

The Book of Job

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MAP

Job 1 – October 25, 2017

I. Introduction1:1-2:13

Prov. 10:19 cautions us against many words. But there is a lot of talking in this book:

There are 35 chapters of man talking in chapters 3-37.

There are 4 chapters of God talking, chapters 38-41.

There are 3 chapters of storyline narrative in chapters 1-2 and 42.

A. Job's spiritual and material prosperity..... 1:1-5

Job as an example: blameless, upright, feared God, shunned evil. Sacrificed on behalf of his sons, as the family's "high priest," just in case his sons may have sinned against God. Job was so concerned about sin that even the potential of doing sin bothered his soul greatly. Job seemed to acknowledge that he was a sinner (7:21). Regardless, we know that he was, for all men without exception are sinners.

Verse 3 lists Job's wealth, and it is substantial. He was famous in his day because of his greatness, perhaps like Bill Gates or Warren Buffet today in monetary terms (but not spiritual terms).

Job is not presented here primarily as an example, however. What the Bible is doing is telling us is that God, at times, permits righteous people to suffer. Job is one of, if not *the* prime example of such suffering in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, Jesus is the ultimate example (1 Peter 2:21-24). After the first century, the Christian church is full of examples of suffering people who, although not perfectly righteous or even as righteous as Job, did indeed suffer despite their spiritual and even material prosperity (Philippians 1:29, 1 Peter 3:14).

See excursus on Job as Priest at the end of these notes.

B. The first affliction..... 1:6-22

Satan is introduced..... 1:6-7

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We should be content to "fly under the radar" and not have God mention us like this to Satan! But God had a purpose in it, which extended not only to Job and his friends, but also to all who would be instructed and comforted over the centuries by what happened to Job.

Satan interacts with God about Job..... 1:9-12

Satan exhibits a very bad thought process when he says that Job fears God only because of the gifts that God gives, including protection and material prosperity. If God were to remove those things, Satan says, Job would curse God.

What does this tell you about the purpose of the book of Job? It appears to me that one thing we can learn from it is that true believers do not love God just because of the blessings God gives. They love God for who He is and for His saving grace. They fear and love God even if they have trials (and they know that God permitted those trials). Job had a true relationship with God. What God will accomplish, among other things, by permitting Satan to try Job, is to show that Satan was wrong and that God-fearing people do not just love God for His gifts.

So that is what God did—he permitted Satan to take away Job’s prosperity. Here we have not only the “anti-prosperity” gospel, but we have the truth that God is in charge of Satan. The devil could do nothing without God’s permission. That is a big truth.

Job’s Troubles Begin 1:13-19

All that Job had was taken away: oxen, donkeys, plow equipment, the servants with them were killed, the sheep were taken, those servants were killed, camels were taken, those servants were killed, and his sons and daughters died in a windstorm. Everything listed in 1:3 was wiped out.

Don’t overlook the servants—many of them were killed. Satan was not allowed to touch Job, but God permitted him to take the lives of many, probably at least dozens, of servants. This seems like heavy collateral damage, but we have to trust God with this issue just like Job learned to trust God by the end of his experience.

Job has just received the news that in terms of family, household, and material prosperity, he has been reduced to basically zero in less than a day.

Job’s Response..... 1:20-22

Job exhibited great grief mixed with worship of God. He recognized, first, that he started with nothing, and perhaps God was using this situation to bring him closer to the end of his life, when once again he would leave with nothing. He recognized, second, that God is the one who gives all things, and God therefore can take away all things as He pleases. Just as we bless God when He gives, we ought to be like Job and bless God when He takes away, because that too is His good pleasure.

The chapter ends with this true statement: Job did not sin, and he did not charge God with sin. Job was able to grieve without sinning. So can we. Job was also able to navigate the situation in such a way that he did not get angry with God or charge God with wrongdoing, as many humans often do. (Just 10/24/2017, during writing of these notes, well known news commentator Bill O’Reilly said he was mad at God for not protecting him from false claims about his behavior. He just failed where Job shined.)

It is amazing how often people do in fact attempt to pin a charge against God, as if God is at fault for *our* sin or *Satan's* misbehavior. True—God permitted Satan. But if he didn't, then the unbeliever would whine that God doesn't give us free will—so God cannot win.

Job 2 – November 1, 5, and 8 2017

C. The second affliction..... 2:1-10

Introduction

The fact that Job was righteous is acknowledged in **Ezekiel 14:14–20**. Verses 13 and 14: “Son of man, when a land sins against Me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will stretch out My hand against it; I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man and beast from it. Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness,” says the Lord GOD.” The three men are mentioned again in verses 16, 18, and 20 as the Lord lays out a series of four judgments that He would use against a country that rebels against Him. Jerusalem’s judgment will be even worse than this, God says through the prophet in verse 21-22.

Furthermore, the fact that Job persevered in his suffering is mentioned by **James in 5:11** “Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord-- that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.”

We also learn from James that God had a purpose / end in what He permitted Satan to do to Job. James summarizes the message of Job by saying that the goal was that God’s compassion and mercy would be demonstrated. Evidently it could not be so highlighted without a trial coming to Job’s life.

I note from last time that Satan did not charge Job with sin, but rather with love of God because of God’s gifts of protection and prosperity. Job’s friends, as we will see, had him wrongly pigeon-holed as a sinner who deserved God’s wrath. Their theology was just as wrong as Satan’s.

The book of Job is written in poetic verse form. Does this tell us anything about the content and message of the book? Among other things, it tells me that the person who wrote this was trying very hard to communicate truth to his readers. He spent a lot of time thinking about how to present the material and how to get the message across most effectively. God used the author to pen words that were God-breathed for our benefit these millennia later.

Job’s Second Affliction

Verse 1 says that the sons of God came to present themselves before God. Sons of God are angels, and manifestly not all good ones, because Satan was included. This presentation before the LORD indicates a subordination of the angelic beings under God. God is “reviewing the ranks,” so to speak.

How Satan can appear before God is a question that has bothered some people, when it is said that God cannot stand evil in His presence. That is axiomatic, but remember that

God is omnipresent, so sin anywhere causes an offense to Him, and He knows about it wherever and whenever it occurs.

The fact stands that Satan can communicate with God, but there will come a time when this will not be possible because Satan will be cast out of the heavenly realm (Rev. 12:9), incarcerated temporarily in the abyss (Rev. 20:1-3), and then imprisoned permanently in the lake of fire (20:10).

Satan has the ability to be present in the heavenly realm and also on the earth. His devious wanderings on the earth are once again where he encounters Job, who has not sinned or charged God with wrong despite the first affliction Satan put upon him (1:22).

Note God's words are similar to the first time, but with this addition: "And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause." Note three things:

1. God acknowledges Job is weathering the trial very well.
2. Satan "incited" God with his false accusation. God chose to prove the accusation wrong by a demonstration in Job's life.
3. Job was destroyed without cause. Satan was the direct agent of this destruction, although since God permitted it, agency may be in some way attributed to Him.

*** [FURTHER INVESTIGATION] Does God do things without cause? Satan thought there was a cause, but the cause was false, and therefore there was no real cause for him to desire to harm Job. God actually used the situation to glorify Himself. We have already seen that God would show to Satan and the world that Job did not love God simply for God's "stuff." Also, we saw in James that God had an intentional purpose behind this, namely to demonstrate his compassion and mercy. God would also demonstrate His greatness to Job, so that Job would Himself also learn through this and his faith would be strengthened.

Satan demonstrates his combative, rebellious, insubordinate, accusatory nature once again here. He should simply have submitted to God and agreed with Him (as he should have done the first time). But he has to get in his accusation against Job into the conversation. He cannot admit that he is wrong—which he is—so he goes to another accusation, that Job will truly curse God if God permits Satan to hurt Job himself physically.

In verse 6, when God says that "he is in your hand," He is transferring a certain authority to Satan over Job's life. Notice that Job is not indwelt by Satan. God also did not permit Satan to take Job's life. So Satan figures out a way to cause maximal, long-term suffering. God permits sin, but He also limits and restrains sin and suffering. (See Genesis 20:6.)

Satan afflicted Job with painful boils or sores all over his body. The Bible doesn't tell us, but we might wonder what this condition is caused by and what it is like. Maybe it

produced nerve pain like shingles. We simply do not know, but it is interesting that Job's case has affected modern medical terminology:

Autosomal dominant hyper-IgE syndrome (AD-HIES), also known as **Job syndrome**, is a condition that affects several body systems, particularly the immune system. Recurrent infections are common in people with this condition. Affected individuals tend to have frequent bouts of pneumonia, which are caused by certain kinds of bacteria that infect the lungs and cause inflammation. These infections often result in the formation of air-filled cysts (pneumatoceles) in the lungs.

Recurrent [skin infections](#) and an inflammatory skin disorder called eczema are also very common in AD-HIES. These skin problems cause rashes, blisters, accumulations of pus (abscesses), open sores, and scaling.

AD-HIES is characterized by abnormally high levels of an immune system protein called immunoglobulin E (IgE) in the blood. IgE normally triggers an immune response against foreign invaders in the body, particularly parasitic worms, and plays a role in allergies. It is unclear why people with AD-HIES have such high levels of IgE. (<https://ghr.nlm.nih.gov/condition/autosomal-dominant-hyper-ige-syndrome>).

This sounds a lot like the condition of a man named Lazarus (Luke 16:20-21). He died, likely in part due to his condition. Other passages that mention painful boils include Exodus 9:10; Deut. 28:27, 35; 2 Kings 20:7; Revelation 16:10-11. This can be for us a reminder of the spiritual problem that depravity causes in every person, so that from head to toe we are full of sin—Isaiah 1:6.

Job's wife becomes the subject in 2:9-10. She complains that Job is being foolish by not complaining against God! In fact, she asks if her husband will continue to maintain his spiritual approach and sincere faith.

Much worse, instead of being a comforter and helper to him, she told him to curse God and die. Perhaps she believes that if he curses God, God will kill him for blaspheming. God doesn't work that way, however, for there are many blasphemers that live long past their many acts of blasphemy. Whatever her belief on that, her words are not those of a faithful, persevering believer.

Job himself models what our own response to suffering should be. We accept good from God, so how can we not accept the negative as well as coming, ultimately, from His hand. Compare his attitude with Ecclesiastes 7:14.

Once again, Job did not sin. So we have five statements in the first chapter and a half that Job is a righteous person. The friends, although they say some true things, are going to directly deny that premise in their speeches.

D. The three friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar 2:11-13

Elpihaz was from Teman, located in Edom, and probably an Edomite, that is, a descendant of Esau. Bildad was a Shuhite, a descendant of Abraham and Keturah. We see that Job was likely a near contemporary of Abraham, about 2000 B.C. Zophar was a Naamathite, for which we don't have any data.

I am speculating that some time passed before the friends came, because they "made an appointment." Job had to become sick for a while before it was evident he had a chronic condition; then news had to travel; then plans had to be made; this could have taken many days or weeks.

When the friends arrived, they could not recognize Job, he was so ill. Perhaps you have experienced a situation like that, with a loved one that changes so much in such a short space of time that it is unbelievable. They expressed grief through the customary means on the ancient near east: loud weeping, torn clothing, dust on the head. Then, they sat with Job for 7 whole days and just were with him. Perhaps they helped him in whatever way they could, but there was no speaking.

The reason for their response was that they saw his grief was very great. He was in agony, perhaps at the level of nerve pain or cancer pain that was unable to be soothed with the medical technology of the ancients. This suffering is something that we have to keep in mind when we read the book. Job's friends are healthy and well. But whenever Job speaks, he is speaking out of great pain and suffering. He is probably tired, feverish, hurting all over, uncomfortable, can't get comfortable, cannot sleep, etc. He is at his lowest point. When we are at our lowest point, we are most easily tempted to sin and speak incorrectly.

Satan got Job into this condition to try to get him to blaspheme God. Think of it! Satan wants us to complain and sin by charging God with error. We might fall for it sometimes. But even if we think that Job speaks somewhat out of turn, we need to remember Job is in extreme pain. He had no modern pain medication, no antibiotics, no anti-virals, no immune suppression therapy, nothing to help. He would likely refuse intoxicating substances, as it seems that he did since he was able to reason and speak coherently with his friends. The content of the book, and his speeches give no indication that he was intoxicated. And if he were, his friends would likely have pointed it out!

Job 3 – November 8, 2017

A. Job Speech #1 – Better off never born, or dead 3:1-26

Think of this: a week of saying nothing would be a bit awkward. As Job's wife looked on, and others like Elihu who is mentioned later, they must have been moved in their souls for Job's condition. It was pure misery.

Now begins the poetry section of the book, which continues through 42:6 with the cycles of speeches, Elihu's speeches, and then God's intervention. We do not know how long these speeches lasted, but it could have been a short time, perhaps shorter than the week of silence.

Job's speech, while not rhymed like modern English poetry, was recorded in Hebrew poetic fashion with its meter and parallelisms. The content is called a *lament*, which is defined in modern English as "a passionate expression of grief or sorrow."

