

From verses 26:1 – 31:40: Job made his last speech in rebuttal to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.

Verses 1-14: Job begins his response with remarkable sarcasm directed at his friends, whose approach has been impervious to his suffering (26:1-4). He then compares his own weakness with the limitless power, majesty, and wonder of Yahweh.

In verses 1-4: Job responded to Bildad's lack of concern for him, showing that all his friends' theological and rational words missed the point of Job's need altogether and have been of no help to him.

Job 26:1 “But Job answered and said,”

Job himself has virtually said much the same as Bildad (Job 9:2; Job 14:4), so he makes no further comment on his remarks here, but merely asks how he has helped him thereby, or others like him in a weak and helpless condition.

Verses 2-4: In six sarcastic questions (the first four may be taken alternatively as exclamations). Job tells Bildad that God would be in a great deal of trouble if Bildad had not been there to help God! Then Job outdoes Bildad in describing the majesty, power and greatness of God.

Job 26:2 “How hast thou helped [him that is] without power? [how] savest thou the arm [that hath] no strength?”

Thou hast helped egregiously. It is an ironical expression, implying quite the contrary, that he had not at all helped (see Gen. 3:22; 1 Kings 18:27; 1 Cor. 4:8, 10).

“Him that is without power”: Either;

(1) God, who it seems is weak and unwise, and needed so powerful and eloquent an advocate as thou art to maintain his fights and plead his cause;

(2) Or Job himself:

I am a poor helpless creature, my strength and spirits quite broken with the pains of my body and perplexities of my mind. Whom nature, and humanity, and religion should have taught thee to support and comfort with a representation of the gracious nature and promises of God. And not to terrify and overwhelm me with displaying his sovereign majesty, the thoughts whereof are already so distractive and dreadful to me.

Job asked Bildad, how he had helped him? If he were truly a friend, he would be trying to help Job, and not tear him down. He said to Bildad, “you say I am weak and helpless, how have you tried to help me?”

Job 26:3 “How hast thou counselled [him that hath] no wisdom? And [how] hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is?”

What counsel or advice is there in anything that thou hast said, by following which I might be benefited? Admitting my own want of wisdom, how hast thou bettered my case? And how hast thou plenteously declared the thing as it is? Rather,

“How hast thou plenteously declared sound knowledge?” What can there be said to have been in the way of sound knowledge, or good practical common sense in the discourse which thou hast addressed to me? A discourse made up of truisms.

Bildad had spent his time trying to destroy Job. He had no intention of helping him by counselling him. He had done nothing but accuse Job of things he was not guilty of. Job reprimanded him for not telling things the way they were. We can see that Bildad’s jealousy of Job had driven him to many of these accusations. Bildad had accused Job of being unwise, as well as being a sinner.

Job 26:4 “To whom hast thou uttered words? and whose spirit came from thee?”

For whose instruction hast thou uttered these things? For mine? Do you think I do not know that which the meanest persons are not unacquainted with; that God is incomparably greater and better than his creatures?

“And whose spirit came from thee?” Or, came forth from thee. Job asks: Under what lofty inspiration hast thou spoken? Is it, indeed, the very spirit of God that has found expression through thy mouth? The words carry a sarcastic reference to the poverty of Bildad’s speech, possibly also to the oracular air with which it was uttered.

Job wanted to know just who it was that had prompted Bildad to say such things. Not any of the things he had said dealt with things the way they really were. Bildad was being used of that old accuser, Satan, himself.

Verses 5-6: Job used three words to describe the place of the dead: “the waters, hell,” and “destruction”: This is his way of saying that if God sees what is going on in the world of the dead, He certainly knows all the world of the living. God has authority over the realms of both the dead and the living.

(In verses 5-14; as before in chapters 9 and 12), Job showed that he was not inferior to his friends in describing God’s greatness. He understood that as well as they did. He described it as manifested in the realm of the dead called Sheol and Abaddon, or place of destruction (verses 5 and 6), the earth and sky (verse 7), the waters above (verses 8-10), and below (verse 12), and the stars (verse 13).

Job 26:5 “Dead [things] are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof.”

The Hebrew word is the Rephaim, who were among the aboriginal inhabitants of the south of Palestine and the neighborhood of the Dead Sea, and it is used to express the dead and the inhabitants of the nether world generally. The words rendered “are formed” probably mean either “are pierced” or “tremble”. That is, they are pierced through with terror, or they tremble. With a possible reference to the state of the dead as the prey of corruption, though spoken of them where they are beyond the reach of it. All the secrets of this mysterious, invisible, and undiscoverable world are naked and open before Him. The grave lies naked and destruction is uncovered.

“And the inhabitants thereof”: Either of the waters or of the earth, under which these waters are; or with the other inhabitants thereof; of that place under the waters; namely the apostate spirits. So the sense is, that God’s dominion is over all men, even the dead and the worst of them. Who though they would not own God nor his providence while they lived, yet now are forced to acknowledge and feel that power which they despised. And bitterly mourn under the sad effects of it in their infernal habitations.

Bildad had thought of God as dwelling in heaven alone. He did not realize that God was omnipresent. God is not only in heaven but on the earth as well. This could be speaking of hell that is under the water.

Job 26:6 “Hell [is] naked before him, and destruction hath no covering.”

As this word is frequently used (as Job 11:8; Isa. 57:9). And so, it seems to be explained by the following word.

“Is naked before him”: It is in his presence, and under his providence. So far am I from imagining that God cannot see through a dark cloud, as you defame me (Job 22:13), that I very well know that even hell itself, that place of utter darkness, is not hid from his sight.

“Destruction”: The place of destruction, which interpreters generally understand of hell, or the place of the damned. Others, the grave, the most secret and obscure places and things. The place of destruction, as it is also used (Prov. 15:11), by a metonymy of the adjunct.

