

The Book of Job

Some Lessons from Job

Lesson #14 for December 31, 2016

Scriptures: 2 Corinthians 5:7; Job 1:1-2:8; Matthew 4:10; 13:39; John 8:1-11; Hebrews 11:10; 4:15.

1. This is our last lesson on the book of Job. Perhaps you, like us, feel that we have barely begun to explore the issues in Job. Modern people who have some knowledge of the sciences will recognize similarities in almost every field. There is always more to learn.

We have no reason to doubt God's word because we cannot understand the mysteries of His providence. In the natural world we are constantly surrounded with wonders beyond our comprehension. Should we then be surprised to find in the spiritual world also mysteries that we cannot fathom? The difficulty lies solely in the weakness and narrowness of the human mind.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* 106.2; *Ed* 170.1; *2MCP* 671.1.

2. But, to get the right answers, we must ask the right questions. What was it that Job said or did that was *right* in contrast to what the "friends" said or did? (See Job 1:8; 42:7-8.)
3. Read 2 Corinthians 5:7; 4:18. The most important truths are not the obvious experiences that we have each day. The most important truths are the ones connected to the great controversy over God's character and government and our spiritual relationship with God. Both of these texts are talking about that more important reality.
4. Did any of the people involved in the book of Job understand and really grasp what was going on at the time? They all believed that God was ultimately sovereign and had creative power. But, none of them really understood why all those calamities happened to Job.
5. Have you ever experienced some calamity for which you had no explanation? How should we explain the existence of evil? In our world where many people—especially educated people—doubt the existence of God and certainly the existence of a real, personal Devil, that question is a real challenge. One United States Supreme Court Justice is famous for stating regarding pornography in a certain case, "I know it when I see it."
6. Is that an inherent human reality? Or, is it something that we learn—perhaps from our parents or—from our personal experiences? We need the guidance of the Holy Spirit in making such judgments. Many people today do not think they need any guidance!
7. We should be able to separate evil into two broad classes: Natural and moral. Natural evil is defined by such natural disasters as earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, typhoons, etc. By contrast, moral evil results from the actions or thinking of human beings.
8. As Seventh-day Adventist believers who accept the scriptural accounts, we are certain that the former Lucifer, now Satan, is the one responsible for all evil. The only way to deny this is to reject the clear testimony of Scripture. And what is Satan doing now in our world?
9. Satan is doing everything he possibly can to get us to believe that he does not exist. If he can accomplish that, then when he appears claiming to be Jesus Christ Himself, we will believe him. But, we are warned by the book of Job about the kinds of results that would take place if Satan were in charge. We must not make the mistake that Job's friends did and the Pharisees and most of the Jews did in Jesus's day, that is, blaming God for everything that happens. If we do that, we are playing right into Satan's hands.
10. Read again Job 1:1-2:8. Satan is determined to cause as much havoc as he possibly can, and he is especially determined to prevent a faithful group of God's own people from forming at the

end of time because that would mean final eradication for him.