Job basically says that if his birthday had not happened in history, he would not be suffering right now (3:1-10). Alternatively, had he been conceived but stillborn, he also would not have known suffering and he would be "at rest" (3:11-19). Since those didn't happen, it would be better to die!

In 3:1-10, **Job expresses his wish that he had never been born.** He wants the day of his birth to be wiped off the calendar, hidden in darkness, not found in any month of the year, to have had no child (particularly himself) born on it, and to become the object of those who curse whatever bad thing they don't like. That is, "Curse _____ like the day of Job's birth is cursed." This in Job's mind would be the worst kind of curse that you could pronounce against something, even worse than cursing in the name of Leviathan, an awful sea monster (see Job 41). Why should it be cursed? Job says because it exists, and it did not do something to shut up his mother's womb so as to avoid Job being born.

In 3:11-19, Job gives an alternative to the scenario of the vanishing birth date. Instead, he proposes a second-best scenario with a question: "**Why was I not stillborn?**" That would have avoided his present problem as well. Had that happened, Job believes, he would be at rest. It is interesting to note Job's theology of death at this ancient point in history. He has the idea that he would be quiet, peaceful, still, restful. He would be in the same place, the grave, with kings "who built ruins for themselves" and "filled their houses" with precious metal (what a fool's errand they were on during their lifetimes). This place is where the wicked cease, those oppressed are delivered from the oppressor, and servants are delivered from their masters.

In 3:20-23 Job turns from the earlier hypothetical scenarios to a third option: he wishes to die. "**Why can't I just die?**" The figure of "light" refers to the "light" of life, that is, being alive as opposed to the dead of being in darkness (eyes open versus eyes closed). He says that he is in misery and bitterness of soul—because of his suffering. He wishes to die, that is, he has no more will to live like he is. He is ready to perish instead of suffer. Death would bring rejoicing. But death escaped him (reminder of Revelation 9:6). Job could not die. Remember from earlier in the book that God limited Satan so that Satan was not permitted to take Job's life. This means that it was God's will for Job to live, so thus death could not come to him (v. 21).

Note carefully that Job did not say he would actively do something to end his life, even though he sought the peace and rest that death would bring to his suffering. Note also that the end of suffering is only the case for believers. Unbelievers who die do not "go to a better place." In fact, they go to a worse place.

Early in the Old Testament, there was very little revelation about the afterlife, and what was known was fairly generic. Job did know about resurrection (John 19:25-27), but other than that, it appeared to them that believer and unbeliever alike went to the same place—the grave. In fact, we learn from passages like Luke 16:19-31 that there were two "compartments" in the grave. But this doesn't seem to have been laid out plainly to Job. That's why he can say—again, generically—that he would go to the same place where kings and counselors of the earth went, or princes.

Verses 24-26 says that the worst that could happen to Job, and what he feared, has indeed happened. This rehearses his misery: he has no ease, quiet, rest.

In spite of what Job has said out of the desperation of his situation, no one can go back and undo the past. It is fixed and unchangeable, and its consequences follow naturally, unless God eliminates or changes them. This is not a “Que sera, sera” fatalistic philosophy (“whatever will be will be”). It is more a “whatever was is” philosophy, and recognizes fully that God is in control of all things. We needed a book like this one with Job’s name on it to understand that even in the worst of situations, God is still in control, and we will never be able to understand all of His ways.

Also, as Job has noted in 2:10, with no birth, there would have been no enjoyment of God’s blessings in life.

Job 4 – Eliphaz Speech #1 – November 15, 2017

B. First cycle of speeches.....	4:1-14:22
1. Eliphaz Speech #1 – Trials due to sin; corrective aspect of affliction.....	4:1-5:27

Eliphaz was likely the oldest, and he was the first of Job’s friends to speak after the 7 days of silence. He continues for two chapters, responding to Job’s situation and despairing speech in chapter 3. He attempts to diagnose the underlying problem in Job’s situation. Supposedly this will lead to a solution. The problem is two fold. First, we know that he does not know the whole situation of what happened behind the heavenly curtains in chapters 1 and 2. Therefore, he is foolish (Prov. 18:13). Second, even if he knew *that much*, he still would not know enough to be able to fully explain and analyze God’s administration of justice in the world, because he is a finite sinner. He would have to admit, “I do not know why this is happening, but we must trust the Lord through it, ask Him for wisdom, and continue to live godly in the midst of it.”

Despite these immediately evident shortcomings, let’s try to understand the main points and theme of Eliphaz’s speech so we can give it a good evaluation.

In verses 1-2, he introduces his speech. The second thing he says is fairly straightforward: he cannot stand *not* to speak. He is enticed by something, as all the other friends will be, to offer his opinion about Job’s situation.

The first thing that he says is more difficult. The English translations are divided as to whether he is asking Job a “kind” question—whether he has enough strength to handle conversation—or an “accusatory” question—whether Job will become impatient with them. I take the first interpretation because (1) the Hebrew verb in this form doesn’t have the meaning “impatient,” at least according to the *Hebrew Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* and (2) *weary* seems to fit the same word in 4:5. I am aware that scholars far more studied than I have concluded otherwise, I think on the basis of the tenor of Job’s first speech and the material that will come later. The difficulty in translation is exposed in the NIV, where in 4:2 it translates this word as “impatient” and in 4:5 it translates it as “discouraged.”

In 4:3-4, Eliphaz commends Job for his righteous conduct. In 4:5, he says that the tables have turned and now Job has become like the weak people that Job helped prior to this calamity. He is understandably discouraged and troubled at this turn of events.

In 4:6, Eliphaz comes to his charge: “Job, you trust in your own reverence and goodness, don’t you?” In other words, “Job, you trust that your piety should have set you up to avoid this whole awful mess.” It is not exactly that Eliphaz is charging Job with a works-salvation mindset. Note that he says, *your reverence*, and the *integrity of your ways*. He recognizes that Job has those two qualities. But he says that Job is relying upon those things as his insulation from calamity. Eliphaz thinks that kind of trust is wrong (and in this he is correct), but Eliphaz also considers that Job in fact thinks in this unrighteous way (when he does not).

Sidebar: in what is your hope? Is your trust in your trust? Is your faith in your faith? Or is your faith reposed totally in Jesus Christ? Do you trust Him and not yourself? Do you trust him and not your own reverence or integrity?

Go back and note in verse 6 that the word for *reverence* is “fear.” That is, “Isn’t your *fear of God* your confidence?” The word for fear is “**יִרְאָה**” from *yirah* which can mean *dread* or *reverence*.

In 4:7-11, Eliphaz advances a very clear theological position. Here it is: Only the unrighteous suffer. The innocent and upright do not perish.

He is the first person in Job to teach this doctrine, but he will not be the last. We have to be very clear at this point to say that his doctrine is false—because he applies it in the immediate here and now with no qualification about God’s judgment potentially being delayed until after life is over. The Scriptures record his statement with full accuracy (that’s inerrancy), but what it records is false, just like what it records of the devils words in Genesis 3:4 and a few other places in the Bible. Here’s how we know:

1. John 9:2-3.
2. Ecclesiastes 7:15, 8:12-14.
3. Jeremiah 12:1, and many other lamentation-types of passages.

The question in verse 7 is rhetorical. The answer Eliphaz intends us to say is, “No one innocent ever perished; nowhere were the upright ever cut off.” Of course, that is simply wrong.

Verse 8: What you plow and sow is what you reap. That’s true in agriculture, and generally true in God’s world, but not necessarily immediately so (see 2 Cor. 9:6 and Gal. 6:7-8).

4:10-11: Evil people, like a pack of lions, will be scattered.

In 4:12, Eliphaz adds this strange claim to what he is saying: he had a dream or vision in which he received revelation. It was a troubling experience (4:13-16). We should note that those who claim extra-Biblical revelation today are completely in the wrong. They often highlight their experience as if that itself is proof that the revelation they discerned is authoritative. They ignore the very real possibility (from their side), and in fact the reality (from our side), that this experience was generated from below instead of from above! The devil often parades about like an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:3, 14).

The content of this revelation seems to be that no man, Job included, is more righteous than God. Therefore, since he is a sinner, Job is suffering. Angels have received the rebuke of God (v. 18, see Revelation 12:4), how much worse is it for *people*, that is, those who dwell in houses of clay, bodies made out of the dust. Mankind is nothing before God; man’s integrity and wisdom disappears into nothing because of their sin.

Job 5 – November 29, 2017

Chapter 5 opens with Eliphaz telling Job that he cannot find anyone to help him: not even an angel can help him now. The reason for this is that Job has sinned grievously; God will not allow anyone to help him out of his situation. In verses 2-5, he says that he has seen the foolish man who suddenly is cursed, and his sons are killed. That would sound very accusatory to Job—the evidence of Job’s dwelling place being cursed and his sons being crushed, according to Eliphaz, points to Job’s foolishness, envy, and anger.

Verses 7 indicates that trouble is a natural part of life, but there is something in verse 6 that colors this statement to look much more dark. Our friend says that affliction and trouble do not come out of nowhere. There is a reason for those things happening, and I take it that he is implying they are the fruit of our sins.

In verse 8, Eliphaz turns to giving advice: seek God. I’ve been down on his words thus far, but I will say this is fine advice, although I would give it with a different context! Verses 9-16 tell why: God is big and does big things, and He can resolve this problem. He catches the crafty, and saves the needy. He lifts up the humble and the mourner. This truth about God brings hope.

The silver lining, he says, is that you should actually be happy, Job, because God is correcting you in all this (v. 17). And this is true—we should not despise God’s work in our lives, even when it includes chastening. Discipline brings good things, as Hebrews 12:5-13.

Furthermore, God will restore Job. What He bruises, He then binds up, etc. (v. 18-26). You will have a blessed dwelling place once again, and you will have many offspring, and will live to a ripe old age, he emphasizes. This solution will come for Job if he repents from whatever sin he has done. The idea of repentance is indicated in the language “seek God” in verse 8.

This sounds wonderful, but it is not true in an unqualified sense, either prior to the Law of Moses, under the Law of Moses, or in the present era. Why? The righteous experience suffering in this life, and may do so until the very end of their days in this life. We know so from Job’s story, but also from the Ecclesiastes references above. Repentance or not, extreme suffering may still be our lot.

Let me hasten to add this: the suffering of the just ends at the termination of their physical life. There is a future day when they will be blessed *on this earth* in the kingdom of God. They will be vindicated, just like Jesus will be.

In the last verse, Eliphaz asserts the truthfulness of what he has said. Unfortunately, he is only partially right. This partial truth will plague the remainder of the book.

Job 6 – December 6, 2017

2. Job Speech #2 – Weight of the trials; rebuke of the friends; speaks to God 6:1-7:21

Job admits here that his words of chapter 3 had been rash (v. 3). The reason is completely understandable—he is in severe agony, both physically and emotionally (v. 1-2, 4). The extent of his suffering has made him speak in an extreme way. He felt that these afflictions were “arrows” from God, something negative and associated with judgment and punishment. This was not quite the truth. Still, he had some good reasons to “complain.” Not even an animal likes to eat food with no flavor, and Job has apparently lost his sense of taste (v. 5-7).

Job returns, in verses 8-10, to the theme of his opening complaint, namely that he wishes God would answer his request that he would die and thus be comforted. Of course, this is not God's will, as we know from the discussion with Satan in chapter 2.

Verses 11-13 show how Job recognizes that he doesn't have any strength in himself to last through this trial. He is not a rock or a piece of metal that can withstand a lot of pressure. He is a frail child of dust, and feeble as he is frail (from the hymn *O Worship the King*).

The next segment of the chapter, starting at v. 14, is a rebuke of Job's friends, or at least of Eliphaz. Perhaps the others were nodding their agreement with the speech of Eliphaz, so they were included in Job's rebuke. Job had not forsaken God, but even if he *had*, it would still be required that the friends show kindness and respect (v. 14). Instead, they are "piling on." They are sort of like clouds without water (Jude 12, 2 Peter 2:17, spoken of false teachers), because Job likens them to streams without water (v. 15-21). Those streams promise something of great value to desert caravans. But when the thirsty travelers arrive and see that the river was no better than a mirage, it is a great disappointment. The lack of water in a time of need can be a source of confusion and even fear. This is how Job felt with respect to his friends.

Job was not asking for a huge favor from them (v. 22-23). He wanted help, encouragement sympathy, but not to be trashed. He says that he is willing to be taught (v. 24). That is a quality that many of us need to cultivate and perfect. Have you noticed a tendency in others—and in yourself—to be stubborn about what you want to do or believe? Be teachable! Be malleable, not hard as a rock! Job honestly wants to know where he has erred. He is repentant in his basic stance toward sin, even though he doesn't believe he has done anything wrong to bring about his current situation.

True words have great power (v. 25), but he has not heard such words thus far from Eliphaz, who has not been able to prove anything. All he has heard are mean rebukes against a man in desperate condition (v. 26-27). His friends are actually undermining him, not supporting him!

Job concludes his speech toward the friends in 28-30 by asking them to take a real hard look at him and concede that he is right—he is not a wicked sinner. He is not a liar. He demands they concede that he is right. And he is right—I hope you will agree, since that is God's conclusion too in Job 42:7-8. In fact, notice there that it is Eliphaz who gets directly called out by God.

