

The Book of Job

Innocent Blood

Lesson #8 for November 19, 2016

Scriptures: Job 1:18-20; 10; 15:14-16; Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:10-20; Matthew 6:34.

1. Read Hebrews 11:1 (*GNB*): “To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see.”

Algerian-born writer Albert Camus struggled with the question of human suffering. In his book *The Plague*, he used a plague as a metaphor for the ills that bring pain and suffering upon humanity. He depicted a scene in which a little boy, afflicted with the pestilence, dies a horrific death. Afterward a priest, who had been a witness to the tragedy, said to a doctor who had been there too: “That sort of thing is revolting because it passes our human understanding. But perhaps we should love what we cannot understand.” The doctor, enraged, snapped back: “No, Father. I’ve a very different idea of love. And until my dying day, I shall refuse to love a scheme of things in which children are put to torture.”—Albert Camus, *The Plague* (New York: First Vintage International Edition, 1991), p. 218.—Quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Sabbath, November 12.

In what ways did Job suffer? Guilt about causing the deaths of his children? His pain? The loss of friendship of his “friends”? The accusations of his friends?

2. Is it possible to make sense of the world in which we live? Is it fair that thousands of children are dying in war-ravaged Syria and other countries at war? Is it fair that billions of people are being born in countries with little or no access to the truth about God?
3. In much of the book of Job, we find that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were doing their best under the inspiration of the Devil to break down Job. Much of what they said might actually have been true. It is true that we are all sinners. But, in Job’s case, he was not suffering because of his sins. In fact, he was suffering because according to God’s righteous judgment he was “blameless and upright”! Was that fair? Elsewhere in the Bible, we find numerous examples of people who did die because of their own sins, beginning with many in the flood; then proceeding on to Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and others. But, what about some who may not have died because of their own sins such as the firstborn in Egypt who died in the 10th plague and the 185,000 Assyrian soldiers who died outside Jerusalem. We could mention many other people who probably died because of their own rebellion. But, the book of Job is troubling because Job did not suffer and Job’s children did not die because of their own sin(s) or Job’s sin(s) although his three friends were certain that it must have been because of their sins. Imagine how Job felt, being accused by them when he knew he did not deserve it.
4. Read Job 9&10. Job was beginning to feel that God was the One punishing him—or at least allowing him to be punished. Do you agree with the general principle that, ultimately, nothing can happen without God’s approval? Job proceeded to discuss his own case by saying: “Why did You create me if You were just planning to destroy me later?” At that point in the story, Job was convinced that he had only a short time to live, and he asked God just to leave him alone!
5. Look specifically at Job 9:24 (*GNB*): “God gave the world to the wicked. He made all the judges blind. **And if God didn’t do it, who did?**” [Bold type is added.] Is that the critical

question in the book of Job? Did Job know about Genesis 3 and the Devil? Why wasn't the Devil mentioned in any of the discussions after Job 2?

6. See handout: "If God Didn't Do It, Who Did?" at: www.theox.org under "Teacher's Guides," then "Writings."
7. In his suffering, even Job wished that he had never been born. Or, perhaps, if he was born, to die before he took his first breath. Can you blame him? I am sure that he could not even get a good night's sleep!
8. Can you think of others who might have been suffering because of their righteousness or good deeds? Jesus, of course. And what about Joseph? And Daniel? Did Paul suffer because he was good? Paul, writing to Timothy not long before his own beheading, said in 2 Timothy 3:12: "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in union with Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Do you think that is true even today? At least on occasion?
9. There are a couple of facts which make this whole discussion difficult:
 - 1) We are all sinners and, thus, ultimately, all deserve to die. But, Job knew that he had not done some horrendously awful sin that was responsible for his suffering. So, why did all that happen to him? As we have stated on several occasions, we believe it is impossible to explain what was happening in this story or in much of the evil events in the history of our world without an understanding of the great controversy over God's character and government.
 - 2) We must also remember that we are in the middle of that great controversy but that the great controversy itself will only last for a brief period of time in contrast to the eternity which God promises to give all His faithful people.
10. If we believe that the righteous are going to end up living with God in a perfect environment for the rest of eternity, why do they need to go through a lot of suffering to be given a place there? Are there people suffering in Job-like experiences even today?
11. Read Deuteronomy 29:19; Isaiah 59:7; Jeremiah 22:17; and Joel 3:19. These verses explain that bad things will happen even to innocent people. We must remember, of course, our first point above. As someone once said: "Your birth certificate is proof of your guilt." Why do the news agencies follow the general principle which says: "If it bleeds, it leads"? Our news is just full of murders, crime, and other disasters.
12. Do Seventh-day Adventists believe in *Original Sin*? Before you answer that question, you must determine what *Original Sin* or *Original Guilt* means. If you mean by *Original Sin* that just as Adam and Eve sinned we all have followed their example, it is true. (Romans 5:12) But, if you mean by *Original Sin* that we are somehow sinful or guilty because of Adam's Original Sin, as taught by Augustine, that is not true. We are guilty because of our own sins. (Romans 5:12) However, it is true that because of their sin, we no longer have the option of living in the Garden of Eden. So, Adam and Eve's sin has condemned us to live in a world filled with unfairness, sin, tragedies, and suffering.
13. There are a number of passages in the Bible that clearly say that we are all sinners. That includes 1 Kings 8:46; Psalm 51:5; Proverbs 20:9; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Isaiah 53:6; and Romans 3:10-20,23.