11. In the case of Job, we understand from Job 1&2 that all the evils that befell Job were a direct result of God allowing Satan to act. Why then do you suppose that the name of Satan never was mentioned in any of the dialogues? Job's accusers blamed God, and they blamed Job; they never blamed Satan. Didn't they know about Satan?
12. So, when disasters and various forms of evil happen in our world today, should we automatically blame Satan? Do not forget James 1:13-15. Most of us have become such easy targets for Satan's temptations that our bad actions have become habits. Satan does not even have to "tempt" us; we just sin out of habit!
13. Read Revelation 12:12; Matthew 4:10; 13:39; Luke 8:12; 13:16; 22:3,31; Acts 5:3; 2 Corinthians 11:14-15; and 1 Peter 5:8. In light of these verses, it is impossible to deny the existence and power of Satan unless you are ready to throw the Bible out.
14. What kind of opinion have you developed regarding Job's friends? When they sat with Job for a week without saying anything, you may have thought they were very sympathetic. But, when Job began to speak bemoaning the tragedies that had befallen him, they began to respond as if it was their job to straighten Job out. Incredible as it may seem to us after reading all of the book of Job—especially Job 1&2, Job's friends believed that they were speaking on God's behalf in their attempts to correct Job's thinking! They felt they needed to find out what terrible sin he had committed because in their view of God, anyone suffering as much as Job was suffering had to have committed a terrible sin! And because Job refused to accept their accusations, they never got beyond the point of accusing him! What had happened to their sympathy and compassion?
15. Even if Job had committed some terrible sin—which he had not—was their approach the right one? Would Job have been helped more by compassion and sympathy? Or, did Job really need correction in his theology?
16. For what did Job repeatedly ask? Contrast the speech of Elihu recorded in Job 37:20! Job pleaded for a chance to talk with God again. In all of his suffering, Job was certain that if he could just talk with God, he would get the answers to his questions. Did he? When God spoke, did He answer Job's questions? Assuming the friends also heard God's speech, were they all ready to say: "God has said it; I believe it, and that settles it for me"? Then God must have shocked them all by saying, "Eliphaz, I am angry with you and your two friends, because you did not speak the truth about me, as my servant Job did." Then God asked them to bring sacrifices and ask Job to pray for them! Then God repeated His accusation: "You did not speak the truth about Me as he did." (See Job 42:7-8.)
17. Did Job's friends ever figure out why God said that? Were they possibly among the group that came to comfort Job as recorded in Job 42:11, *GNB* in these words: "They expressed their sympathy and comforted him for all the troubles the LORD had brought on him. Each of them gave him some money and a gold ring." Had the LORD really brought the troubles onto Job? Or, was it Satan?
18. On a very different occasion, Jesus dealt with a real sinner, the woman caught in adultery. Read John 8:1-11. Did He condemn and accuse her? If Jesus had been the kind of Person who was prone to condemning and accusing, He should have started with the accusers of that woman! But instead, Jesus treated them with compassion.

In His act of pardoning this woman and encouraging her to live a better life, the character of Jesus shines forth in the beauty of perfect righteousness. While He does not palliate sin, nor lessen the sense of guilt, He seeks not to condemn, but to save. The world had for this erring woman only contempt and scorn; but Jesus speaks words of comfort and hope.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 462.3.

19. If you were suffering some terrible calamity either because of an actual sin or for no apparent reason, how would you like your friends to treat you? Is there ever a time when God asks us to judge others? If one of our church members is committing open sin that is bringing shame on the church, it may be necessary for the church to take action; but, in a case like Job's, we should never take our places in the judgment seat of God. That is His responsibility.
20. Our world has become a vast sea of suffering, disease, sickness, poverty, war, crime, depression, pollution, and injustice! Secular writers and atheists struggle with the meaninglessness of lives that they believe have no reason for starting and no reason for ending. It is sometimes called *nihilism* from the Latin word *nihil* which means "nothing."
21. However, the book of Job suggests that every one of us is a part of a much larger theater. Our lives do matter. Our cases will come up individually before God and the universe. (1 Corinthians 4:9) We have the hope of one day returning to heaven and living with God.
22. Many biblical students and scholars have compared the experiences of Job with the experiences of Jesus. These experiences should also be compared to what we have been told will take place at the end of human history. Read Job 1:1 and compare it with 1 John 2:1; James 5:6; and Acts 3:14. Read also Matthew 4:1-11; 26:61; Luke 11:15-16; and John 18:30. What parallels do you see? Jesus and Job were both righteous although Job was not sinless. Through their lives, both of them brought glory to the Father. Both were severely tested by the Devil. Both were falsely accused.
23. But, neither Job nor Jesus collapsed under the pressure. They stayed faithful to God. As wonderful as the story of Job is in his suffering, his faithfulness in the face of terrible accusations is only a small and imperfect reflection of what Jesus our Savior faced on our behalf.
24. One of the questions that has been raised and which we have mentioned briefly was the question: How did God speak out of the storm? We know that God walked with Enoch. He walked and talked with Abraham. He spoke with Moses as a Friend. God Himself was a teacher of Daniel and his friends. (*Prophets and Kings* 486.1) Did He speak to Job often?
25. But, while the book of Job is a great challenge, we, of course, will never get answers to all the questions it raises. For example, we have been told in *Great Controversy* page 678 that we will be studying the plan of salvation and all its implications for the rest of eternity. So, how could we possibly fully comprehend it now!
26. Fortunately for us, the book of Job is a part of a much larger total of inspired Writings to which we can turn to increase our understanding of God.
27. How we understand the book of Job can have enormous implications. Try to imagine yourself living among the Jews in Jesus's day. John 9 and other passages make it clear that they believed that every illness or disaster was a direct result of sin—sin either of the person himself or his parents.