Job knows the "taste" of unsavory characters—and they fit the bill. He is directly confronting Eliphaz's doctrine that sin always leads to punishment, and that innocence prevents this sort of trial from coming into one's life. For Eliphaz to continue in this line of accusation is unjust. Job knows injustice when he sees it, or, that is, when he tastes it. So should we.

Job 7

The tenor of this chapter seems to be that Job sees his life is fleeting and hopeless, something like Ecclesiastes' theme of *vanity*. So much so that he still hopes for death to come (v. 15). I believe that he sees death as the eventual outcome of all his suffering, so that he might as well get that over with sooner rather than later.

The pains in Job's life are many. In addition to all that we have read before, Job tells us that he is like one in the middle of his workday, or in the midst of his servanthood contract. He looks for the end and rest, but it is not coming (v. 1-2). He has been months in this state (v. 3). Have you been sick for *months* before? We had a brother with a massive infection in his tonsils, and it

lasted for many weeks. It became very wearisome to him and eventually the doctors had to take those tonsils out.

He also had sleepless nights, full of tossing and turning (v. 3-4). He actually has worms and dirt in his skin; he has cracked skin and breakouts from the boil disease (v. 5); days pass one by one with and kind of back and forth rapidity, but without hope (v. 6). His life is a vapor (v. 7; and recall James 4:14). He feels like he will never again see good. His life is like a cloud that disappears—who can know where it goes? He just knows he is going to die and never return, and be totally forgotten (v. 8-10). These are truly the feelings that Job has—good or bad, it is what it is.

Following this description of misery, Job feels that he has shown that he has a legitimate right to complain. So he does, starting in verse 11! He lets loose his mouth again. It somehow helps him to deal with the afflictions he is experiencing. I believe he is directing his complaint now against God. Notice the "You" of verse 12, and especially the one of verse 17. You might be able to argue that the "you" refers to the friends in verse 12, but I don't see how you can do that in verse 17 because of the nature of the statement speaking broadly of mankind and the action that could only be done by God.

Job can't even get comfort in his own bed or couch. The place of rest (v. 13) is the place where God has given him terrifying nightmares (v. 14) so that he would wish to die instead of live (v. 15-16). He wants to be left alone rather than terrified.

He wonders why God would focus His attention on Job. When, Job wonders, would it be that God would turn his (judging) gaze away from Job instead of "looking at him" every moment (v. 17-19). "Don't look at me!!!" "Swallow my saliva" is an idiom that means something like, "until I catch my breath." He's just asking for a little breather, a little rest, from the trial.

Job then asks (v. 20-21) the big question: what sin had he done that God had targeted him for this punishment? And if he has sinned, since he knows that God pardons sin, he asks why God doesn't forgive him, in order that he won't die under the effects of this trial.

The problem is that neither does Job know what is going on behind the scenes. So he is not correct in his estimation of the situation. But at least he is asking, "have I sinned?" instead of what his friends say, "you *have* sinned!" Notice again that Job indicates a repentant spirit. I believe his attitude is more of "search me, O God" than a hard-nosed "I have not sinned at all" rebellious attitude.

Job 8 – December 13, 2017

Now it is Bildad's turn to speak. Let us see if he does any better.

It doesn't start out well in verse 2—Bildad accuses Job of spewing nothing more than a bunch of hot air. In verse 3 he correctly says, using a rhetorical question format, that God is not unjust. He is righteous and carries out his righteousness in a perfect way. But even though the words are correct, his underlying assumption is not—and that will come to light just now.

He basically tells Job that his sons died because they transgressed God's law (v. 4). He adds that Job is suffering because he is not pure and upright (v. 5-6). But if he were to seek God and ask Him to forgive, He will do so and give him back his former prosperity (v. 5, 6, 7). There are a couple of problems with this whole notion, as there has been all along in Job's friends: first, the immediacy of the punishment for sin and blessing for repentance; second, the assumption that

Job has sinned, yet without complete knowledge of the situation; and third a latent assumption that God's blessings are of the "prosperity gospel" sort.

In verses 8-10 Bildad calls to witness former history and those who lived it, who because of age are far wiser than them. They believed the same thing: wherever there is suffering, there is sin. But that is only partly true—it may be my sin; it may be the sin of others; it may be the general nature of living in a sin-cursed world; or it may be God permitting Satan's sin to have its way.

Verses 11-12 lay down a biological illustration that says there are necessary preconditions for the growth of a papyrus. It needs a marshy, wet setting in which to grow. But then it withers. He applies this in verses 13-18 by implying that the withering experienced by Job is because he has forgotten God. Job's sin is the necessary pre-condition of the result that he is experiencing. Cause and effect is the logic of Bildad. The hypocrite will perish; the things he trust in will be no better than a spider's web or a flimsy house that will fall apart quickly.

In the final four verses of the speech, he gives the reverse of his logic, namely that God will not do to the blameless what he has done to Job. But he does try to give some comfort, encouraging Job that God will bring rejoicing once again into Job's life. His opponents will be put to shame and the wicked will come to nothing. Actually, the text says that the dwelling place of the wicked will come to nothing, but that is the same as saying the wicked who dwells in that dwelling place will disappear.

Job 9

The back and forth continues, with Job taking his turn for two chapters.

He admits that there is some truth to what Bildad is saying, but he despairs because he knows that no man can be righteous before God. Job knows, in other words, that all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. See also Psalm 130:3. He includes himself in that analysis. We know the answer to that quandary in our own age, with the benefit of crystal-clear revelation on the matter. But it was a bit more murky for the Old Testament believer, particularly before the Law of Moses and the revelation of passages like the Psalms and Isaiah 53. When we studied this topic in another setting, we learned that the OT saint received a full remission of sins through faith, because of God's grace and mercy, on the basis of the future shed blood of Jesus Christ.

In verses 3-13, Job exhibits a very humble attitude. This section reminds me of the questions that God asks later in the book. Job knows that he is nothing compared to God's wisdom (v. 3-4), creative and destructive power (5-9), and infinite acts (10). Job mentions God's creation of the constellations (all the stars and their arrangements). The "chambers" of the south are likely the constellations in that direction. Job cannot see God (v. 11). None can stay God's hand (v. 12). He is victorious over all his enemies (13). Job cannot contend with God and have any hope to respond properly to Him (14), *even if* he were righteous (v. 15).

Job knows that he is at the mercy of God (15b). Even if Job did call out to God and God answered, Job would find it so shocking that he couldn't believe it really was God.

However, Job still ascribes his suffering to God, saying that God has crushed him, and does so without cause (v. 17). He won't give any respite but continues to let me languish in bitterness (v. 18)!

Verse 19 is clear enough based on the prior context. No one can expect to summons God to court to address their complaints. Even if he could, and even if he were righteous, v. 20 says, Job would be condemned and proven wrong. We are indeed nothing in the sight of God.

Job's frustration gets carried away in the following verses. He affirms that he is blameless, but yet God destroys him. This is sort of a strange theological turn. The friends are wrongly accusing God of doing things to Job because of God's justice. Job is accusing God of doing things to him in *injustice!* But because of Job's high view of God, he has no other choice than to understand that if the blameless die, or the innocent suffer, or the earth is given into the hand of the wicked (rulers, judges), then those things have to be done by God (v. 21-24). As for verse 24 with its mention of the covered faces of the judges, I take it to be a negative situation. He is not saying that justice is impartial (blindfolded justice), but that the judges are looking the other way and not doing their jobs to promote righteousness. In short, there is confusion here. He knows God is not unjust, but he knows that bad things happen to good people, and it is tough to process it all.

Job's time is a fast-moving. Day after day went by, but they were all in despair (v. 25-26). He cannot forget his misery or paste on a smile. His put-on happiness would come off again, because He knows God will judge him. He is fearful of what he is suffering (27-28). He believes that no matter how hard he tries to live righteously, as he has done until now, God will still find fault and he will not "win" (v. 30-31). He is in utter despair. Verse 29 says that if nothing Job can do will result in anything other than condemnation, then why does he labor to be righteous? He feels there is no point!

Job recognizes the creator-creature distinction in verses 32-33. That difference is etched in stone, so to speak, unalterable and inviolable. God is not a man. Men are not gods. Man cannot take God to court. There is no mediator, he believes, who will bring the two parties together. But there is! Jesus lays his hand on both. The conundrum of Job is solved in Christ, the only one who can lay his hand on both, for He is man and God all in one.

Job prays that God would take His rod of correction away so that he would not have to fear. But he knows that cannot happen.

Job 10 – December 20, 2017

Job continues his response to Bildad—in this his third speech—with a reiteration of how bad things are, and a direct challenge to God to show Job why these things are happening to him.

Job tries to use God's nature "against Him" so to speak, when he asks if God sees it as "good" that He should be oppressing Job. But is God oppressing Job? Is He despising the work of His hands? Not according to James 5:11.

Job is beginning to believe at least a part of his friends' incorrect theology, that he is suffering because of sin (4-6) although he affirms again that he himself is not wicked (7).

In the next verses, there are some beautiful statements about the creation of man in the womb of his mother (v. 8a) and how man is clay (v. 9a). The second half of each of these verses expresses that God is going to destroy the wonderful, clay creation that He had made. Verses 11-12 are also beautiful in their poetic description of how we are fearfully and wonderfully made. In the midst of these truths, Job asks God to remember him because he is clay (v. 9). He "reminds" God that He has preserved Job's spirit. Job depends on Him for life and everything. God has made Job, and Job presents that as a reason that God should not destroy His own creation!

Verses 13-17 indicate that God is coming after Job again and again. More and more witnesses are coming against him (his friends). He humbly recognizes that if he sins, then God knows about it. Despite knowing that God pardons sin (7:20-21), Job presently believes that he will never be acquitted of his sin. If he has sinned, he is wicked, but even if he were righteous (v. 15), he is nothing before God. God hunts him down. This all is a true report of how Job feels at the moment.

So, why did God allow Job to be born (v. 18-19)? If all God is going to do is destroy him, why not save the trouble of creating, and then destroying? Remember back to chapter 3 when Job expressed his wish that he would be dead, or never had come into being in the first place. He wants a little quiet from his friends talk, so that he can have even a small amount of comfort (peace and quiet!). He is going to the land of darkness anyway, and that would have been better than to be where he is now (v. 20-22). You can see the utter gloom surrounding death for even a godly Old Testament saint. He believes that he will languish in a place where light is like darkness, a place from which there is no return. This is mixed with a hope in future resurrection, which we will see in chapter 19, but this is quite different than the hope we know about—“absent from the body means present with the Lord.”

Job 11 – December 27, 2017

Now it is Zophar’s turn to talk. He gets one chapter. He cannot tolerate Job’s long speeches in which Job justifies himself (v. 2). He feels compelled to answer. (When you have that feeling, by the way, is a good time to stop and take stock of whether it would be wiser to just keep quiet and see the outcome unfold without your input. Your contribution may be less than two cents worth!). He adds in v. 3 that Job’s talk is empty and full of mockery.

Zophar summarizes Job’s talks thus far in verse 4 this way: “You have said, ‘My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in [God’s] eyes.’” I don’t know that I can fault this other than to say it is a bit reductionistic. Job is indeed pure in the sense that he has not done some egregious sin; he has not held sin back from confession before God; he has done good works, etc. But Zophar totally rejects this analysis of Job’s life.

Instead, he wishes that God would speak, and against Job at that. This would allow Job to get some knowledge in the “secrets of wisdom” which refers to the things God knows that man does not know (v. 5-6). In fact, man cannot know it unless God reveals it to him (Deut 29:29; 1 Cor. 2:10). This would make Job twice as smart as he is now (I use *smart* informally to refer to prudence).

Once again, the problem with this is that it is partly right and partly wrong. It is true that the more we know of God’s wisdom, the “smarter” we will be. That is true for anyone, Job included. We would be more wise, prudent, righteous, etc. But the context indicates that *Zophar himself* would also be wiser if God would show *him* the secrets of wisdom! He would not be so quick to say what he will say at the end of v. 6.

In effect, Zophar claims to have some of that hidden wisdom which Job needs, and he says that God is going easy on Job. Some translations put it this way: “God exacts from you less than your sin deserves.” Others translate this way: “God has forgotten some of your sins.” This should not be taken in the sense that God cannot remember what a person did, as in amnesia. Rather, the sense is, “He is not holding some of your sins against you.” The effect is the same no matter

which of these translations you prefer. Job, if you think that you have it bad, just imagine what it would be like if God punished you for all your sins!

The earlier friends had claimed that Job was suffering for his sins. Zophar adds to that and says that Job is only suffering for *some* of his sins! I guess Job should be thankful! Again, there is something here that we can appreciate. If we were punished for our own sins, and no substitute was allowed, no mercy was extended, no grace was available...then we would be in a heap of trouble. But God is not punishing Job here at all! He is “nurturing” and “building” in Job’s life; he is not just spanking Job for some sin that he has done. The building up process includes teaching Job, and his friends, and us, something about how God administers His world. We already see that trying to understand *that* is fraught with problems, not the least of which is that we do not know all the relevant facts, just like Job did not know all the relevant facts.

