

Job 20:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer, and for this I make haste.

Analysis

Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer, and for this I make haste.

This verse introduces Zophar's second speech in response to Job's defense. The Hebrew laken (לכן, "therefore") signals that Zophar speaks from compulsion based on what Job has said. The phrase "my thoughts cause me to answer" (se'ippai yeshivuni, שְׁעִפָּי יְשִׁיבָנִי) reveals that Zophar's response is emotionally driven—se'ippai can mean thoughts, but carries connotations of agitation, disquiet, or inner turmoil.

The statement "for this I make haste" (ba'avur chushi vi, בְּאַוּר חֻשֵּׁי בַּי) indicates Zophar feels urgency to respond—his inner compulsion will not allow silence. The word chushi (חֻשֵּׁי) suggests emotional haste or impatience. Zophar is not responding from careful reflection but from agitated conviction that Job's words demand immediate rebuttal. This reveals a fundamental problem with Job's "comforters"—they speak from emotional reaction and theological presumption rather than genuine wisdom or compassion.

Zophar's haste contrasts with biblical wisdom's emphasis on thoughtful, measured speech. Proverbs repeatedly warns against hasty words (Proverbs 29:20, "Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him"). James counsels being "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19). Zophar's agitated response demonstrates that theological correctness without love and patience becomes cruel accusation. His speech that follows (Job 20:4-29) presents orthodox retribution theology—the wicked suffer, therefore Job's suffering

proves his wickedness—but misapplies truth, becoming false comfort that increases suffering rather than relieving it.

Historical Context

The book of Job is set in the patriarchal period, possibly contemporary with Abraham (approximately 2000-1800 BC). Job lived in Uz, likely in the region of Edom southeast of Israel. The dialogue structure—Job's lament followed by three cycles of speeches from his friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—reflects ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature conventions. These lengthy dialogues explore the problem of innocent suffering, challenging simplistic retribution theology common in ancient cultures.

Zophar the Naamathite (possibly from Naamah in northwest Arabia) represents the most harsh and dogmatic of Job's three friends. His two speeches (Job 11 and 20) are shorter than Eliphaz's and Bildad's, and he doesn't speak in the third cycle, possibly indicating he has nothing more to say. His theology is rigid: the wicked always suffer, prosperity indicates righteousness, and suffering proves sin. This perspective reflected conventional wisdom but failed to account for the complexity revealed in Job's case.

The historical context of the book addresses the universal human problem of suffering's meaning. Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature from Egypt and Mesopotamia (like the Babylonian "Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi") also grappled with innocent suffering, but Job provides the biblical perspective. Unlike pagan literature that questioned divine justice or accepted suffering as capricious divine whim, Job maintains both God's absolute righteousness and the reality that human understanding is limited. The book anticipates Christ, the ultimate innocent sufferer whose redemptive suffering accomplishes God's eternal purposes (Isaiah 53, 1 Peter 2:21-24).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does Zophar's hasty, emotionally driven response illustrate the danger of speaking before truly listening?
2. What is the difference between theological truth (the wicked do suffer) and wrongly applied theology (therefore all suffering indicates wickedness)?
3. How can we offer comfort to suffering people without falling into the errors of Job's friends?
4. What does this passage teach about the relationship between emotional conviction and spiritual wisdom?
5. How does Job's experience of being misunderstood by religious friends point forward to Christ's suffering and rejection?

Interlinear Text

וְכִי שָׁעֵפֶת יִשְׁיב וְרִי

H3651

Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer

H5587

H5668

H7725

וְעַתָּה בַּעֲמָד

and for this I make haste

H2363

H0

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 31:22 (Parallel theme): For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.

Proverbs 14:29 (Parallel theme): He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.