

# ***The Book of Job***

## ***The Wrath of Elihu***

Lesson #10 for December 3, 2016

Scriptures: Job 1-2:10; 13:28; 28:28; 32:1-5; 34:10-15; Ezekiel 28:12-17.

1. So, what have we learned so far from the discussions back and forth between Job and his three friends? There was a lot of repetition of nonsense! Of course, there were some fairly important truths spoken, even by Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. And in each case, Job responded. But, to that point, apparently there was a stalemate. The three friends had not convinced Job of the truthfulness of their words; Job still was certain that he had not committed the terrible crime or sin of which they had accused him.
2. Read Proverbs 25:11-13. When words are appropriately spoken and carefully thought through, they can be a great blessing. But, that was not the case in the book of Job.
3. So, what came next? Suddenly, a younger man by the name of Elihu jumped in and added his words of wisdom to the discussion.
4. Read Job 15:14-16, and remember that these words came basically from Eliphaz's statement in Job 4 which he got from that "vision" in the night from the Devil. Contrast the words of Job recorded in Job 19:25-27. The three friends kept emphasizing that God rewards righteousness and punishes sins. Job continued his laments about how he was being treated—both by God and by his friends.
5. All four of these participants really believed that they were speaking on God's behalf. Job made a final speech as recorded in Job 26-31 which we need to look at briefly.
6. What was the cause for this whole discussion? Wasn't it that Job seemed to be living a righteous life? (See Job 1-2:10.) Job was not being punished because he was wicked, but rather, because he was righteous! Notice God's statement about Job. In His foreknowledge, God already knew that Job would prove to be firm for the right. What would have happened if Job had collapsed? What does Job 26-31 say about Job's former life?
7. Did Job's three friends have any idea that the words they were mouthing repeatedly might have come from the Devil himself? Did Job know about the Devil? Remember that in light of our first two lessons in this series, our goal is to understand why God said to Eliphaz in Job 42:7-8, *GNB*: "I am angry with you and your two friends because you did not speak the truth about me, as my servant Job did." Do we clearly understand what it was that Job said that was correct which was in contrast to what his three friends said?
8. Look briefly at Job 26-31, Job's final statement. It is important in reading this section of Job to realize that there are portions for which the original speaker is not clearly known. Some think that Job 26:5-14 was the speech of Bildad. Some think that Zophar was the speaker of Job 27:7-10, 13-23. Traditionally, these portions have all been attributed to Job. That would make Job apparently contradict himself. How should we decide for sure who gave those speeches? However we understand these sections, they must be considered in the light of Job 31:29-30 where Job made it clear that he had never been glad when his enemies suffered. This is part of the reason for believing that the section starting with Job 27:7 was not Job talking. Who do you think was talking in Job 28? Is it clearly Job speaking again in Job 29? The *LXX*—the Septuagint—the first translation which was from Hebrew into Greek, gives a somewhat different picture of Job than does the original Hebrew that we have. We do not know exactly why.

9. How did Job become righteous? Wasn't it a compliment to God that Job really missed their conversations? How did God communicate with Job before this story began? Job kept calling to God; but, God did not seem to answer! Job was not trying to deny the fact that he was a sinner like the rest of us. (Job 31:33)
10. Was Job actually abandoned by God during this whole experience? Or, did the Holy Spirit and the heavenly angels surround Job to protect him from the Devil? What kind of a "fence" would that be? If they had done that, wouldn't the Devil have cried, "Foul"?
11. Job had apparently developed a very solid faith in God.
12. Is faith something that somebody else does for us? If not, why do we call it a gift of God? (Ephesians 2:8) Would that suggest that when we say we have faith and trust God, that God is really speaking through us and, thus, speaking to Himself? (Compare Galatians 2:20.) Almost all scholars—including most Seventh-day Adventist scholars—believe that there is no way that Job himself could have become righteous. They suggest that his only righteousness must have been the righteousness of Christ imputed to him. In Job 1&2, was Satan saying that Job was not justified? Or, could not be justified? Or, that God could not forgive Job? Or, that God could not declare Job to be upright? Hadn't God already said Job was upright? (Job 1:8; 2:3) Was God lying?
13. Is it possible to come to the place that when you say that you trust God, it is actually you speaking? Is it possible to make such a decision by yourself? Some Christians are very reluctant to say that.
14. Was Satan challenging Job's legal justification? Or, whether his "righteousness" was imputed? **If Job had not been really changed, what is this whole book about?** How does the Holy Spirit actually do His work in the lives and minds of people? Was the Holy Spirit present when Jesus was dying on the cross? How many of God's angels and/or the Holy Spirit were protecting Job lest Satan go beyond what God had prescribed that he could do? (See *Desire of Ages* 753-754.)
15. At the end, when God said that Job had spoken the truth, was He asking us to agree? **One of the greatest proofs that God can be trusted is the method He used to show that Job could be trusted.** Was God offended by Job's cries? God was commending Job for what he did! The four were horrified! **The real lesson is that God's approval of all that Job did says wonderful things about God Himself! God has set His seal of approval to that kind of method and that kind of a relationship! Imagine what that says about what kind of government He wants to preside over!** Do you like a God who behaves like that?
16. Read Job 33:1-7,12,19-28. Elihu started, clearly hoping that Job would admit his sin. But, if Job had admitted having committed some terrible sin just to satisfy his friends, he would have been acting in contradiction to God's statements! Job could not win! Elihu was certain that Job was justifying himself and blaming God! (Job 32:1-5)
17. Do we know at what point Elihu joined the conversation? Job 32 is the first time his name is mentioned. Do you think he heard all the previous discussions? Elihu was apparently somewhat younger than the other men, and his anger had been kindled over what he had heard. Were any of those statements from Elihu and about Job correct? Did either Job or Elihu know anything about Satan? If you are a monotheist and something bad happens, who must you consider responsible?
18. After reviewing Elihu's speeches as recorded in Job 32-37, do you find anything really