Romans 3:23 (GNB): "Everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence."

14. In light of all the above, wouldn't life be hopeless without knowing about the life and death of Jesus Christ and what He accomplished for us through the cross? At the same time, as we look at the Pattern, we each must realize how far we have fallen from that Pattern.
15. Read Job 15:14-16. In these verses Eliphaz was repeating a portion of what he received in that night vision from the Devil himself as recorded in Job 4:12-21. While it is true that we are all frail creatures of clay and could die at any moment and also that sin and suffering are universal facts of life on this earth, we can look beyond all of that to God's promise of a future, better life. Have you ever talked to someone who really believes in the "Big Bang" and asked him/her what hope s/he has for the future? S/he might say as others have said, "I try not to think about it!" Does God need to refine the lives even of His chosen children?

God has always tried His people in the furnace of affliction. It is in the heat of the furnace that the dross is separated from the true gold of the Christian character.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* 129.3; *Compare 4T* 18.2; RH, June 16, 1885, par. 12; April 17, 1894, par. 3.

16. Having read the entire book of Job on more than one occasion, you might be able to say that many people have learned important lessons from this book. It is one of the clearest places in Scripture for us to view what goes on in the great controversy. But, there are many instances of suffering for which—from our limited perspective—we can see no reason. How do we explain the death of those apparently innocent Christians who have been killed in one way or another down through the ages? What about those who are suffering, having never known anything about God? And what about those whose terrible experiences have only made them more angry and hateful toward God? Have they learned anything?
17. What about the suffering of animals who die in a forest fire? What about animals who are mercilessly beaten by their masters? What about the thousands of people who have died in natural disasters or who were civilians caught in the midst of war? Think of Syria! Would those people somehow fit into the same category as Job's first 10 children?
18. When considering such cases, we must never forget that every single one of those people will be raised either at the second coming or the third coming and will see the part they played in the great controversy when that fantastic panorama which God is preparing appears in the sky. (See John 5:28-29 and *Great Controversy* 666-668.)
19. Let me go on! The children who die of cancer, young college women who are sexually assaulted and killed, and the over-19,000 Japanese killed in the 2011 Tohoku earthquake. Were all of those people guilty of some horrendous sin? When we first went to Africa in 1970, around 50% of children died before they reached the age of 5!
20. Think of the people pictured in the following verses: Job 1:18-20 - Job's first family; Genesis 4:8 - Abel; Exodus 12:29-30 - the firstborn in Egypt; 2 Samuel 11:17 - Uria, the Hittite; Jeremiah 38:6 - Jeremiah when he was thrown into the pit; Matthew 14:10 - John the Baptist being beheaded; and Hebrews 11:35-38 - where brief mention is made of many who suffered in various ways in the Old Testament. The Devil is the one who is constantly arguing with God: "How can you save all of these sinners and still destroy me?"
21. Those who believe that if we are faithful to God, we will avoid suffering can only support their teachings by a very selective collection of a few verses in the Bible. But, 2 Timothy 3:12 does not support their ideas.
22. Jesus Himself suggested that every day has enough evil on its own. (Matthew 6:34) The

Greek word *evil* in that verse means badness, depravity, even malignity.

23. Read Proverbs 3:5 (*GNB*): “Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Never rely on what you think you know.” But, we do not need to go to ancient stories in the Bible to recognize the evil that surrounds every one of us. And it affects us in many ways. One of the arguments that people have repeatedly used to support their views is the idea that “everyone knows that.”

Job 14:1-2: ¹ We are all born weak and helpless.

All lead the same short, troubled life.

² We grow and wither as quickly as flowers;

we disappear like shadows.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation* (2nd ed., Job 14:1-2). New York: American Bible Society.

24. Job is the one who said those words. The brevity of this life was one thing that both sides seemed to agree upon.
25. After studying even this first part of the book of Job, it should be impossible to deny the existence of a personal Satan. (See especially Job 1&2.) Without an understanding of the great controversy, it is virtually impossible to rationally explain the existence of evil. Even with an understanding of the great controversy, there are still some things which seem so unfair.
26. However, as Christians we still have hope because we have faith in that relationship with God on which we must rely. What happened to the disciples between crucifixion Friday and Pentecostal Sunday? They realized the truth about the future life and that Jesus was God.
27. **Hebrews 11:1** (*GNB*): “To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see.”
28. Based on the experiences we have had and that we have seen, is it easy to learn how to trust God for the things we cannot see? Or, do our current surroundings make it very difficult to trust God?
29. Albert Camus who we mentioned at the beginning of this lesson was an atheist. In another location he stated:
- There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy.—*The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 3.
30. Having read Job 1&2, we are alerted to a source of trouble that we could not have dreamed of otherwise. Suffering becomes a universe-wide issue. And our world becomes the theater of that universe. (1 Corinthians 4:9)
31. But, what assurance do we have of what the final result of this conflict will be? Read Revelation 21:1-4. No matter how many evil things attack us or affect us, we must hold firmly to the promise of these verses. Isn't that worth looking forward to?
32. There are many Christians in our world who believe that Christ's judgment consists of His holding up scales on which He places our good deeds on one side and our bad deeds on the other. If the good deeds outweigh the bad deeds, we can be saved; but, if the bad deeds outweigh the good deeds, we are sent to suffer in hell.