Verses 7-9 remind us that man is unable to understand the ways of God. They are inscrutable. I don’t mean that nothing God does or reveals cannot be understood or interpreted. This is like what we say when we discuss the incomprehensibility of God. God can be known, but He cannot be exhaustively known. He is too big (infinite) for that. Our minds are too small and sinful as well. It does us well to admit our lowliness and exhibit some intellectual humility. After the enlightenment age, including our own era, does not do well with this because man thinks he knows a lot. He admits that he doesn’t know everything (e.g., scientists), but they have confidence that given enough time and money, they can find out.

Furthermore, God cannot be hindered in what He decides to do. He will take into account evil when He sees it—and He always does (v. 10-11).

Zophar adds that it is impossible for man, with his empty head, to become wise. “When pigs fly...” is the idea.

If we assumed that Job had sinned and lacked repentance, then the following advice would be pretty good (v. 13-14): prepare your heart, left your hands toward God (in humility, I would understand), turn away from sin, and do not tolerate it in your dwelling place. If you repented like that, then you could look up to God without fear in your eyes (v. 15). God would cleanse you and withdraw his punishment, so the affliction would only be a memory and life would be bright and cheerful again. Things would be secure and hopeful instead of fearful (v. 16-19).

This conclusion is dubious, however, because there is no absolute promise of prosperity after repentance is exercised. Repentant faith fully fixes and restores the relationship between God and man; but it doesn’t erase consequences or bribe God into prospering us.

But then Zophar’s speech concludes with a terrible statement. He switches from Job to a generic “the wicked.” He says they will not escape, and their only hope is that they will die. What a “hope!” That non-hope is what Zophar is extending to Job, going back to the premise that Job is wicked and has only one outcome to look forward to—death. This is hard to take—that a “friend” would say such a mean and untrue thing to Job. This will call forth a strong reaction from Job in the following chapter.

Job 12 – January 3, 2018

Job now takes three chapters as he concludes the first round of speeches.

The NKJV of 12:5 says “A lamp is despised in the thought of one who is at ease.” This is similar to the KJV, but *lamp* is not followed by any other modern translation. It should read something

like *calamity* or *misfortune*. The difficulty with translation seems to be that the word is prefixed by the letter “L” in Hebrew, which often is used as a prefix meaning *to* or *for*. The ESV, NAS, and NIV translate the idea better.

The main idea of the first half of chapter 12 is that Job sarcastically says that his friends are really smart. They have all the wisdom...except what they are saying is already known not only by Job, but also by the lower creation. These all know that God’s hand is in control of all things; in fact He controls the breath of every creature.

In verse 2, Job says that wisdom will die with his friends! Job reproves them by saying in verse 3 that he knows what they are talking about, and in fact everyone knows it too. They are not giving him any real insight here. They are not thinking too well.

Job feels, and truly is, mocked by his friends (v. 4). Job was calling on God, and then his friends treated the just and blameless man as an object of scorn. It is easy for them to say the things they said, since they are not suffering calamity right now. In verse 5 the idea is that they look down on the thought of calamity—and those presently suffering it—because they are presently at ease. It is easy to criticize when you are not the one suffering!

Job now gives counter-examples to his friends’ theology, thus demonstrating that it is false. There are robbers and evil people who prosper (v. 6)—and that prosperity is something that God permits them to have!

Verses 7-10 show how Job believes that the sub-human creation understands the theology that his friends have brought to him. “Guys, we get what you are saying...enough already!” (v. 11). We already commented on verse 12 above—it is Job’s sarcastic addition to what he said in verse 2.

Job’s critical line of thought extends through verse 12 where he reiterates that these guys really have it down. They know what they are talking about because they are so old and wise! In reality, he is insulting them because they should be elevated above this basic level of mechanical retribution. The idea that Job must have done some sin to bring on this calamity is foolishness. Job knows something else is going on, but he can’t figure it out.

Pause and think of a homeless man in your town. What do you think landed him in that predicament? Are you thinking that his irresponsibility caused it? Be honest: when you encounter such a person, what is your reaction?

Maybe the situation was heavily influenced by his own sinful decisions. **But maybe not.** Maybe it was someone else’s sin, the oppressive actions of another, or a confluence of events that he could not control. Since you are not in calamity like they are, it is easy to despise the situation they are in without knowing what happened, why, or most of the facts that lie behind the situation.

In the second half of the chapter (verses 13-25), Job extols the sovereignty, power and wisdom of God. As you read these verses, meditate on the truth in them. God does what He pleases, and what He does cannot be undone by anyone. No evil can stand before Him; no nation can stand without Him; national leaders are not treated with partiality. What a great God we have. He is infinite in wisdom and power. He humbles the exalted ones like counselors, judges, kings, princes, trusted ones, and elders.

Job 13 – January 10 and 17, 2018

Job knows all this, and anything the friends know, he also knows just as well (v. 1-2). But he wants to be able to communicate more directly with God about this matter (v. 3). The friends' help is useless (v. 4) and it would be better if they were silent, because then they would actually seem wise (v. 5). This echoes the same teaching in Prov. 11:12, 17:28. More words generally (not always) correlates to more foolishness (Ecc. 5:3).

Job desires to go directly to God Who is in charge of all the things that are happening to him, in order to speak and reason with God (v. 3). But first, he urges his friends to hear him (v. 6) and accuses them of speaking wickedly and deceitfully in their supposed representing of God and the truth (v. 7-8). He asks them to remember that they will be judged by God, and to consider whether they are going to get a good evaluation at that time (v. 9). He asserts that they will be certainly rebuked (v. 10) because they *are* showing partiality, namely, *against* Job. They should remember that He is a fearful God (v. 11).

We do well to remember that there are lots of people who claim to speak for God, some of whom are very well meaning, but they may well be speaking what is from their own mind instead of what is from God (a good place to find this idea in the Bible is in Jeremiah 14:14 and 23:16; see also Matt. 7:15).

Once again in v. 12 he says that what they have been speaking are mere platitudes. In English the idea of this word is this: "a remark or statement, especially one with a moral content, that has been used too often to be interesting or thoughtful." This "remark" may have been so used that it become a proverb or maxim, indicated by the Hebrew word that has to do with "memorized sayings" or "memorable sayings." The friends are taking overused generic statements and applying them to Job's specific situation such that they seem trite. He calls this way of speaking "proverbs of ashes" and "defenses of clay." They are not solid, but are easily burned up; they are not like iron but rather are weak like malleable clay.

So Job tells his friends again to shut their mouths and let him bear the consequences of his speech (v. 13).

I don't understand v. 14 very well. Lots of other commentators don't quite get it either. The best I can figure, the first part is an idiom in ancient Hebrew that is hard for us to duplicate into English. Both phrases may very well refer to the same idea through synonymous parallelism, and that idea is that Job's life could be on the line when he speaks very frankly to God about his situation. He realizes that it is dangerous to speak to God—remember v. 13 "come what may." Why can he say this (v. 13) and stick his neck out (v. 14)? Because he trusts God (v. 15).

Verse 15 is one of my favorites: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." No matter what God does to Job or permits into Job's life, Job says that he will continue to trust in the Lord. This is faithfulness at its highest. May it be our testimony too.

At the same time, Job is ready and willing to defend his life to God, that is, to prove that he is righteous and blameless. God already knows this, of course, so the point is not so much to make it known to God, but to defend himself. He feels God is attacking him in a way (see 6:4).

January 17: He can say with certainty that he is not a hypocrite, else he would have not salvation from the Lord. We should be able to say the same. He has confidence in God's salvation, and which refers to salvation from the trials that he has fallen into (v. 16).

Verses 17-18 reiterate that Job is bringing his case to the court where God will be. It is an "open letter" to God, although initially in verbal form. In other words, Job has prepared his case, and it will be laid out in public. Many court proceedings are public in our own culture (in order to avoid corruption, I suppose).

Job feels that there is no way someone can contend with him on this—he has an airtight case. He has to say something because he feels like he is going to die if he doesn't. He might die in facing off with God (v. 13-15), but he's also going to die if he doesn't address his situation with God. And he might die from the disease he has anyway. So what is there to lose? At least he will feel like he is doing something to explain himself!

He is now addressing God directly. He asks (commands?) God not to do two things to him. If God grants the request, then Job will not "hide myself from [Him]," as if that is even possible.

The two things are in verse 21, which I paraphrase here: "Do not take Your hand far from me, and do not make me afraid of You." He doesn't want to be so close as to be in terror, but He also doesn't want God to be very far away. I see in this a plea for the "just right" relationship with God. From the wicked, God stands afar off and doesn't hear their prayers, or He comes very near in judgment. Job wants to be in a proper relationship with God.

Then (v. 22) he can speak with God, or answer when God calls. And that he hopes to do.

Job's next request of God is this: tell me about my sin (v. 23). He wants to know what he has done wrong. The true believer does the same: "Keep me from sin and show me my secret faults" (Psalm 19:13, 139:23-24). But we should not do so in a way that is challenging to God or with an attitude claiming that we have not sinned and do not deserve suffering. We deserve far worse than we get.

Next (v. 24), Job asks, "Why do You hide Your face, and treat me as an enemy?" If God replied immediately—which He does not—the answer would be that He is not hiding His face nor treating Job like an enemy. But that is not at all evident to Job right now. Similarly with verse 25 (why do you frighten me and pursue me like I am dry stubble?).

We should pause and notice that Job is asking God a lot of questions. God will return the "favor" later. We must avoid any attempts to put God under oath or demand that He answer our questions. Our questions are relatively foolish compared to Him and His thoughts.

Job asserts this because God "writes" bitter things against him. I'm not sure what this "write" is other than that God figuratively writes these things down in His book, and when He does that, those things come to pass. In verse 26 as well, the assertion of Job is that God is making him inherit the sins of his youth. He seems to be experiencing the consequences of the sins of his younger days. Such can have devastating consequences, but not always. God does not always punish us as our iniquities deserve (Ezra 9:13).

In what seems to be the final verse of this section/theme (v. 27), Job asserts that God has hemmed Job in and does not allow him any freedom or prosperity.

The strength of what Job is saying is that he recognizes that God is in charge of everything (chapter 12) and that all that is happening to Job is under the control of the sovereign God of the universe. Unfortunately, he takes that a bit too far, somewhat like the friends do, by attributing to God his awful situation in far too direct of a way. He sees it as punishment for sin, or perhaps

better yet, punishment that is unjust because he has done no sin deserving of such. He doesn't yet see the positive, character-building aspect of the trial.

Job 14 – January 24, 2018

As I see the development of the subject matter of Job's speech, it appears that 13:28 belongs with chapter 14 since their common theme is the brevity of life. My study Bible even sets 13:28 off from the rest of chapter 13 with some extra space and places it closer to the heading of chapter 14 so that there is a visual effect that mimics the change in theme.

By way of immediate application, this theme is good for us to ponder on, as Jonathan Edwards does in some of his resolutions:

5. Resolved, never to lose one moment of time; but improve it the most profitable way I possibly can.

7. Resolved, never to do anything, which I should be afraid to do, if it were the last hour of my life.

17. Resolved, that I will live so as I shall wish I had done when I come to die.

We know from elsewhere in Scripture that our lives are a vapor (James 4:13-17) and we need to learn how to number our days (Psalm 90:12 and entire chapter). Our lives do not consist in the abundance of our possessions (Luke 12:15). Our life focus should be on the eternal instead of on the here and now (2 Cor. 4:18).

Indeed, our days are few and full of trouble (14:1-2). The "few" portion of his statement is illustrated in verse 2 with the flower and the shadow.

The "trouble" portion of his statement is laid out starting in verse 3, which refers to God's "judgment." God "opening His eyes on such a one" refers to His judgment. Since man is a sinner (14:4), and cannot bring cleanness out of uncleanness, his time has to be limited. He has limits that God has set and he cannot pass. It appears that just under 1000 years is the maximum limit that God permitted any sinful human to live. Nowadays, it is the greatly reduced 70-90 years of lifespan.

Verse 6 is a request for that "look of the eyes" to be removed so that Job may have rest until his days are over, until his labors are completed.

Job contrasts a tree that is cut down (v. 7-9) and has hope for a continued existence, with a man who dies and is put into the ground and is no more. We had a tulip tree at the parsonage property that broke in half a number of years ago. We cut it down since there wasn't anything worth saving. But that tree has sent up several saplings and there are a couple that are very tall.

So there was still life in that tree even though it was completely amputated down to the ground. Of course, we know that as much tree as was above the ground, there is about that much below the ground as well to draw nutrients up into the part above ground. Much life remained in the "in ground" portion of the tree.

But when a person is buried in the ground, there is no more life there. It seems there is no more hope for him (v. 10-12). His death condition is permanent, or so it seems, even until when the heavens cease to exist. Job's theology of resurrection was obviously not as well formed as ours can be from the mountain of Scriptural revelation that we have which he did not have.

But this state of nothingness is preferable to Job, as we see starting in verse 13. He wants to be hidden in the grave, so that God's wrath would pass over him without touching him anymore.

