

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, אם) 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

אם	בְּנֵי יָךְ	הִטָּאוּ	לִי	וְיִשְׁלֶה עָלֶיךָ
H518	If thy children	have sinned	H0	against him and he have cast them away
	H1121	H2398		H7971
בְּיָד	פְּשָׁעָם:			
for	their transgression			
H3027	H6588			

Additional Cross-References

Job 1:5 (Sin): And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.

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