German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer used a powerful example to debunk that whole notion of some sort of balance between good and evil in this world now. “The pleasure in this world,” he wrote, “it has been said, outweighs the pain; or, at any rate, there is an even balance between the two. If the reader wishes to see shortly whether this statement is true, let him compare the respective feelings of two animals, one of which is engaged in eating the other.” How would you respond to the idea that good somehow balances out the evil?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Friday, November 18.

33. We know very well that in the Garden of Eden and in the future in the earth made new, there were/will be no carnivorous animals. When and how did those carnivorous creatures get started?
34. Do all cases of suffering cause us to trust God more? Or, should we just grow more bitter toward God? How can a knowledge of suffering—either our own or that of others—help to strengthen our faith? How much of the time does our own sinful condition contribute to our suffering?
35. In light of the fact that so many wars have been started because of religious intolerance toward others whose beliefs are different, how should we feel about the undeserved suffering resulting from war, terrorism, etc. Is your natural reaction to be angry at God for allowing all of that?
36. Ellen White spoke of a group of people that she saw in vision in heaven with red borders on their garments. She was told that those people will be especially honored because they died martyrs’ deaths. Is that enough reason for us to say that the suffering should be tolerated?

As we were traveling along, we met a company who also were gazing at the glories of the place. I noticed red as a border on their garments; their crowns were brilliant; their robes were pure white. As we greeted [19] them, I asked Jesus who they were. He said they were martyrs that had been slain for Him. With them was an innumerable company of little ones; they also had a hem of red on their garments.—Ellen White, *The Day Star* (January 24, 1846, par. 1); *A Word to the Little Flock* 17.1 (1847); *Experience and Views* 14.1 (1850); *Early Writings* 18.2-19.0.

37. Read Matthew 2:13-18. Surely, this story should tear at the hearts of all rational beings. Satan desperately wanted to destroy the Messiah that he knew was coming. He had tried to do it by killing the baby boys in Egypt at the time of Moses. (Exodus 1:15-18) He had tried to do it by destroying all the Jewish people in the days of Esther. (Esther 3) He knew that if the Messiah Jesus could live a sinless life and die that cruel death illustrating the true consequence of sin, it would guarantee his—Satan’s—ultimate destruction.
38. And what about the people who are wrongly convicted of crimes? Recently, a gentleman was released from prison where he had spent 25 years of his life for a crime that he did not commit. What would you say to him about the fairness of God?
39. Why do you think God felt it was necessary to call Job “blameless and upright” before the entire group of representatives from around the universe? Remember that God, of course, knew what the result would be.
40. In Job 10 where we started our lesson, Job effectively said to God, “Please let me alone

so that I can suffer in peace.” “Isn’t my life almost over? Leave me alone! Let me enjoy the time I have left.” (Job 10:20, *GNB*) Isn’t that a reasonable request?

41. How would you answer Job with his arguments that the God who formed him perfect in his mother’s womb should have let him die in infancy?

Both the Old and New Testaments are clear on the sinful nature of humanity. Paul, in Romans 3:10-20, quotes the Old Testament directly at least eight times, mostly from the book of Psalms (*Ps. 5:9, 10:7, 14:1-3, 36:1, 53:1-3, 140:3, Prov. 1:16, Isa. 59:7*), embedding his theology of the sinful nature of humankind deeply into the Old Testament worldview. God created Adam and Eve in His image (*Gen. 1:26-28*), but with the Fall, the image in the first human couple was marred and all their descendants share the fallen nature, born with weaknesses and tendencies to sin (*Ps. 51:5, Rom. 5:12-17*).—*Adult Teacher’s Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* 109.

42. In light of these speeches that we have considered, including the accusations of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar as well as Job’s responses, do you see any reason for hope? Any comfort? Or, do they promote confusion and questions about the character of God? As we have mentioned in previous lessons, God places a very high value on every single human soul. He would have sent His Son to die for just one of us. Such a thing seems unimaginable to us.
43. What questions would you like to ask Christian martyrs when you meet them in heaven? What questions would you have for groups like the Waldensees who lived under very difficult circumstances between the 12th and the 16th centuries A.D.? In this series of lessons so far, do you feel that you are coming closer to understanding what was going on in the case of Job? Or, are you still puzzled by it all?

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