But then there is the request that God would not forget Job, as seems to be the case in Job's affliction. Job wonders about resurrection, but he asks that God would set a time and remember him in the grave, evidently to resurrect him from that grave (13b). Job wonders if a man will live again (14a), but he trusts that he in fact will do so—he is going to wait for it (v. 14b) until “his change comes.” This is a transformation from the body of death into the body of life. Verse 15 seems to indicate that Job will answer when God calls him to life (John 5:25).

Job pleads with God to not deal hard with his sin (v. 16) and would seal up his transgressions so that they would not kill him (v. 17). This makes me wonder how can Job ask this, when we know that sin does have consequences? There is a difference between the believer who confesses and repents of his sin, and the unbeliever who does not. Iniquity will find out the later, and God will forgive the former. Thanks to God for that!

Just like when someone is very ill in the hospital and the news day by day (or hour by hour) is a roller coaster, so Job's feelings are the same in his darkest hour. In verse 18, he returns to the brevity of life theme, saying that as the earth erodes, so man's hope is destroyed as well. It may happen little by little (like water wearing away at stones, v. 19a) or all at once (by a flood, v. 19b), but it happens to man's hope likewise. Death will come. Man passes on and is sent away by God (v. 20). Death also means a separation from the next generations, particularly of loved ones. The father would love to see the sons be successful and receive honor, but he will not know it when he is dead (v. 21). This is a very difficult part of death and causes pain and sorrow (v. 22).

I do not think we can resolve all of the tensions in the book of Job. I do not think that God gave the text with the purpose to try to do so. In fact, even if we hypothetically could resolve all of this suffering and so forth satisfactorily in our minds, it would not be very helpful, because each of us as we suffer trials are going to wrestle through these tensions ourselves. Pat answers and formulas do not work in such a situation. The book of Job teaches us that as we examine what the friends said. They had a clean and cut-and-dried theological perspective that they promoted, but it did not help. It would have helped more if it were more correct, to be sure, but even someone with a completely orthodox theology still struggles with the afflictions of this life. At bottom, it boils down to trusting the Lord's sovereign control and good hand in all things.

Job 15 – Eliphaz Again, February 7, 2018

If we think back to the first speeches, Eliphaz responded to Job's opening lament in chapter 4. There, it appears that there were no words of comfort or encouragement or assistance. Now we come around to Eliphaz's second turn to speak.

There are some notable elements of his speech that are repetitious of earlier material:

1. He appears to repeat some of the same words back to Job that Job said to them. For example, in verse 8 he says, “Do you limit wisdom to yourself?” This sounds a lot like 12:2's, “wisdom will die with you!” Also, 15:9 sounds a lot like 13:2.
2. Add to that the fact that Eliphaz repeats certain (wrong) points that we have seen already. In general, he says, mankind is wicked (15:14)—so far so good. But then he adds in great detail an

explanation of how the wicked get what they have coming (15:20-35). The wicked, according to Eliphaz, live a life of basically unmitigated pain and disaster.

3. Eliphaz lays into Job, basically saying that what wisdom he had is gone and he is just so much hot air (15:2); he has no fear of God (15:4); his mouth is driven by iniquity (15:5); he is condemned by his speech toward God (15:6, a conclusion that God will rebuke later); Job allegedly knows nothing more than his friends, who are anyway much older and wiser than he is (15:7-10). Job seems, in the sight of Eliphaz, to have rejected the comforts that God has provided for Him (15:11). He adds that Job has become carried away (15:12) and has turned away from God (15:13). He implies that Job “drinks iniquity like water” (15:16). This is saying that Job is full of iniquity, in contradiction to the clear pronouncement of Job’s righteousness earlier in the book.

I get the feeling from this that Job and his friends are traveling in circles, chasing their tails, and going back and forth and making no discernible progress in their quest to elucidate Job’s situation. It will take an intervention by God to accomplish real forward movement.

Take a careful look at verses 14-16. It starts out seemingly well, supporting as it does Paul’s argument about the depravity of all humans in Romans 1-3. Then, verses 15-16 form a better-worse kind of argument. In 15, he tells us that God doesn’t trust in His saints, and not even the heavens are pure in his sight. That is, even the best of humanity and the world are dirty to God. How much worse is the man who is abominable, filthy, and full of sin.

Eliphaz provides us with a good statement in verse 14, but he begins to err in verse 15. Pause and ask yourself whether what Eliphaz says there is true. Are God’s saints and God’s heavenly dwelling really so bad that God cannot have fellowship with them at all? Certainly some angels fell into sin, and this dirties the heavenly realm in a way, although not God’s immediate “space.”

We may cheer on Eliphaz in verse 16 when he supports the doctrine of total depravity and hammers on the idea that there is none righteous. But in the context, is he using this idea rightly? He seems to categorize Job with such people. Is Job really that kind of character? Clearly not. No one who is saved (regenerated) is totally depraved. Still a sinner? Definitely. But not totally depraved. Believers are not abominable and filthy in the sight of God.

The life of the wicked that Eliphaz describes from verses 20-35 is based on a heavy dosage of “tit for tat” or retribution theology. Eliphaz is vastly oversimplifying the situation, or is looking at the life of the wicked from the end without considering the years of peace and prosperity that intervene before the end when they must face God in judgment. Even so, he doesn’t seem to know that there is a final judgment. In his theology, all judgment is carried out in this life in an immediate way. This is why Job has not gotten away with his (alleged) wickedness.

At this point, we would do well to ask ourselves this question: “Just how should I comfort someone who is having severe trials in life? Perhaps it is someone who has lost loved ones or has a terminal disease. How can I avoid hurting them further, or sharing useless platitudes with them?”

Job 16-17 – Job Responds Again, February 14, 2018

Job reiterates that he has heard it all before (16:2). His friends are miserable comforters. This could be translated as “troublesome.” The fact is that they are adding to his misery, not subtracting from it. He wants their “advice session” to end already (v. 3). It would be easy to

speak like they do, if their places were swapped (v. 4), and to ridicule them in their weakness and heap up words against them. But Job would take a higher road than that (v. 5) and give them comfort. He would relieve their grief instead of adding to it.

Job goes on to recount more of his bad feelings (6-22). In his speech, he fluidly switches back and forth from addressing God directly (You in verse 7), or addressing God by means of the third person (v. 9, including “my Adversary,” and verse 11), or speaking of enemies in the third person (They, v. 10). He attributes his problems to two sources: at some points the source is his enemies, and other times it is God’s “fault,” which we know is an overstatement of the situation. Job has not contemplated that Satan has a part in his suffering. It is not clear to me how Job sees himself as being handed over to the wicked (v. 11). It is more clear how he considers that God is the source of His trouble. At least he has a high view of God in that he believes nothing can touch him that God has not done (or permitted). In verse 12, he pictures himself like the prey of a cat or lion that grabs him by the neck and shakes him before making the final kill.

Job cannot get relief through speaking, nor through silence (v. 6). Job’s excruciating agony continues, causing him to weep and look like death (v. 16) despite his innocence (v. 17).

He desires that the earth will not cover up his blood. He wants to be memorialized forever, and not forgotten (v. 18) despite the fact he knows that he is going to die (v. 22). Job despairs of life and says he will be going to a place from which no man returns.

He desires some help before God—he wants a mediator (v. 21). None is forthcoming, and certainly his friends don’t fit the bill. Job wants someone to plead with God on his behalf, because God does not seem to be listening to Job. Even his friends have become mockers (v. 20). God has made a provision for a true mediator between God and mankind—Jesus Christ. See 1 Timothy 2:5 and 1 John 2:1-2. A perversion of this idea is found in false religions. For example, many people think that if they pray to Mary or some particular saint, that saint will be able by his or her own merit provide a favorable response from God.

In the opening segment of **chapter 17**, Job expresses that he truly feels that he is finished. His friends scorn him; the grave is ready; his days are over.

Job wants a friendly handshake with God to establish an agreement that they will be able to meet (v. 3). Job has been “blaming” God for his problems; he now also attributes to God the fact that his friends don’t have good understanding. God has not permitted them to “get it” in their speeches. In verse 4b and 5, Job points out that those who speak “flattery” (words that sound good but actually are not) will be punished by God.

Job’s reputation is ruined (men spit at him, v. 6) and his emotions are in tatters (v. 7). This is not a nice thing for righteous people to consider—the suffering of themselves or other righteous people—but it is a reality. Still, Job affirms that the righteous will keep on the righteous path and not serve out of it. Job is seeing something of God’s work in his life at the end of verse 9, where he says that the person with clean hands (the righteous person, no blood on their hands), will grow stronger.

He was still looking for (true) help from his friends (v. 10). He had to be very desperate to invite them to continue their speeches (v. 10). Still, he expected no final good to come of it. He was doomed (v. 11-16).

When he speaks of corruption and the worm as his relatives (13-14), he is referring to the time when he goes into the grave. Even then, he will have no hope, or if he does, no one will be able

to see it (v. 15). Would someone kindly visit him in Sheol? We might visit orphans in widows in their trouble, but most of us would not volunteer to go to Sheol (the grave) to visit someone who went there.

Job 18 – Bildad Again, February 21, 2018

The 21 verses of chapter 18 present no new insight to the debate between Job and his friends. Bildad opens the chapter by asking three questions. In verse 2, he wants to know how long Job is going to continue speaking/complaining. That is to say, what he really means is, “When are you going to finally shut your mouth, Job? Your long-windedness is getting tiresome.” Bildad is “done” with Job and wants him to take some time to become wise, after which time his friends can actually talk to him with good results—he thinks.

The second question is in verse 3, in which he asks why Job thinks of them as stupid. There is a good reason for that. We will leave it to the reader to figure out based on what we have discussed before.

The third question about the earth being forsaken or the rock being removed seems to indicate that Job is asking for something impossible to be done—or at least that he is asking for some very remarkable special treatment. Since, in his friends eyes, Job is wicked, then what happens to the wicked must happen to Job. For it not to happen would be like the earth being forsaken or the rock being removed from where it has resided all along. Since that is not right, it is not right that Job get relief from his suffering.

The remainder of the chapter (v. 5-21) is given over to a lengthy description of the curses that come upon the wicked because of their deeds. His destiny is death and darkness, weakness, a snare, a noose, a trap, terrors, destruction, ill health, no memory of him, no posterity. The “king of terrors” (v. 14) refers to death in a personified way. The reference to the west and east (v. 20) is challenging, but I think it refers to people all about who see the fate of the wicked and take note of it.

Implication? Job is wicked and does not truly know God.

Job 19 – Job Responds Again

The back-and-forth continues. Job is tormented by his “friends.” They have wronged him in a shameful way, without excuse. In v. 3 he says that they have reproached him 10 times. Up to this point, however, there have only been five speeches—the first round of three, and two of the second round of three. It appears to be an indirect way of saying “numerous times.” It’s not far off to say 10, however, if you consider that in each speech, there were multiple statements that were offensive to Job.

For this author, who is pretty strict about literal interpretation, this may seem like a startling admission, but the reality is that we speak like this even today and don’t think it amounts to eliminating meaningful, literal communication. You probably remember a child, or yourself as a child, exaggerating by saying something happened 10 times or 100 times. If you visit Genesis 31:7 and Numbers 14:22 you can see similar examples.

In the case of Jacob in Genesis 31, I don’t think the prior text lists 10 changes to his wages. But there were some significant ones, like the “wrong wife” being given to him in his first marriage!

In Numbers 14:22, God was explaining that He showed His power to the people of Israel in Egypt up to the culmination of their disobedience at the cusp of entering the Promised Land when they shrank back in unbelieving fear. During that time, he says, they had put him to the test 10 times.

If we bypass their unbelieving statement during the plagues (Exodus 5:21), we come to the months between the Exodus and their rejection of God at the entrance to the Promised Land. They complained against Moses and against God in Exodus 14:11-12 because of impending conflict with the Egyptian army, 15:24 (bitter water), 16:2 (lack of food), 16:20 (keeping leftover manna), 16:27-28 (trying to gather manna on the Sabbath), 17:2 (water), chapter 32 (golden calf and debauchery surrounding that idolatry), Leviticus 10 (unauthorized worship by Nadab and Abihu), Numbers 11:1-3 (general complaint), 11:4 (complaint for meat), Numbers 12:1 (Aaron and Miriam spoke against Moses), and finally Numbers 14 about Israel's refusal to enter into the promised land. If we count these, we get 12. But if we subtract the individual sins of Nadab/Abihu and Aaron/Miriam, we get back to 10. God was not exaggerating at all!

(February 28, 2018) Back to Job 19 around verse 4, his friends have no pity upon him (see also 19:21). Instead, they have exalted themselves over and against Job (19:5). They actually add persecution instead of comfort and prayer (see 19:22). In verse 4, Job says that if he has made an error, or sinned, then that error is still present, because nothing that has been debated up to this point has helped him or solved the problem.

Job then makes another lengthy complaint against God (v. 6-22). He says that no one is listening to him. God is against him on every side. God has even done to Job a really awful thing in taking his family away and turning his acquaintances against him (14-19). Job is hanging on by a thread (v. 20). People did not want to enter into Job's presence—either because he stank, or he looked so awful they couldn't stand to look at him, or they didn't want to catch what he had.

