

The Book of Job

Curse the Day

Lesson #5 for October 29, 2016

Scriptures: Job 3:1-10; 6:1-3; 7:17-21; John 11:11-14; James 4:14; Psalm 8:4-6.

1. Have you read all the way through the book of Job recently? Fortunately for us, but unfortunately for Job, we know about Job 1&2 and Job 42 but he didn't. What if Job had known? Have you tried to imagine yourself going through the experience of Job or even of Job's wife? Can you imagine yourself reduced to mourning and grieving on a pile of ashes?
2. Read Job 3:1-10. When tragedy strikes, it is human nature to try to find someone or something to blame. In ancient times when unexpected tragedy struck and no apparent reason could be found for it, it was customary in polytheistic societies to blame some evil god. But, for those who believed that there was only one God, there was a dilemma; should they blame that one God? Clearly, Job believed in only one God; he could not explain either to himself or to his friends in a convincing way why these things were happening to him. In that context in his grief and depression, it seemed better to Job just to ask God to let him rest in death, concluding that it would have been better if he had not been born rather than to go on living an unexplainable life. Try to imagine yourself in Job's position, trying to figure out what possible meaning could come from all that had happened to him.
3. We know that hour by hour and minute by minute, our lives are preserved and sustained by the power of God. (Acts 17:25,28; Revelation 4:11) Modern science has tried to figure out what the essence of life is. In fact, they cannot even define exactly what life is! Or, what separates life from death. Is a bacteria alive? Is a virus alive?
4. Have you ever wondered in a moment of despair whether your life was worth anything? There is an ancient Greek legend about the god Dionysius, the god of wine, and his friend Silenus who was drunk most of the time.

When intoxicated, Silenus was said to possess special knowledge and the power of prophecy. The Phrygian King Midas was eager to learn from Silenus and caught the old man by lacing a fountain from which Silenus often drank. As Silenus fell asleep, the king's servants seized and took him to their master. Silenus shared with the king a pessimistic philosophy: ***That the best thing for a man is not to be born, and if already born, to die as soon as possible.***—Plutarch (A.D. 46-A.D. 120)[1878]. "Consolation to Apollonius". *The Morals*, vol. 1. Online Library of Liberty. (Quoted at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silenus#cite_note-4. [Bold type is added; italic type is on Wikipedia.]

5. Almost all of us have gone through times of discouragement, perhaps even depression; but, eventually, things usually work out for the better. So, for Christians, is it helpful to recognize that God Himself has come to this earth and lived and died for us? Is it helpful to recognize that there is a future immortal life possible for each one of us? That may not take the current pain away; but, it would give us something to look forward to!
6. Read Job 3:11-26. When every movement is painful and it is impossible even to sleep, is it any wonder that Job thought that it would have been better if he had never been born? Or, if he had been born, that he had died at a very young age? We would think it almost an unimaginable tragedy to lose a single child. Job lost all ten at one time. How would you survive that? Did he ask the Lord why he did not die instead of his children? How much time did Job and his wife spend mourning the deaths of their children? Later in the book, we are

going to learn that Job's "friends" claimed that those children must have deserved to die! (Job 8:4) How would that make you feel? Remember that Job had offered sacrifices on behalf of his children every time they had gotten together for any kind of a gathering or party. (Job 1:5)

7. As Christians, we are aware of the wonderful promises of God about the future. We are also aware of what has taken place in the past and is now spread out on the pages of sacred history. So, if we understand and believe what the Bible says, we will remember that what happens in this life is just the blink of an eye in comparison with the lives that God is preparing for us in the better land. Whatever happens in this very brief life span on planet earth is just the tiniest, briefest beginning of God's plan for us. God wants us to live forever!
8. As we will note a little later, most of the book of Job consists of Job speaking, then one or more of his friends responding, and then Job answering their response; back and forth it goes. So, in Job 4&5, Eliphaz one of Job's friends gave his first speech. We will examine it next week. But, in Job 6&7, Job continued his speech: "If my troubles and griefs were weighed on scales, they would weigh more than the sands of the sea, so my wild words should not surprise you." (Job 6:1, *GNB*)
9. Surely, this lament is an example of the fact that Job was struggling to think of some metaphor that was large enough to be compared to his suffering and pain. Job's pain was real to him; and our pain is real to us. We can never truly feel the pain of another individual. We can have sympathy for them, and that sympathy may cause us pain; but, that is our pain and not theirs. It is not possible for us to really feel anyone else's pain or suffering. Do you agree with that premise? This is not to suggest that there is nothing like compassion or pity or empathy. But, when we have compassion or empathy, we are taking a certain amount of psychological pain on us as a result of our sympathy for them; but, that pain then becomes ours and not theirs.
10. Surely, we would recognize that only Jesus can fully understand and commiserate with our pain. He has explored the depths of pain and suffering for each of us. In fact, the pain He felt was on a level we can hardly comprehend. Consider these words about the cross:

But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt.—Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages* 753.1. [Bold type is added.]

11. Do we feel pain every time we are tempted to sin? Can we even understand what it means to feel pain because of being separated from the Father?
12. In Scripture God has promised us that He will not allow us to be tempted beyond our capacity to endure.
1 Corinthians 10:13: Every test that you have experienced is the kind that normally comes to people. But God keeps his promise, and he will not allow you to be tested beyond your power to remain firm; at the time you are put to the test, he will give you the strength to endure it, and so provide you with a way out.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation* (2nd ed., 1 Corinthians 10:13). New York: American Bible Society.
13. Does it help to know that God will not allow us "to be tested beyond our power to remain firm"? Does that mean that if we are faithful to God, we can expect to be tested a great deal?
14. The Bible clearly states that men and women who lived before the flood lived for hundreds

of years. We are told that Methuselah lived 969 years. But, 969 years is still a mere drop in the bucket compared to eternity. So, what about our lives? Do we recognize every day that this brief existence which is nothing more than a puff of smoke or a wisp of wind is just a preparation time for eternity? (Job 7:1-11; Psalm 39:5,11; James 4:14) Believing and accepting that your life is nothing more than a puff of wind could be really a problem if we did not have promises for the future.

15. Notice that in a few verses, Job went from wishing that he were dead (Job 6:8-10) to worrying that life is so short! (Job 7:7-11) Have you ever had similar feelings? How much did Job know about the future life? So, whether our lives are good or bad, blessed or cursed, they only last a very brief time considering the perspective of eternity.

Job 19:25-27 (GNB): ²⁵ But I know there is someone in heaven who will come at last to my defense.

26 Even after my skin is eaten by disease, while still in this body I will see God.

27 I will see him with my own eyes, and he will not be a stranger.

16. How does that fit with his cry recorded in Job 7:7 (GNB): “Remember, O God, my life is only a breath; my happiness has already ended”?
17. Read Job 7:17-21. What was Job trying to say by these words? What questions were being raised? Given his situation, were his questions rational?
18. It seemed to Job like God was punishing him non-stop. Job was begging for just a little respite. How he must have longed for a comfortable night’s sleep! He was asking if God didn’t have something else to do besides causing him all that pain!
19. Job’s arguments and statements in these two or three chapters that we have looked at raise one of the great existential questions: Why are we here? Included in the question is a second question: Who are we? What are men and women? Where did we come from? Surely, Job could not understand why in God’s vast universe, God and Satan seemed to be focusing their attention only on Job!
20. Many of our Christian friends believe that nothing we do here on this earth can really affect God in any way. They say that He is Sovereign, way above us; He does not have time to bother Himself with the minor things that trouble us. The whole story of Job is a clear rebuttal to that argument. (John 3:16; 1 John 3:1)
21. But, there are many people who consider Christianity as basically irrelevant to life in our times. Why is that? Are they fulfilling the prophecy recorded in 2 Peter 3:3-13?

“In an era so unprecedentedly illuminated by science and reason, the ‘good news’ of Christianity became less and less convincing a metaphysical structure, less secure a foundation upon which to build one’s life, and less psychologically necessary. The sheer improbability of the whole nexus of events was becoming painfully obvious—that an infinite, eternal God would have suddenly become a particular human being in a specific historical time and place only to be ignominiously executed. That a single brief life taking place two millennia earlier in an obscure primitive nation, on a planet now known to be a relatively insignificant piece of matter revolving about one star among billions in an inconceivably vast and impersonal universe—that such an undistinguished event should have any overwhelming cosmic or eternal meaning could no longer be a compelling belief for reasonable men. It was starkly implausible that the universe as a whole would have any pressing interest in this minute part of its immensity—if it had any ‘interests’ at all. Under the spotlight of the modern

demand for public, empirical, scientific corroboration of all statements of belief, the essence of Christianity withered.”—Richard Tarnas, *Passion of the Western Mind* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991), p. 305.—Quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Friday, October 28.