new? Or, was he just repackaging the old arguments from Job's three other friends?

19. Read Job 34:10-15. This seems to be an argument suggesting that since God is so powerful, everything He does must be right. Does might make right? In the case of Job, the question was not whether God had might, but rather, how He uses His might. Can someone possess great power and do what is wrong? Or, should we trust God just because He is powerful and could potentially destroy us? Elihu suggested that if God stopped supporting us, we would cease to exist. Others have said something similar. (Acts 17:25,28)

20. Ellen White said:

Every pulsation of the heart is a rebound from the touch of the finger of God.—*Review and Herald*, December 2, 1890, par. 15.

21. For a summary of Elihu's arguments, read Job 34:21-22; 36:5-7; and 37:23-24. Do any of the arguments of Elihu—or for that matter of the three friends who spoke earlier—answer Job's question recorded in Job 9:24 (*GNB*): "And if God didn't do it, who did?"

22. If you believe God mechanically rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked, then what conclusion could you come to other than the conclusion of Job's friends?

23. All of the participants in this discussion were trying to find logical explanations for what was happening to Job. They all apparently failed. Is there any logical explanation for sin and evil? Think of the story of Lucifer—now Satan—and his fall from heaven to the depths of evil.

It is impossible to explain the origin of sin so as to give a reason for its existence. Yet enough may be understood concerning both the origin and the final disposition of sin to make fully manifest the justice and benevolence of God in all His dealings with evil. **Nothing is more plainly taught in [493] Scripture than that God was in no wise responsible for the entrance of sin; that there was no arbitrary withdrawal of divine grace, no deficiency in the divine government, that gave occasion for the uprising of rebellion. Sin is an intruder, for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it is to defend it. Could excuse for it be found, or cause be shown for its existence, it would cease to be sin.**—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* 492.2-493.0. [Bold type is added.]

24. Would it be correct to use the word *evil* in place of *sin* in Ellen White's statement?

25. Read Ezekiel 28:12-17 and Isaiah 14:12-15. These passages give us just a very brief view of the fall of Satan. There is no explanation for it except envy and jealousy. How did such thoughts develop in the creature in heaven who had been closest to God? He was a perfect being, created by a perfect God, in a perfect environment.

26. Why do you suppose none of the participants in this story mentioned the Devil?

27. Read Job 36:1-4. What do you think about Elihu's claims about himself?

28. If God could have resolved the problem of evil or even the issue regarding Job simply by making claims, it would have been over almost as soon as it began. But, God does not resolve issues by making claims; He provides evidence! To prove that Job was a righteous man, God allowed him to go through all of that trouble to show that Satan could not break Job down with his temptations or accusations.

29. What do you think Job would have said to God about his being used as a kind of guinea pig or pawn in this experiment? Might he have said: "Please, God, use someone else"? Given his prior successes with the human race, the Devil must have been quite certain when this whole discussion started that he would get Job to sin. When it was all over and God was proven right and the Devil was proven wrong, did the Devil concede defeat? **So, what was the point? Was it to demonstrate to the rest of the universe that God judges humans correctly?**
30. Jesus also suffered terribly because He was righteous. Why was that necessary? The 144,000 who live through the final events in this earth's history, standing firmly for the right on God's side will also suffer terribly. Why will that be necessary? Will that be for the same reason as Job?
31. The *Bible Study Guide* for Thursday, December 1, suggests that in situations like that, we just have to have faith! It suggests that we cannot live "by sight"! What does that mean to you? Would you call that a "leap of faith"? Many theologians have talked about a leap of faith. Would God ask us to leap without providing the evidence that what He is asking us to do is the right thing to do?

**God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith.** His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet **God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith.**—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* 105.2. [Bold type is added.]

32. **Why do we do what we do? Did Job have enough evidence to trust God? (Job 29:1-5)**

If you are a believer and are seeking to do God's will, what makes you willing to obey?

Could you say, "I do what I do because God has told me to, and He has the power to reward and destroy"? Is this why you don't murder or commit adultery, because God has said you mustn't? You would otherwise, but you can't afford to incur His displeasure.

This might be all right for a beginner or a little child, but it suggests that God's laws are arbitrary and do not make good sense in themselves. That does not speak very favorably of God.