The reference to troops gathering together against Job (19:12) is a figure of speech expressing how Job feels attacked by God. An army has come, they are encamped around. Their road-builders have prepared the way for the army so that it has no hindrance in its attack on Job.

In 19:20, Job says that he has escaped by the skin of his teeth. We hear the same phrase used today in English, indicating that he has barely survived.

Despite Job's feeling of being forsaken by God, he was not. And we must set our hearts to remember that God will not forsake us either (Heb. 13:5).

Job wishes that his words were written down in permanent record (v. 23-24). And, they were—in the Bible. We benefit from them today.

The chapter draws toward a close (19:25-27) with a big movement forward in terms of the theology of Job. Job expresses his confidence that his Redeemer—God, but whom we know as Jesus Christ—lives. He has the idea, from prior revelation, that the divine redeemer will stand on the earth at the last (v. 25). He also indicates to us that he knows about the doctrine of resurrection, for in v. 26 he says that after his skin is destroyed (by his worm friends, 17:13-14), that he will once again have his flesh back and will see with his own eyes his redeemer (v. 26-27). How he looks forward to this day! So, the doctrine of resurrection was known to believers in God starting many millennia ago.

His friends are bent on persecuting him (v. 28), but they need to focus on what might happen to themselves (v. 29). A judgment is coming, and Job says that none will be exempted, not even

these “righteous” friends of his. They need to be careful, because they are heaping up additional punishment for themselves by attacking him.

Job 20 – Zophar’s Second and Final Speech, February 28, 2018

Zophar basically boasts that he has a keen understanding of the situation (v. 3b), says that he doesn’t like the reproach that Job has given to him (3a), and expresses his turmoil and anxiety (2). He is compelled to answer what Job has said. He is going to open his mouth again, in error.

We can profitably approach the chapter with a glance to the last verse first. In verse 29, Zophar says that “this” is the portion from God for a wicked man. That is, what he has explained in the prior verses is exactly what God has appointed for a wicked man. He is saying that his description is the God-ordained, normal way in which wicked people are treated by God. The implication, once again, is that Job is a perfect example of this wicked man.

In verse 4, he says that it is “old news” that wicked people triumph in the world only a short time. During that time he may have joy and boastfulness, but he will perish quickly and thoroughly (v. 7-9). He will die while yet a young person (v. 11). His children will be so bad off that they will need to beg from the poor (v. 10). All that he may have enjoyed turns against him and he becomes sick and empty of joy. He will have no food to eat. God will furiously throw him down, and his wealth will flow to others (v. 11-29).

It has become more evident to me as I read these speeches that what the friends are saying is internally incoherent. They say that a wicked man mounts his boasts up to heaven and has youthful vigor and other temporal prosperities, but that he will perish forever. Certainly true, but they seem to forget that the delay between the prosperity of the wicked and the downfall of the wicked may be a very long time, by earthly standards. Furthermore, to equate Job to these wicked people is just absurd on the face of the situation. There is no evidence that Job has acted like the people described in chapter 20, or elsewhere in the prior speeches about wicked people. The current difficult state of a person is no sure evidence that they are wicked. They may or may not be. Paul was in jail for Christ. He was not a wicked man, though he had been one. Those former sins had been forgiven. Most of the apostles were martyred, but that was no evidence of their wickedness. If anything, “getting along nicely with the world” is a stronger evidence of wickedness! I do not say that to suggest that calm and reasonable people are wicked. They can be very righteous. But if you are persecuted for Christ, that is actually a good sign, not a bad one.

Job 21 – Job Responds Again, March 7, 2018

This speech completes the second cycle or round of the debate. This is Job’s seventh speech. Job asks for attention (v. 2), but doesn’t expect that the mocking will stop after he is done (v. 3). He reiterates that his problem is not with man (v. 4). I think that means that his problem is not even with his friends, as rotten as they have been! His situation is so frightening that Job still trembles at it when he thinks about it (v. 5-6).

Job directly contradicts what Zophar “taught” in chapter 20. There, Zophar said that calamity always befalls the wicked. That is false. The wicked:

- They live and become old (v. 7)
- They become mighty in power (v. 7)
- They have descendants established (v. 8)

- Their houses are safe from fear (v. 9)
- God does not punish them (v. 9b)
- Their farm animals breed just fine (v. 10)
- They have many children who rejoice (v. 11-12)
- They spend their days in wealth (v. 13)
- They tell God to leave them alone because they do not want His ways (v. 14-15).

Yes, Job acknowledges that they go to the grave (13b) just like everyone else, but that happens at the last moments of their lives, relatively speaking. There is not necessarily justice for them in this life. It seems that many escape justice, in fact. We could add that due to common grace, even the wicked enjoy many gifts from God (sunshine, rain, Matt. 5:45).

Verse 16 is a bit puzzling when you initially read it. Let's take its two parts separately. First, when Job says that their prosperity is not in their hand, what he means is that the good things enjoyed by the wicked come from God. Everything they have (and we have) is a gift from God (principle from 1 Cor. 4:7). It is undeserved, and it came to them out of their born-with-nothing state. Second, when Job says "the counsel of the wicked is far from me," he is distancing himself from their philosophy, from their thinking, from their methods. He doesn't want anything to do with them. He hates the very idea of being wicked. Yet his friends accuse him of that very thing. They have emptiness and falsehood in their answers (v. 34b).

Here is an illustration: someone might accuse you of being a racist, a bigot, or homophobe because you are a Christian. But you are (should be) no such thing. The counsel of racists and bigots is far from you. You don't buy into their philosophy in the least.

Job now switches from speaking about the good things that the wicked experience and their blasphemous words against God, to speaking about how they do not get punished often. Verses 17 and 18 should be taken as a series of questions. KJV and NKJV get the translation wrong when they miss the question in verse 18. The idea of this whole section is that the wicked *do not* get what they have coming in what we might consider a "timely" fashion.

"How often is the lamp of the wicked put out?" (v. 17a). The question is rhetorical. They are not snuffed out often. Once at the end of their life. "How often does their destruction come upon them?" Not often enough, in fact, although Job's friends claim it comes all the time upon them. Verse 18 should also be understood as a question, otherwise it is hard to fit into the flow of the context. "How often are they like straw before the wind, or like chaff carried away by a storm?" The understood answer that Job intends for us to get is "not often."

In verse 19, "they say" introduces a proverbial statement that was current at the time. The generic "they" say that God will punish the children for the father's sins. In other words, if the wicked person escapes justice in this life, certainly "karma" will catch up to the kids and they will get it. Job's thought is that it would be better for God to repay the wicked himself, so that he would understand the sinfulness of his sin. The idea that children should not pay for the sins of the parents is found in several places in the OT (Ezekiel 18:14-18, Jeremiah 31:29-30). But then there are passages like Jeremiah 32:18 and Exodus 20:5, 34:7; Deut. 5:9.

Job does wish for the wicked to see destruction and receive God's wrath (v. 20). The evil person doesn't care about his household after him when he dies (v. 21). So Job desires that justice be served more directly and more quickly, but he observes that it is not so.

The fact is that God judges how He wants to (v. 22). Some people die at their peak point in life, without prior warning (v. 23-24). Another man dies without having experienced pleasure at all (v. 25). They together “lie down in the dust” and there is no ultimate distinction between the two.

Job finally exposes that he knows what his friends are thinking and how they are figuring that they will get Job (v. 27).

Verse 28 is another rhetorical question, with the understood answer, “the house of the prince” and “the tent of the wicked” are nowhere to be found. That’s what Job’s friends think. But this simply does not correspond with reality, so it is untrue.

In verse 29, Job asks his friends whether they have done any research, any kind of investigative journalism on the question. All they have to do is ask those who travel, like merchants. They have seen a lot in their travels. Their “signs” should be something like “their reports.” What they report is contained in verse 30.

Here again we have another translation problem (v. 30). The Hebrew is much more easily understood as “the wicked are kept back from the day of doom” or “preserved / spared” from it. Yes, they will face it eventually, but the travelers report that they see a lot of wickedness on the earth. So do we today.

No one confronts the wicked or pays him for what he has done, again opposite of the theology of the friends (v. 31). In spite of that, he will go to the grave, just like everyone else before him (v. 32-33).

Job ends with a condemnation of his friends: you are speaking empty words to me, and your answers are lying answers. No thanks!

Job 22 – Eliphaz, March 14, 2018

Eliphaz gets his third turn as he opens the third round of what, sadly, has become a debate instead of friends bringing comfort. Let’s examine his opening questions one by one and see what we find.

Verse 2: First, read his question. The second part of the question is true, that a wise person can be a help to himself. The first part asks, “Can a man be profitable to God?” The understood answer from this rhetorical question is “No.” While it is true that no one can bring to God something that God needs—because God is independent and self-sufficient—it is not true that His creatures cannot glorify Him or bring Him pleasure. So Eliphaz starts off on the wrong foot.

Verse 3 contains two questions that are basically one in meaning: “Is it any pleasure/gain to God that you are righteous/blameless?” The understood answer, once again, is “No.” So, if a person is righteous, that is not pleasing to God? Then is it also the case that if a person is a sinner, that is not displeasing to God? Eliphaz is saying that God basically doesn’t care about Job’s little righteousness, or that God has no feelings about it. That is simply untrue.

Verse 4 asks another question: “Is it because you fear God, Job, that God corrects/judges you?” The understood answer, once again, is “No”—it is not your fear of God that is bringing this about. In fact, it is your *wickedness* that is bringing this suffering to you!

With that introduction, Eliphaz launches into a tirade against Job. Look at verse 5, in which Eliphaz lies that Job’s wickedness was great. He throws out unproven accusations right and left

in verse 6-7 and 9. In his mind, something has to stick. But it can't. These alleged sins are the cause of Job's snares and fears, he wrongly asserts (v. 10-11).

The Christian would have desired by this point to tell Eliphaz to be reasonable and repent of *his* wickedness in speaking in such a way to Job. The parents of these guys would long ago have stepped in to tell them to do what they did during the first seven days of their visit—BE QUIET!

With this start, and with the prior bad theology that we know his friends have, we have a right to despair of finding much good truth in the remainder of the speech. We have to pick through it carefully.

Eliphaz speaks of the exalted nature of God and His knowledge (v. 12, 14b). This is OK, but I wonder if it is in service to the idea that God is so high as to be almost a deistic God, not concerned with the present affairs of the world. Verse 13 and 14a also seem to question God's ability to see through the great distance between Himself and His creation. In fact, this is probably Eliphaz accusing Job of having a deistic view of God, not Eliphaz saying that he himself believes that. Regardless, the theology is wrong, and the accusation against Job is wrong too.

Eliphaz accuses Job of walking the old evil path which others have trod (v. 15-17). Verse 18 is a bit confusing, and part of the reason is because it is a quote of Job (21:16b). Another reason for the confusion is that it is unclear how he uses the quote. Here's what I think. He is saying that Job is walking with the wicked, and Job claims that God fills the home of the wicked with good things. "But Job, using your own words against you, YOUR wicked counsel is far from me." Eliphaz rejects Job's ideas outright in 18. Instead, he says that the righteous and innocent see the downfall of the wicked and they are happy about it (v. 19-20).

How snarky (sharply critical, cutting, snide). How brutal. It strikes me just now how bad Job's friends are to him. It is amazing how truly mean they are to him.

So, Eliphaz tells Job to get acquainted with God so that he will experience good (v. 21). He urges Job to repent and receive instruction (v. 22-23) and he will consequently have plenty (v. 24-25) and he will be able to delight in God (v. 26) and pray meaningfully (v. 27). Verse 28 almost sounds like name-it-claim-it theology. Even though during this repentance-induced period of prosperity Job may be cast down, he would be exalted again (v. 29). God would see to it, Eliphaz guarantees. If you are pure, you will prosper (v. 30). By now, we have reviewed the fact that this is false. Just take a look at 2 Timothy 3:12.

Job 23-24 – Job Tells Us the Lesson of the Book, May 2, 2018

We can see why Job has a *bitter* complaint (v. 2). I'm beginning to wonder if Job's case—the one he wants to speak with God about (v. 3-4) is more about why God is afflicting Job with these three men than about the original question that brought this all about. But the reality is that Job wants to speak to God, and is confident that he would convince God. But Job does not directly rebuke or respond the friends in this speech, as he had done in the past (for example, 19:2).

Up to verse 9, Job expresses that he cannot find God, even though he knows what God would say to him in this case. Job looks everywhere, but it seems as if God has left him.

But notice the great expression of faith in verse 10. "But" is quite a contrast. God, Job says, knows my life's path. This path passes through some heavy testing, but in the end, Job affirms, he will come out as gold. This shows the rock solid foundation that Job had to carry him through

this lengthy trial. This is the kind of faith the NT writers urge us to have, even when dealing with hostile sinners (James 1:2-6, 1 Peter 1:5-7, Hebrews 12:3-4, 7, 11).

That faith also drove Job to hold fast to God's ways (v. 11) and commandments (v. 12). This is a direct response to his friends' attack on his character.

