

Job 8:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If thy children have sinned against him, and he have cast them away for their transgression;

Analysis

Bildad cruelly suggests Job's children deserved their deaths: 'If thy children have sinned against him, and he have cast them away for their transgression.' The conditional 'if' (im, אִם) is rhetorical—Bildad assumes their sin as fact. The phrase 'cast them away' (shalach be-yad, שָׁלַח בְּיָד, literally 'sent them into the hand') means to deliver them over to the power of their sin's consequences. This brutal assessment adds profound insult to Job's injury.

Bildad's theology contains truth—sin brings death (Romans 6:23)—but lacks compassion and misapplies general principle to specific case. He cannot know whether Job's children sinned; he simply assumes they must have because they died. This reasoning inverts proper theological method: rather than moving from revelation to application, Bildad moves from observation (death) to theological conclusion (sin), forcing reality into his theological grid.

The New Testament explicitly rejects this interpretive method. When disciples asked whether the blind man or his parents sinned (John 9:2), Jesus denied the assumption. When told of Galileans killed by Pilate and those killed when a tower fell (Luke 13:1-5), Jesus warned against inferring guilt from tragedy. Bildad's error isn't theological ignorance but pastoral insensitivity and epistemological overreach.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern wisdom assumed direct correlation between sin and suffering, righteousness and prosperity (Deuteronomy 28). This covenant pattern, true in general revelation, doesn't apply mechanically to individual cases—a nuance Bildad misses. The book of Job systematically dismantles simplistic retribution theology while affirming God's ultimate justice.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How do we avoid Bildad's error of using correct theology to reach incorrect conclusions about specific suffering?
2. What does this verse teach about the danger of reading divine judgment into every tragedy?
3. How should Jesus' teaching in Luke 13:1-5 and John 9:2-3 shape our pastoral response to those experiencing loss?

Interlinear Text

אִם בְּתֵךְ יְנַצְּרָא לְזַעַם תִּשְׁלַח
H518 If thy children have sinned H0 against him and he have cast them away
H1121 H2398 H7971

בִּיד פְּשָׁעָם:
for their transgression
H3027 H6588