Would you rather say, "I do what I do as a believer because God has told me to, and I love Him and want to please Him"? Is this why you don't steal or tell lies? You would see nothing wrong or harmful about doing these things. It is just that you want so much to please God. For some reason He does not like it when you steal or lie, and since He has been so good to us, you feel under some [35] obligation to please Him. It would only be grateful and fair.

Again, this might be all right for a beginner or child. It might even be progress beyond the obedience prompted only by fear of punishment and desire of reward. But it still implies an arbitrariness in God's commandments and does

not speak so well of His character and government.

There is another possible approach to obedience. Could you say this? “I do what I do because I have found it to be right and sensible to do so, and I have increasing admiration and reverence for the One who so advised and commanded me in the days of my ignorance and immaturity.” Then hastening to add, “Being still somewhat ignorant and immature, I am willing to trust and obey the One whose counsel has always proved to be so sensible, when He commands me to do something beyond my present understanding.”—A. Graham Maxwell, *I Want to Be Free* 34-35.

33. Did Job win in this situation because he was good at leaping? Or, did Job remain firm in his commitment to God because he had plenty of evidence on which to base his faith before the whole contest began? And what about us? Have we seen adequate evidence on which to base our faith? Are we willing to move forward and trust God even when, at times, we do not understand fully why He would ask us to do certain things?
34. Is it ever right—or even fair—to explain God’s actions as a kind of simple cause-and-effect response? In this story, could we say that the cause was Job’s supposed sin? Was his suffering the effect?
35. Do you think God had ever discussed the Devil and his fall and his role on this earth with Job before this whole sequence took place? Or, were Job and his four friends completely ignorant of the story of the Devil?
36. Do our daily choices—including time we spend with God in study and prayer—impact our faith, making it either grow stronger or weaker?
37. Elihu started his speech implying that he had the answers! By the time we get to the end of his speech, we find that his answers were the same worn-out answers already given by the other friends of Job.
38. In our day, do the facts that we know about the rebellion of Satan and his fall from heaven adequately explain in our minds all the evil we see happening around us? Is there any possible rational explanation for why Lucifer/Satan rebelled in heaven? See GC 492.2-493.0 quoted in item #23 above. If we try to explain the causes for suffering and death in our day, are we just supposed to throw our hands in the air and not even try to understand them?
39. Jesus was the very essence of humility. By contrast, Satan was the opposite of humility; he was exhibiting pride, arrogance, and selfishness right in the throne room of heaven!
40. If we take a humble approach to God’s kingdom, does that mean that we do not ask any questions? If we believe that evil is inexplicable, can we still have faith and trust in God?
41. If one studies the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, he discovers that there is a huge gap between the leadership and the youth of our church. Why are so few of the young people participating in leadership in the church? Why is there a huge gap in beliefs and practices between the generations?
42. Many of us recognize that the youth are often motivated by anger against: War, racial segregation, the economic situation, social injustices, etc. Their anger often leads them to make very strong statements or take very strong positions on some things. Was that what happened in the case of Elihu? (See Job 32:4-5.) Ellen White wrote:

**With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might**

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**furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world!** How soon might the end come—the end of suffering and sorrow and sin! How soon, in place of a possession here, with its blight of sin and pain, our children might receive their inheritance where “the righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever;” where “the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick,” and “the voice of weeping shall be no more heard.” [Psalm 37:29; Isaiah 33:24; 65:19]—Ellen G. White, *Education* 271.2. Compare *GCB*, July 1, 1902, par. 23; *GW* 66.2; *Christian Service* 30.2; *CT* 555.2; *FLB* 332.4; *AG* 189.8; *Mar* 122.5; *MYP* 196.1. [Bold type and content in brackets are added.]

43. Do you see this happening in your church? In what direction do the young people in your church seem to be heading?
44. The speech of Elihu extends for six chapters. It is the longest continuous speech recorded in the whole book.
45. One of the most important statements made by Elihu is found in Job 37:20 (*GNB*): “I won’t ask to speak with God; why should I give him a chance to destroy me?”
46. What does this tell us about Elihu’s relationship with God—or the lack of relationship? It is certainly a big contrast with the many times Job wished that he could speak with God.
47. In Job 34:36-37, he suggested that Job was even guilty of rebellion! Did Job in any way mock God?
48. The picture that Elihu painted in Job 35-37 is pretty scary. He claimed to speak for *Yahweh* (God), only to find himself corrected by God’s own speech directly out of the storm as recorded in Job 38-41.
49. Read Psalm 45:6 and James 4:6. The psalm by Korah’s clan suggests that truth, humility, and justice should be the crowning features of the new king. They were certainly not true about Lucifer/Satan, and it was certainly not true about Elihu or even the other three friends of Job.
50. Sometimes, we as Seventh-day Adventists claim that we have the truth. Is that a correct statement? It might seem that way as we lay out scriptural proof for our beliefs. But, the real question should not be: Do we have the truth? But rather, does the truth have us?
51. Elihu’s wrath or anger is disappointing. Is there ever an appropriate time for self-righteous anger? Do we ever fall into the trap into which Elihu fell—just rehashing the old arguments?
52. What can we learn from the final speech of Job and the speech of Elihu?

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