22. How would you answer that writer? Are Christians being irrational in believing that Jesus Christ will come back again, possibly in our day? Is it irrational to believe in anything that cannot be proven by science or reason?
23. Why is it that the skeptics are not questioning the writings of Aristotle, Plato, or Socrates? There are many things in history which cannot be proven by reason or science. Christians believe that God has not only become man, but also that He will return; and after the millennium, He will turn this tiny little blue marble in space into His headquarters!

Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.—Ellen White, *Christ's Object Lessons* 69.1.

What will the sceptics say then? (Revelation 6:16)

24. How would you answer the question: “What is man?” (Job 7:17, *KJV*) Or, “What is woman?” How would your answer be different from the answer of an evolutionist or an atheist?
25. While there are many people in our day who choose to take their own lives and/or the lives of others, most of us do our very best to cling to life. Why is that? Is it because we are afraid of the unknown? What does the cross teach us about the value of human life? God has told us that Jesus Christ would have died for just one of us. (*8T* 72.3)
26. Do the thoughts expressed by Job in our lesson for this week seem very morbid to you? As Christians we do not believe that suicide is an option. Did Samson commit suicide?
27. As Job was talking about dying, it is important to notice his idea about what happens when one dies? Did he dream of going directly to heaven? He looked forward to a resurrection! (Job 29:26-27) Did he look forward to seeing God immediately? Did he talk of playing a harp with the angels? None of those things were mentioned. Instead, Job talked about lying quietly in the grave, asleep, at rest. (See Job 3:13-14. Compare Ecclesiastes 9:5 and John 11:11-14.) Job stated what others after him also stated: Death is only an extended sleep until the Lord calls us back to life again either at the second coming or at the third coming. (John 5:28-29)
28. Read Genesis 2:7 (*GNB*). In a very simple and straightforward few words the Bible says: “Then the LORD God took some soil from the ground and formed a man out of it; he breathed life-giving breath into his nostrils and the man began to live.”
29. This verse should make it very clear that a body, formed from the soil, having the life-giving breath of God breathed into it becomes a living being or a living soul. When a person dies and the life-giving breath of God ceases in his body, he does not disappear to float off somewhere; he no longer is a being or a soul; he is a dead body.
30. How did Job know about the “state of the dead” or perhaps better stated: The “nature of man”? Do any of us have immortality in us? Did God and Job discuss that issue in some of their previous conversations? Or, did that information come to Job from his ancestors?
31. So, what did Job say about the state of the living? (Read Job 7:17-21; 14:13-15; 19:25-26; and John 3:16.)
32. Consider the following from the Bible study guide.

Job talks about human life as being fleeting (*Job 14:2*), contrasting human mortality with God's exclusive immortality (*1 Tim. 6:16*). Then he compares human death to a sleep (*Job 14:10-12*; compare *Ps. 13:3*; *Jer. 51:39, 57*; *Dan. 12:2*), during which there is no conscious state (*Eccles. 9:5, 6*).

As there is harmony in Scripture and continuity between the Old and New Testaments, this imagery of death as a sleep is taken up in the New Testament and applied in the most dramatic way by Jesus Himself to the death of His friend Lazarus (*John 11:11-14*). His disciples and apostles reiterate throughout their writings this understanding of death as a sleep (*Acts 7:60*; *1 Cor. 15:51, 52*; *1 Thess. 4:13-17*; *2 Pet. 3:4*). Finally, the closing scenes of the book of Revelation refer to a time when there will be no more suffering and death (*Rev. 21:4*), following a resurrection to eternal life or to final destruction (*1 Cor. 15:26*; *Rev. 2:11*; *20:14*; *21:8*).—*Adult Teacher's Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* 68.