Thus the way was prepared for the Jews to reject Jesus. He who "hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" was looked upon by the Jews as "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;" and they hid their faces from Him. Isa. 53:4, 3.

God had given a lesson designed to prevent this. The history of Job had shown that suffering is inflicted by Satan, and is overruled by God for purposes of mercy. But Israel did not understand the lesson. The same error for which God had reprovved the friends of Job was repeated by the Jews in their rejection of Christ.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 471.2-3.

[Bold type is added.]

28. So, as we come to the end of the book of Job, can we explain God's statement to Eliphaz?

What did Job say that was in stark contrast to what the friends had said?

29. Job's friends' main accusation of Job was that his picture of God was in error. They were sure they were speaking the truth about God, and they ended up quoting the Devil! (Job 4:12-21) Ellen White suggested that even the Devil and his angels will appear to be converted at the end. (2 Corinthians 11:14; GC 588; *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, 405) When the Devil shows up, the whole world will be crying: "Christ has come! Christ has come!" (See *The Great Controversy* 624.2.) And the Devil is God's worst enemy!
30. So, why are all these mistaken and deceptive speeches recorded in the Bible? They are in the Bible to show how their mistaken views led them to misrepresent God and Job! At the end, there will be a great "religious revival"; but, the world will have a wrong picture of God. The Jews had a false picture of God, and Jesus was hoping to correct it.
31. What would you say is the most important lesson you have learned from this quarter's study of the book of Job? Although Satan is determined to do everything he can to harm, harass, and even destroy God's chosen people, the book of Job shows us that if we remain faithful to God, God will take care of us in the end.
- a. **What is the basic issue in the book of Job?** Is it a book about why the righteous suffer? Is it a handbook about how to help people who are suffering? Or, is it a book about whether or not God can correctly judge human beings?
- b. **Did God win His case? Or, did He lose?** In Job 42, God announced that He had won. Does that settle it? If so, He might as well have done that in the beginning and avoided all that suffering. If God could settle things by making a proclamation, there really is no need for all of Scripture and all the suffering that has occurred and is occurring on this earth.
- c. **How did God win His case?** Was He shown to be right in trusting Job? Does God depend on the weight of evidence? Why did He keep His disguise on the road to Emmaus? (Luke 24:13-35; 3SP 214.2)
- d. **Did Job let God down?** Why are some so anxious to show that Job let God down? Then they have real trouble with God's statement at the end! Were there things about which Job and his four friends agreed? God's existence? God's power? God's justice? The only thing that they clearly disagreed on was their picture of God! See Elihu's comment recorded in Job 37:20, *GNB*. Elihu belonged with the Israelites at the foot of Sinai! They believed that might makes right!
32. What were Job's questions that he expressed in the book? In some cases, the questions may only be implied. Look at the following quotations:
- Job 6:8** (*GNB*): Why won't God give me what I ask? Why won't he answer my prayer?
- Job 7:16** (*GNB*): ... My life makes no sense.
- Job 9:4** (*GNB*): God is so wise and powerful; no one can stand up against him.
- Job 9:8** (*GNB*): No one helped God spread out the heavens or trample the sea monster's back.
- Job 9:12** (*GNB*): He takes what he wants, and no one can stop him; no one dares ask him, "What are you doing?"
- Job 9:24** (*GNB*): ... And if God didn't do it, who did?
- Job 9:32** (*GNB*): If God were human, I could answer him; we could go to court to decide our quarrel.

Job 12:10 (GNB): It is God who directs the lives of his creatures; everyone's life is in his power. [Job clearly did not question God's power or His sovereignty.]

Job 13:23-24 (GNB): What are my sins? What wrongs have I done? What crimes am I charged with? Why do you avoid me? Why do you treat me like an enemy?

Job 16:11 (GNB): God has handed me over to evil people.

Job 19:25-27 (GNB): But I know there is someone in heaven who will come at last to my defense.... I will see him with my own eyes, and he will not be a stranger. [Job expected God to be a Friend!]

Job 21:14-16 (GNB): The wicked tell God to leave them alone; they don't want to know his will for their lives.... Their way of thinking I can't accept.

Job 29:2-3 (GNB): ² If only my life could once again

be as it was when God watched over me.

³ God was always with me then

and gave me light as I walked through the darkness.

