevertheless, that sentiment, even in the very words of this verse, “clothed with shame,” occurs in Pss 35:26; 109:29; 132:18. There the expression occurs in prayers based on the Davidic covenant, expressing “desire that the treaty curses come into effect, thereby delivering the king from the unwarranted crisis and at the same time vindicating God as the Lord and King of Israel.”²⁷ Here it is from the mouth of Bildad, an ancient Edomite whose

theology is not affirmed by Scripture. [Robert L. Alden, *Job*, vol. 11, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 122–123.]

The conventional language used often in psalmody, of salvation for the pious and destruction for his enemies, now takes over completely. Job might well be puzzled to know who these “enemies” of his are (lit. “those who hate you”). No one can now envy him his fortune (contrast 31:29); and neither he nor Bildad will be thinking of the Sabaeans or Chaldeans who attacked his property in 1:15, 17, since they have faded into the scenery of the story, and they are never the objects of animosity on the part of Job or his friends. The enemies here are those conventional figures, “workers of iniquity,” whom we meet with frequently in the psalms of individual appeal. They symbolize, in all probability, the many faces of death with which the psalmists sense they are confronted (see G. W. Anderson, “Enemies and Evildoers in the Book of Psalms,” *BJRL* 48 [1965–66] 18–29; C. Barth, *Introduction to the Psalms* [Tr. R. A. Wilson; Oxford: Blackwell, 1961] 49–55). For the language, cf. Ps 9:14 [13]; 18:18 [17]; 21:9 [8], etc. (the “haters”); 35:26; 132:18 (“clothe with shame”); 84:11 [10] (“tents of wickedness,” cf. “tent of the wicked ones” here; and contrast 118:15, “the tents of the righteous”).

There is another possible interpretation of “your enemies.” The enemies of the psalmist are frequently those who “on the basis of the doctrine of retribution infer from his misfortune some sin which has caused it, and set themselves against him as one who has been punished by God” (Fohrer). Those who act like this in the Book of Job are none other than the friends! Can the poet mean Bildad’s final sentence as a mordant criticism of the friends themselves? It would not be the first time that one of Job’s interlocutors has served as a vehicle for the author’s irony (cf. on v 5). Similarly, J.J.M. Roberts has remarked generally about the Book of Job that it shows that “the traditional wisdom theology, pushed uncritically to its logical limits, would end by transforming would-be comforters into the slandering enemies so well-known from the individual laments” (“Job and the Israelite Religious Tradition,” *ZAW* 89 [1977] 107–14 [113]). [David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20*, vol. 17, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 210–211.]

Bildad’s speech ended with the words, “no longer,” cf. same words with which Job concluded his speech in 7:21.

Cf. the end of the book (Eg. 42:7) where the 3 friends are clothed with same!

But we cannot even here withhold the confession that the composition of such a drama would not be possible under the New Testament. The sight of the suffering of Christ and the future crown has a power in calming the mind, which makes such an outburst of sorrow as that of Job impossible even under the strongest temptation. “If the flesh should murmur and cry out, as Christ even cried out and was feeble,” says Luther in one of his consolatory letters (Rambach, *Kleine Schriften Luthers*, S. 627), “the spirit nevertheless is ready and willing, and with sighings that cannot be uttered will cry: Abba, Father, it is Thou; Thy rod is hard, but Thou art still Father; I know that of a truth.” And since the

consciousness of sin is as deep as the consciousness of grace, the Christian will not consider any suffering so severe but that he may have deserved severer on account of his sins, even though in the midst of his cross he be unable clearly to recognise the divine love. Even such uncharitable, cold-hearted consolation as that of Eliphaz and Bildad, which bids him regard the divine trial as divine chastisement, cannot exasperate him, since he is conscious of the need for even severer divine chastisement; he need not therefore allow the uncharitableness of the friend to pass without loving counter-exhortations. [Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 4 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 323–324.]