“Hath no covering”: To wit, such as to keep it out of his sight.

Even hell is within the view of God. It is also under the control of God. God is not controlled by anyone or anything. He is the controller of all things. He controls Satan as well.

Verses 7-10 and 13: With great accuracy, Job described the world as it is, created out of “nothing” by the Maker of heaven and earth (Gen. 1:1). “By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens” speaks to the Holy Spirit’s role in Creation. All three members of the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, were present and involved in the act of Creation (Gen. 1:2, 26).

Job 26:7 “He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, [and] hangeth the earth upon nothing.”

“Hangeth the earth upon nothing”: A statement that is accurate, given in ancient time, before scientific verification. This indicates the divine authorship of Scripture.

It was by God’s hand that all of the beautiful stars were hung in the northern sky. Of course, all planets, and the moon and sun, were created by God, and placed in the empty space of the sky; and told to stay in their places. The earth is not hanging or sitting on anything. It is in the open sky, where God put it and told it to stay.

Job 26:8 “He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them.”

Those fluid and heavy bodies, pressing downward with great force.

“In his thick clouds”: As it were in bags, keeping them there suspended often for a long time.

“And the cloud is not rent under them”: But sustains them, notwithstanding their great weight, so that they do not burst forth all at once, and fall suddenly and violently upon the earth. But distil in dews, drops, and showers, to moisten, refresh, and fertilize it in due season.

The water that becomes rain upon the earth is held in the clouds, until God releases it to rain. Nothing except God, can cause them to release their water.

Job 26:9 “He holdeth back the face of his throne, [and] spreadeth his cloud upon it.”

To wit, from our view, so that its luster and glory should not reach us, and so dazzle our sight”: he covers it with a cloud, as the next words explain it. Or, he holds fast, or binds together, or strengthens it, that it may be able to bear that burden.

“The face of his throne”: Either

(1) This lower air, which is as the face or open part of the heavens, which is often called God’s throne (as Psalm 11:4; Isa. 66:1; Amos 9:6). Or;

(2) The appearance or manifestation of the heaven of heavens, where he dwelleth, whose light and glory is too great for mortal eyes, which therefore by clouds and other ways he hides from us.

The “throne of God in heaven” is hidden to the human eye. The mercy seat in the Holy of Holies was covered with a thick cloud of smoke when God’s presence was there. He is not to be seen with the natural eye of man. He may be seen in the spirit. When we all go to heaven, we will see Him face to face. The reason that we will be able to see Him at that time, is we will be in our spiritual bodies.

Job 26:10 “He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end.”

The theme of God’s power over the sea (“water with bounds”), is common to the poetic genres in the Bible (Psalm 104:7-9; Prov. 8:27-29; Jer. 5:22). For God to have power over the chaos of the sea symbolized that He has power over everything that seems chaotic and evil to humanity.

This describes the earth as a circular globe, another scientifically accurate statement at a time when many thought the world was flat.

It was God who set the bounds for the oceans. The waters in the sky are also restrained, until God wants them released. As long as there is night and day upon the earth, these restraints will be in place. This earth and heaven will pass away someday, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth. In that place, there will be no night.

Job 26:11 “The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof.”

“Pillars of heaven”: A figure of speech for the mountains that seem to hold up the sky (Psalm 104:32).

Everything in heaven is in that same restrained condition, until God releases them. Even the heavens tremble at the voice of God. Some people believe that thunder and lightning in the sky is God shaking things up a bit.

Job 26:12 “He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud.”

“Smiteth through the proud” (compare 7:12; 9:13; 26:13). “Rahab” seems to be widely used to describe various things that wreak havoc.

In the Bible, there are several demonstrations that God controls the seas as well as the heavens and the land. A very good example of that was the dividing of the Red Sea. We know that God smote Satan, because of his pride. He will do the same thing to anyone who becomes too proud of himself. God has a way of humbling proud men.

Job 26:13 “By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent.”

“His spirit” (compare 33:4). The Holy Spirit, described here as God’s “breath,” worked mightily in creation (compare Gen. 1:2).

“The crooked serpent”: This is figurative language for the idea that God brought all constellations into subjection under His authority (compare 26:12). “Serpent” could be translated “crooked” and refer to any wayward stars or planets being brought under control by His mighty power.

We know that God made the heavens and all of their beauty by His spoken Word. The hand of God is a symbol of work. This was saying, that even the crooked serpent was a creation of God's hand.

Job 26:14 “Lo, these [are] parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?”

These things are “parts of his ways” – only a fraction of the total magnitude of the greatness of God. All the things Job had cited in the previous verses about God's unrivaled power over the grave, over nature, over the earth and skies, was a faint outline of His infinite, incomprehensible sovereignty.

Poetic language reminding his counselors that all that could be said and understood by man was only a glimpse of God's powerful hand.

We know that many times the thunder is connected with the voice of God. When Moses had the children of Israel around the foot of the mountain to hear the Ten Commandments, the voice of God was spoken of as a thunder. It frightened the Israelites terribly. No one can understand the voice of God in the thunder, unless God reveals the Words to the listener.

Job Chapter 26 Questions

1. What had driven Bildad to some of these accusations?
2. Who had Bildad been used of in accusing Job?
3. Even hell is within the view of _____.
4. Where did Bildad think God was?
5. What is verse 7 saying about what God had done?
6. Who releases the rain to the earth?
7. How is the throne of God in heaven hidden from the human eye?
8. God set the bounds of the _____.
9. What causes things in heaven to tremble?
10. Who formed the crooked serpent?
11. What did Job ask Bildad in verse 2 of chapter 26?
12. What had Bildad said about Job?