Job 30:20 (GNB): I call to you, O God, but you never answer; and when I pray, you pay no attention.

Job 31:33 (GNB): Others try to hide their sins, but I have never concealed mine.

Job 31:35 (GNB): Will no one listen to what I am saying? I swear that every word is true. Let Almighty God answer me.

Job 31:37 (GNB): I would tell God everything I have done, and hold my head high in his presence. [Content in brackets is added.]

Summarizing Job 23:1-10: Most of all, Job wanted for God to speak with him.

33. The book of Job might lead us to come to some other conclusions as well:

1. Is it a sin to ask God, "Why?" Is it wrong to cry out to God? What about Jesus on the cross? (Matthew 27:46) How do you compare Job and Jesus? What about David in Psalms 77:10? Or, do real saints say: "No problem! I trust God no matter what happens!"

2. Both Job and Jesus felt that their greatest trouble was that God was not responding to them at the moment. They had had such a close relationship with God that it was devastating to lose that relationship. Do we feel that way about God?

34. In Elijah's experience, God first responded by sending lightning from heaven to consume the sacrifice, the stones of the altar, and the water, leaving a black hole in the ground. But, later, God chose to speak to him in a very small, soft voice. (1 Kings 19:12) Do you think Job would have preferred a "still small voice" instead of the storm? Why did God use a storm in this case?

35. Was this display of power really for the benefit of the onlooking universe and the four friends rather than for Job? The real monster that God "created" and only He can control is the Devil! God is constantly limiting what the Devil can do and preventing him from destroying all of us! (See Job 1&2.)

36. Perhaps, the second most important evidence of God's love and care in the book of Job is His saying to Job: "Please pray for these friends who have misrepresented Me!" (See Job 42:8.)

37. When Job said, "I repent," did God say: "Finally, it's about time! Let's ask these other men to pray for you so you can get your life straightened out"? Did God ever mention Job's sins?

38. What do you think Job said in his prayer for his friends? Did God say to Job: "Because I

created this universe, including the world with all its forms of life, and because I rule over all and control the relationships that exist among living creatures, why should you doubt My capacity to control the affairs of your life? Why should you, with your limited vision, question the justice of My dealings?" Did God expect Job to say, "OK, God, I recognize that You are in charge; so, no problem"? Or, might Job have said: "After listening to your speech, I have more questions than I did before! God, who did this to your beautiful creation?"

39. So, even if we have not experienced significant suffering in our own lives so far, does the book of Job have a message for us? Absolutely yes! God's judgments can be trusted; each one of us, suffering or not, will experience the results of God's judgments whether we are faithful or rebellious.
40. Some theologians have struggled with Job 42:6. Why did Job need to repent?
1. Job demanded that God give him a visible sign of divine blessing and care.
 2. Job thought that God had become his enemy.
 3. Job went too far in his lament and complaint.
 4. Job suffered from pride.
 5. Job was depending on a secondhand religion.
 6. Job was hostile to his friends.—Daniel J. Simundson, *The Message of Job*.
41. How do you feel about the apparent cooperation between God and Satan in the case of Job? Does God often give Satan permission to do terrible things? Read 2 Samuel 24:1 and 1 Chronicles 21:1. These verses superficially appear to be in contradiction. But, if we take a God-centered view of things, we realize that, as in the case of Job, Satan may choose to do something; and with God's permission, he causes a lot of trouble. But, it is still true that God and Satan are both in one way or another responsible.

42. Could we summarize the issues in the book of Job as follows?

1. Can God's judgment be trusted? Did Job let God down?

The Devil would have done anything to destroy Job, not because he really cared about Job but because of what Job proved about God!

2. Did God win His case in the book of Job?

Did God need to prove that He was more powerful than the Devil? (See James 2:19.) No! God simply allowed the evidence to accumulate. God is still teaching the universe about Himself by the way He deals with us. (Ephesians 1:7-10; 3:7-10; Colossians 1:19-20)

3. How did God win His case?

Did God win in the book of Job by making a pronouncement about His power? (See James 2:19.) If God could win by making a claim about Himself, why bother with the whole great controversy? God is prepared to bend down and wash our dirty feet to show how He feels about us! (John 13:1-11) How many religions, even Christian churches, have that kind of God? God wins by the way the Spirit works! (Compare Zechariah 4:6.)

43. What is the most important thing that you have learned from the book of Job?

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