33. How pervasive is the belief in the immortality of the soul? The ideas behind the belief in the immortality of the soul came directly from the Devil. He refuses to believe that he has condemned himself to eternal destruction. He told Eve that God's statement was a lie when He said that they would die if they ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge! (See Genesis 3:1-5.) During Satan's very first encounter with humans, he accused God of being a liar! Because of the commonly held view that God will stoke the fires of hell where the wicked will be tortured for eternity, many have been led to come to the conclusion that God is arbitrary, exacting, vengeful, unforgiving, and severe. The eternally-burning hell is necessary if humans are naturally immortal and if some of us are not fit to be taken to heaven.
34. How did you respond when a friend or loved one died? We believe that such a person is sleeping and that s/he has no awareness of what is happening here on earth or anywhere else at the time; s/he awaits the day of her/his resurrection. Is that a more satisfying belief than the idea that they are floating around on a cloud, looking down at us?
35. Do you feel that our understanding of the state of the dead is more plausible from a scientific point of view and more satisfying from a religious point of view than the ideas proposed by those who believe in the immortality of the soul?
36. What makes the Bible stories believable? The stories are real, and people's sins are discussed! Would we have even heard about Jesus Christ if He had not risen from the grave?
37. When reading the Bible stories, it is an excellent idea and a wonderful exercise to try to put ourselves in that place as far as possible. There is an old Native American proverb that says that in order to understand a man, one should walk a mile in his moccasins. Could we do that with the story of Job?
38. We need to note that much of the rest of Job was written in poetic form. (*Job 3:3-42:6*) There are two important points to know about Hebrew poetry. It does not have rhyme or rhythm as our English poetry does. But, it uses parallelism to emphasize important points. For example, read *Job 8:3 (NKJV)*: "Does God subvert justice? How does the Almighty pervert justice?" We can see that the first sentence in this verse is parallel to the second.
39. Another important poetic device is Job's potent, rich imagery which is used throughout the book. These images come largely from everyday life in ancient times.
40. In this lesson we have focused on some laments from Job. We need to recognize that they are, in fact, laments. But, he went to the right place with his laments; he went directly to God. We are told:

Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before

God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of His children. “The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” James 5:11. **His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them.** Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. **Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice.** There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel. **No calamity can befall the least of His children, no anxiety harass the soul, no joy cheer, no sincere prayer escape the lips, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which He takes no immediate interest.** “He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.” Psalm 147:3. ***The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watchcare, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son.***—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* 100.1. [Bold type and italic type are added.]

41. Finally, let us look briefly at the structure of the book of Job in the following outline as taken from the *Adult Sabbath School Teacher's Bible Study Guide*, page 67:
1. Prologue (*Job 1, 2*)—written in prose
 2. Job's first lament (*Job 3*)—from here onward until chapter 42:7, written in poetry
 3. First cycle of dialogues: Eliphaz (*Job 4, 5*); Job (*Job 6, 7*); Bildad (*Job 8*); Job (*Job 9, 10*); Zophar (*Job 11*); Job (*Job 12-14*)
 4. Second cycle of dialogues: Eliphaz (*Job 15*); Job (*Job 16, 17*); Bildad (*Job 18*); Job (*Job 19*); Zophar (*Job 20*); Job (*Job 21*)
 5. Third cycle of dialogues: Eliphaz (*Job 22*); Job (*Job 23, 24*); Bildad (*Job 25*); Job (*Job 26, 27*) [*Job 24:18-25* may be from Zophar and *Job 26:5-14* may be from Bildad. Zophar may return in *Job 27:13-23*.]
 6. Job's monologue (*Job 28-31*)
 7. Elihu's speech (*Job 32-37*)
 8. God's response and Job's repentance (*Job 38-42:6*)
 9. Epilogue (*Job 42:7-17*)—written in prose [However, the real conclusion to the story of Job is in the epilogue. (*Job 42:7-17*)] [Content in brackets is added; italic type is in the original.]
42. These cycles end up being fairly repetitive: Job spoke and then one of his friends responded whereupon Job spoke again and another friend responded. Many of the same points were repeated by Job's friends.
43. In a previous lesson, we spoke quite extensively about theodicy and our understanding of the great controversy and cosmic conflict. Once again, we would like to state that without a correct understanding of the great controversy over the character and government of God, it is difficult to answer many of the questions raised in Scripture and in our daily lives. What have you learned about God from this study from the book of Job?

© 2016, Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution of all or of a portion of this material such as to a Bible study class is encouraged. Info@theox.org

Last Modified: September 2, 2016

Z:\My Documents\WP\SSSTG-Hart\Job\SS-5-Job-2016_10_29-Fin+.wpd