Look again (v. 12) at how Job treats the word of God—as more important than his daily food. That is the right attitude for a believer in God.

Job knows that God does what He pleases (v. 13-14), so Job views His sovereignty with fear and trembling (v. 15-17). **Job is opening up to us the lesson of the entire book.** We must fear God, because He is in control of all things. He is doing what He pleases, and those things that He has appointed for us will come to pass. We must continue to trust Him and His word because we know that every true believer will come out of the trials as gold. We don't understand everything, like Job didn't understand, but we know God will take care of us.

This doctrine of the sovereignty of God troubles many people. They complain that it leaves them no freedom in daily life, or in regard to their salvation. But that is shortsighted. In every kind of situation, and especially in trials, the fact that God is in control of all things ought to bring us comfort, not complaint! After all, the sinful aspects of any situation that we face are not directly caused by God—because He is holy—but He does utilize those things to accomplish His perfect purposes.

Job opens chapter 24 with a lament that those who know God cannot see how everything works (times, days).

Then he turns to a listing of evil behaviors, like removing landmarks (stealing land), stealing farm animals, oppression of orphans and widows and poor (v. 2-4). The oppressed ones have to forage for enough food for themselves and their children (v. 5-6). They also don't have proper clothing (v. 7-8), probably because the oppressor has taken their garment in pledge, i.e. as collateral, for some loan.

The wicked also take babies from their mothers, even mothers who have lost their husbands! They oppress the poor (v. 9-10). These poor have to work hard to tread out grapes for the wealthy wicked, but they themselves go thirsty (v. 11). Even though they die, God does not openly rebuke the wrongdoers (v. 12). It is frustration for the righteous to see this state of affairs. This may be a charge against God, since a human court should do better than this; or it may be a simple recognition that how God rules the affairs of men does not follow the way that Job's friends preach. It is much more complex than what they are saying, and Job recognizes that. The wicked do indeed prosper for a time.

These evil people love darkness rather than light (v. 13, see also John 3:19). Here light is used in a figurative sense; later in the passage it is used in a literal "daylight" sense. But these are so brazen they will kill the poor and needy in broad daylight (v. 14). Others are more sneaky and go off to do their sin at night (v. 15). Thieves case houses in the daytime, and break in at night (v. 16). They also do not know "the light" of righteousness. The light of day, as a picture of that light of righteousness, is scary to them because they may be found out if someone recognizes them.

If Job's friends were right in their theology of evil, then these wicked oppressors should disappear quickly (v. 18a). They should be cursed in everything they do, and no one should want to associate with them (18b, c). The grave should consume them quickly (v. 19). His mother

should forget him, and his body should be destroyed in the grave. He should be totally forgotten by the world, and his evil should be smashed (v. 20). Why? Because he treats the barren and widow with contempt and violence (v. 21).

But now the resolution comes, like it did for Asaph in Psalm 73:17. Job knows that God will take care of these mighty wicked ones. Before God, no one can be sure of his time (v. 22). Even to the wicked God gives security—every good gift is from above in one sense or another—and they enjoy that gift (v. 23). But God sees what they are doing, and it doesn't escape his notice (“His eyes are on their ways”).

Job recognizes a key truth—that the wicked are exalted for a little while. That is the key idea. It is only temporary. Somehow in His seemingly infinite patience, God puts up with their wicked ways. BUT, then they are destroyed (v. 24). Job is 100% certain that this is truth, and no one can prove him wrong. The back-and-forth argument of the book has come to a head right here. This is a direct and open challenge to the false theology of his friends.

I agree with Job. As we collate the rest of Biblical truth, including passages that we have seen before in Ecclesiastes 7:15 and many others, we see clearly that Job is correct. Wicked people can prosper for a while, and that too is from the hand of God. But it is not from God's hand in an affirming way. It is a goodness of God, but in the end, the severity of God will have to be displayed (Rom. 11:22).

Job 25 – Bildad's Very Brief Speech May 9, 2018

Bildad gives his speech in this third round of the debate. Zophar will not be heard from again in the book, except at the end, where the three friends offered a sacrifice to the Lord for their folly and theological falsehood (42:8-9). We remind ourselves of that fact here so that we do not give too much weight to Bildad's theology.

Verses 2-3 seem OK in that they speak of the exalted nature of God. He is the great ruler of the universe, his (angelic) armies are innumerable, etc. But as before, this truth is used as one side of a contrast that is, when taken together, entirely false.

This is because on the other side of the contrast, Bildad teaches that man is completely incapable of righteousness (v. 4). He is in fact less in stature before God than the moon or the stars, and those are not very shiny to God to begin with. Man is a maggot, a worm (v. 5-6). We might feel like that at times, but we are not. Mankind is the pinnacle of God's creation, and is inherently more valuable, more glorious—when righteous, more worthy of honor, than any maggot or worm or lower, subhuman creation.

This theology is “God is great, man is nothing. And Job, you are *really* nothing.” Whenever the friends speak about mankind, comparing him to maggots and worms, they imply that Job fits that very description.

The question, “How then can man be righteous before God?” is a misplaced question because it assumes a negative answer: that no one can be righteous before him. This reminds us of the similar question from Job in 9:2 and his recognition that he needs a mediator (9:33). But it is indeed possible for a man to have a righteous standing before God! How is that, you ask? Well, certainly not in the man himself. But the Bible is full of references to righteous people. See Psalm 1. How does someone get that way? See Psalm 32, which was the subject of a recent study

we undertook at a recent Lord's Table service. The bottom line is that Christ Jesus provides a righteousness that is not our own by imputation. This makes us righteous. So how can a man be righteous before God? In Christ!

We should note that Bildad's argument is self-defeating. If no one can be righteous before God, as he argues, then his own argumentation is unrighteous!

Righteous does not mean perfect, for no one is sinless. Certainly there is the sense that "no one is righteous" and "all have fallen short of the glory of God." But after salvation removes a person from that terrible estate, it is possible to be a righteous person. And *every* Christian is supposed to be that way! Old Testament believers could be as well because of the blessing of God's forgiveness.

Job 26-31 – Job Concludes

Chapter 26 – May 9, 2018

This section is going to end the four-way debate between Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Job asks in verse 1-3 how his friends have helped him:

- How have you helped the one who has no power?
- How have you saved the arm that has no strength?
- How have you counseled the one who has no wisdom?
- How have you declared sound advice to many?

These are rhetorical questions, once again, and the answer Job intends to convey is this: "You haven't helped/saved/counseled/advised!" In other words, the friends had been no help at all. Their theology (or rather, philosophy) was wrong. They did not salve his wound or fill the gap where he had need.

By way of application, don't mistake spiritual talk, and lots of it (like 25 chapters), with solutions, forward progress, or godliness. The content of the conversation need not be *much*; it needs to be *theologically correct*.

Verse 4 is not as straightforward as the prior verses. And there is a translation question. Is it "To whom did you declare these words?" or "From whom/for whom did you declare these words?" The question is one of direction—are the words spoke to someone, or from someone? Either way makes good sense, with the latter option being a synonymous parallel with the former. I will take the NKJV text as it stands.

Here's the idea: They need to think again about the one to whom they have uttered words (4a) and the one from whom their words came (4b). Are they really speaking **to Job**, and are they really speaking **from God**? It seems evident that they are speaking of **false caricature of Job**, and that their words, though clever, actually come from a **demonic kind of wisdom**. This is like the "wisdom" that James speaks about in James 3:15.

Their words are in some way so close to the truth that it is hard to discern upon a cursory reading. This is like the counterfeit gospel that is so common today—a gospel that reduces to mere intellectual assent to the facts about Jesus. But there is no repentance, no acknowledgement of the Lordship of Christ, and no transformation of character after regeneration. Such assent is no more than the demons have. It sounds spiritual, but it is not the true gospel!

Job goes on in verses 5-14 to magnify the wonders of who God is. He does not take second place to any of his friends in expressing the greatness of God! They have tried to do so, and in some ways succeeded, but again, they used their exaltation of God in service of a bad overall case.

God rules over everything. Even the dead tremble before Him (5). The grave, though it is closed to human eyes, is wide open to God (6; see also Psalm 139:8, 11-12). He stretches the expanse out over the north and yet there is nothing to hold it up. He hangs the earth on nothing! This is still an amazing thought to me even though we know it is true because of how gravity and orbits happen. Still, the idea that we are hanging out in outer space—and we aren't even hanging by a thread. We are hanging on nothing! God's wisdom and power are awesome. And how is it that an ancient man like Job—almost a caveman if we are to believe our evolutionist friends—could say something like this? He either knew a lot more than we give him credit for, or God's Spirit superintended Job to know and understand enough to be able to write this perfectly.

Job declares further wonders (8). Think of the incredible weight of water that is held in clouds. "One inch of rain falling on 1 acre of ground is equal to about 27,154 gallons and weighs about 113 tons."¹ How can that weight be suspended in mid-air? Job expresses it this way: the clouds do not break under the weight.

In verse 9, the word *throne* is debated. Most translations take it as "moon" because of its spelling in the Hebrew text. I will take it that way. God hides the moon during the daytime, and by clouds. It is present, but not seen.

Note verse 10's "circular horizon" that forms a boundary at waters, light, and darkness. This idea of a circle flies in the face of those who even today accuse Christians of believing in a flat earth!

The pillars of heaven (v. 11) may be the mountains, or simply a figure of speech to express that which upholds the heavens over the earth. They move at the voice of God (Isaiah 6:4). God handles the vast oceans, and any other dreaded power, like here, Rahab (v. 12). NKJV translates this as "storm." Leviathan appears in verse 13 as the fleeing serpent. God's Spirit created the heavens, and He is more powerful than the most powerful animal of the deep.

Verse 14 caps it all off: all of what Job has said, and all its wonder, is only a smidgen of what God is all about. We only perceive the mere edges of God's ways. What we see and marvel at is only a small percentage of the true greatness of God. It is like one whisper out of a crowd of conversations. No one can understand God fully. This is why we say that God is *incomprehensible*. He is knowable, but no one can fully know Him.

Chapter 27 - May 16, 2018

The prior chapter (26) ended with Job extolling God's greatness, and by means of a rhetorical question asserting that no one can understand the full magnitude of God's power. This points to a key part of the message of the book, that we cannot understand God fully. This makes it impossible for us to understand all of his ways. In the case of Job and his friends, they are debating back and forth on something that they cannot fully grasp. Their debate was fruitless, and we expect it to be so. They basically go back and forth on the issue of the wickedness of man and how that results in the demise of the wicked, but there are so many more dimensions that God is working in that this is far too simplistic.

¹ <https://water.usgs.gov/edu/earthrain.html>

Job asserts that God has taken away justice and made his soul bitter (27:2). I would agree with the latter; the former, however, is not really true, but it is truly how Job feels. God is just all the time. To be sure, God has not intervened in the conversation to declare that Job is righteous. But that is not the same as actively taking justice away or doing injustice.

In verses 3-6, Job says that he will not agree with his friends. Their philosophy is wicked and deceitful. He could not agree with them and continue to uphold his righteousness. To throw in with them would be to make himself complicit in their theology; it would be a lie if he said that he agreed with them. He will not make a plea deal with them just to get out of the conversation! Job is going to hold fast to his belief that he has been righteous. That was what God said, after all, at the beginning of the book. If he agreed to his friend's theology, he would not only believe incorrectly, but he would be saying that he himself is not righteous.

Job lumps his friends into the same group as the wicked (v. 7). He wishes upon those enemies of his the same fate as the unrighteous. We see that the "friends" are more enemies than friends.

Job continues to express the ultimate fate of the wicked—which he agrees with his friends will be awful (8-10, 13-23). But what he disagrees about is that his own case is the same as the wicked's case. It is not his sin that has brought this awful predicament upon him. There must be some other explanation. What that is, he does not say; in fact, he does not know. But his friends have not even put their finger on the idea that there could be another explanation for Job's trials than Job's sinfulness. (The idea that Satan could be involved in this hasn't entered any of their minds—they have pinned everything on God!)

The unrepentant sinner will not be heard by God in the time of trouble (9). Even if he has gained much in his life, he has no hope, because when God takes life away, that's it (8). Job doesn't want to be in that boat.

Job is going to do some teaching here (v. 11). He will not withhold what he knows about God. What is mystifying to Job is that his friends have seen and experienced the same kinds of things in life that he has. So, he wonders, why do they say such nonsensical things?

Here is what experience has taught Job: indeed the wicked will receive a heritage from God—and not a good one. They will experience children who will die or are hungry; they might multiply money and possessions, but they will not benefit from the use of those things (v. 17). Righteous people will enjoy the fruits of the wicked's labor. Their house is temporary (v. 18), indicating that like a moth or a short-term watchman, he will not be in his place very long. The remainder of the verses in the chapter say much the same kinds of things. Disaster awaits the man who does not believe in God. He may flee, but he will be overtaken (22) and people will mock him.

Chapter 28 – May 23, 2018

This is Job's "wisdom chapter" (something like Proverbs 8). Job turns to contrasting wisdom with mankind's mining operations for silver, iron, and other metals and stones. In 28:1-11, he says that mankind goes to great lengths to look in every nook and cranny of underground mines. He is searching for precious stones and metals. To do so, he works in places where no animal has gone before, in very obscure places.

Contrasted to all the work that is done to obtain precious metals and stones, Job says that mankind does not know the value of another and even more precious commodity—wisdom (13a). It cannot be bought with precious metals. It cannot be found in a mine (12). It is not

sourced in mankind. It comes from somewhere else (13b). This wisdom, which is the wisdom of God, cannot be found in any physical location (like the ocean, v. 14), nor can it be purchased or exchanged for money (15-19). It is far more valuable than all of the things that mankind considers precious. It cannot be purchased. It must be imparted some other way.

I am reminded of Psalm 19:7-11 which highlights the great value of the Lord's words.

Job asks again where this wisdom comes from (v. 20), and says that its source is hidden from the living (21). Death and destruction know about this wisdom, but not from whence it comes (22).

Finally, the answer comes: God knows where it is. He understands it. Somewhat like in Proverbs 8 where wisdom is personified, here it is spoken of like a substance or a thing. In reality, wisdom is hidden in God, but God delights to give it to His people as they ask Him for it (James 1:5). It is imparted to us by means of the Holy Spirit (Col. 1:9—spiritual understanding, and especially 1 Cor. 2:8-10). Still, God's wise ways are ultimately unsearchable for man (Rom. 11:33).

Job and the friends would need that wisdom to explain what is going on in Job's case, but they did not have it. God has used His wisdom to arrange the affairs of creation (24-27).

To mankind, God teaches that the fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding (28). This is a wonderful doctrine. It complements and reinforces other Bible teaching about wisdom and man's relationship to God (Eccl. 12:13-14; Prov. 1:7). To trustingly fear God, and to turn away from sin, is the basic kind of wisdom that mankind can have. This is good enough for us, since it is what God has given us to have. Beyond that, we may never know the full explanation of suffering, or of other deep issues that we cannot figure out. That is, we can't achieve the kind of wisdom that would be necessary to understand it all. But we can trust God and obey Him in our life. We can trust God about what we do not or cannot know.

Without this fear/trust/wisdom, there is no real relationship with God. Anyone who has not expressed true fear of the Lord with the result of departing from evil is demonstrating a kind of foolishness that is, ultimately, deadly.

Combining the last verse of chapter 26 with the last verse of chapter 28, we get a good insight into the problem of evil and suffering, which have plagued mankind for so long. It is a problem that has this answer: fear the Lord, and depart from evil. That is wisdom and understanding, despite the fact that it doesn't answer the question directly. And that is about all we can do, because we can only see or understand the very edges of God's ways. His wisdom and power are beyond our comprehension. Solving the problem of evil entirely is a task that no man can succeed at doing. It cannot be answered directly with our current spiritual and mental capabilities.

Chapter 29 – May 30, 2018

This entire chapter records Job's wish that he could be as he once was, months earlier, before the loss and physical affliction had visited him. It also serves as an autobiographical defense of his behavior before his friends. They would hopefully be able to put two and two together and see that indeed he was righteous, or at least that he was not wicked like they accused him.

In those earlier days of Job's life, God watched over him for good and blessed him (2-6). He walked in the light; he was in the prime of life; his children were like olive plants around his table (Psalm 128:3). Life was like a bed of roses, without the thorns. Cream (butter) and oil

represent luxuries in life. These things were abundant for him. He didn't just have skim milk; he had whole milk (or half-and-half, or even thicker cream!)

The favor of God extended to Job's standing in the community. Young men, old men, leaders, and nobles all showed great respect for Job. He was the patriarch, the wise man, the leader of their community. When he showed up, everyone took notice (7-10). The people blessed and approved of Job (11). They did this because Job was a very good man. His reputation was spotless. He was above reproach. He was not a man that what whispered about in the community as being some high up but corrupt person.

Verses 12- explain why he had this reputation. He helped the poor, the orphan, people who were dying, the widow (12-13). He was a just and righteous man (14). He helped the blind, lame, poor, and dug into situations that he didn't know to figure out how he could help (16).

For those who were wicked, however, Job offered different treatment. He broke their teeth and saved the oppressed from them (17). The translation puts it memorably as "fangs." Obviously he is not talking about sabertooth tigers here, but instead is speaking of people who "ate up" others figuratively with their teeth. The idea is that their teeth might as well be the fangs of a wild animal, because they are behaving viciously toward their victims.

If you were oppressed, it was good to have Job on your side. He was a man of strength and power, of moral conviction and courage. This is completely contrary to the supposition of Job's three friends, that he was suffering for unrighteousness. If anything, he was suffering for *righteousness*. Remember Satan, who saw Job and said that he was only righteous because of what God was doing for him? Well, God was showing Satan, and the world, that saved and therefore good people do not just do good for a temporal reward. They do good because they have been made good by God.

Looking forward, Job trusted that he would be able to retire in ease, live long, and die comfortably (18). His nest was his homestead, with his family all around. He was like a well-watered tree by the river, bringing forth fruit (Psalm 1:3; see v. 19-20). He was full of health and vigor.

His relationship with other men was remarkable. They listened to him, waited for his wise counsel, and took his word as kind of the final say in the matter (21-22). They were desirous of his advice as one waits for the rain to water the crops (23). He had such a reputation for respectful and wise speech that if he spoke facetiously, it took the audience a minute to figure out that he was joking. Everything he said was taken as "gospel" so it was a shock to their systems when he spoke in a way to make fun of someone or mock someone (24).

Job was so important in the community that he was like a chief or king. He was their guide and comfort in human terms (25). Now, Job was not a king, but perhaps he was the elder of the community, or the "mayor" or "governor."

Notice that the response of the community was entirely different now that Job was brought low. See Job 19:13-19 for the contrast to how he is presently being treated in his affliction.

Chapter 30 – June 20, 2018

Now Job laments what we just saw from chapter 19, that the very people who respected him before have nothing but contempt for him now. The sin nature of humanity goes against the command of Proverbs 24:17 (Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be

glad when he stumbles). Many people perhaps coveted Job's place of authority and respect. Some must have considered him to be an enemy, because they were wicked and he "broke the fangs of the wicked." Now that he was down-and-out, it was easy for them to turn against him. Younger people, people of disrepute in the community, etc. all turned against Job (v. 1).

Verses 2-8 describe these antagonists as homeless people who lived in caves and in the bush. They were sons of foolish and evil people. The fact that they lived outside of the regular places of society indicates that they were outcasts.

Yet here they were, taunting Job (9). They didn't hesitate to treat Job like a piece of trash. What is more disrespectful than spitting in someone's face (10)? Now that their former superior is now a victim of what seems to be God (11), they feel that they can behave in an unrestrained fashion. Before, had they attempted to do this, Job would have flattened them into the dust. The strength of righteous Job caused the wicked to show restraint, because they would be hurt if they did not do so. (This is why it is important to have a strong righteous presence in our community.) As it stands in the now of Job's life, these evil people take advantage of the turn of events to taunt and humiliate Job, to destroy and terrorize him (12-15). They used him as a sick form of entertainment.

He really didn't need additional destruction, for he is already poured out, pierced, pained, and disfigured by his disease (16-18). Whatever it is, it has him by the neck (as the collar, 18). God has thrown him out and made him no more than dust and ashes. That language is reminiscent of our saying at a funeral, that the human body came from dust and it goes back to dust. Several other places in Scripture use dust and ashes to picture the weakness of mankind (Gen. 18:27), or the repentance and humiliation of man (Job 42:6).

In 20-23, Job addresses God directly. Job's suffering was amplified by the fact that God did not seem to hear him, but instead was leading him down the pathway of death. Job feels that God has been cruel in pouring out such suffering (He wasn't, though neither Job nor we might understand at the time the good reasons God has for doing such things). He felt that God had opposed him (He hadn't). Job was certain that God was bringing him to death, which was the "house" appointed for all the living to go to eventually (God wasn't doing that either).

Job is hoping that God would not (continue to) stretch out his hand for bad against someone who is already a heap of ruins (24). That's how Job saw himself. He was a basket-case, we might say, so why should God want to afflict the basket-case any further? You might be in a spot like Job. Trust God, like Job did, and if you can't see what good God is doing, at least take comfort that you are in good company, with Job and all the saints who have suffered like him over the centuries.

Job relies on the fact that he himself has been sympathetic to people who were in trouble (25). He grieved for the poor. But when he in turn wanted a break, he couldn't get one (26). Evil and darkness kept coming (26). He has turmoil instead of peace (27-28). Things are so bad, he feels like he is living among the jackals and ostriches. He doesn't even get the dog house—he's farther out than that!

Job's physical condition is terrible. His skin is disfigured (18, where garment may be a metaphor for the "skin" garment that covers his body) and turning black (30a). It is molting off of his body. This seems to indicate tissue death caused by the boils all over his body (2:7). He has high fever that is unrelenting (30b)—and he had no Tylenol or Advil to break it even temporarily. The pain

is in his bones, which points out how difficult it was, if you have ever had that kind of bone or nerve pain that seems worse than other kinds of pain.

What skill and instruments he would have used to praise and thank God, he now uses to play the music of mourning and weeping (31).

Chapter 31 – July 11, 2018

This chapter records Job’s final defense. The general idea of the chapter is that Job is saying he has NOT committed sins worthy of the punishment he is receiving, but if he had committed those sins, he acknowledges that he should be judged.

In verse 1, Job affirms that has been pure with regard to women. He has made a firm covenant with his eyes not to look intently or gaze at a young woman. Seeing is one thing; gazing or taking the second or third look is another. The allurements of beauty is something that Job is aware can tempt a man’s heart, and he doesn’t want to become enslaved to that sin. He does not want to violate Matthew 5:28 (even though he didn’t know that verse as such) and Prov. 6:25. See also James 1:15. Nothing has changed today in the nature of man, or of woman, or their interactions. Notice that Job is pointing out a key problem for men: the eyes. There is no question he is onto something here. I don’t know by experience the temptations of being a woman, but Job is right on for men. We have to watch our eyes.

Job realized that such sin, among every other kind of sin, results in destruction (2-3). God destroys workers of iniquity. Christ will banish them to a forever punishment away from the glory of the Lord (Matt. 7:23; 2 Thess. 1:9). God knows everything that we do, good or bad (4).

Now Job shows his honesty before God. He makes about a dozen “if...then” statements in which he says “if I have done sin X, then may I be punished accordingly.” He recognizes that he would deserve punishment for doing evil. But he has not done those sins, so he says he doesn’t deserve the grief he is experiencing. These “if...then” statements will be interspersed with some related commentary.

- If he has lied (5), then he wants to be evaluated by honest scales (6).
- If he has walked in a crooked way or by the mere sight of his eyes or has unclean hands (7), then he is ok with his fields being eaten up by another (8).
- If he has committed adultery (9), then he accepts the punishment that his wife would be taken by another man (10).

Verses 11-12 are an interlude between “if...then” statements in which Job says that all the sins he has listed (and those he will list) are wicked and rightly deserve punishment. The punishment is of such a nature as would destroy his increase and consume him totally. The puzzle for Job is that he has experienced the judgment, but hasn’t done the sin!

- If he has ignored the just cause of a servant in a complaint (13), then God is justified to rise up against Job and let him have it (14) because the servant, just like Job, is made by God (15). It is interesting that although Job is a very respectable man in the community he sees himself as of the exact same substance with those who occupy a lower place in society. That is the kind of humility that people in leadership positions should have.
- If he has oppressed the poor or widow or orphan (16-17)...but notice the parenthetical statement, which the translators have done well to set off in those parentheses. He

actually hasn't oppressed people at all. Rather he has raised the orphan and helped the widow (18). The "then" part is understood by now.

- If he has observed a poor person in need of clothing and he has not taken care of the need, pictured by the poor man blessing Job and wearing a fleece garment from Job's sheep (19-20)...the *then* is understood—Job would deserve the appropriate judgment.
- If he has raised a hand against the orphan (fatherless people would be considered basically orphans because they lacked the provider, leader, and protector that a father is) (21), then Job deserves to lose his arm (22).

Job fears God. He takes it very seriously that God punishes evil. We need to have the same attitude, and let that frighten us away from doing sinful things no matter how alluring or easy they seem to be to get away with (23). Job is guilty of none of these "ifs."

- If he trusts in riches (24-25)...the then is understood. See Psalm 49:5-7, 62:9-10, Mark 10:24, Luke 16:11, 1 Tim. 6:17. Job has very good theology of how to handle wealth.
- If he has worshipped the sun or the moon or even himself (26-27), then he agrees that he would deserve judgment because he would then be guilty of idolatry (28). Idolatry is equivalent to denying God above.
- If he has laughed at the calamity of those who hate him or asked for a curse on their soul (29-30), then...we understand by now the pattern of the chapter.
- If he has withheld food from someone or let a traveler spend the night on the street (31-32)...the fact is, again translated in the parentheses, he has provided hospitality to all who have come to the town. With "Job Hotel" there was no need for an inn!
- If he has hidden his transgressions as Adam did (or as mankind always does) because of the fear of man taking the place of the fear of God (33-34)...

Job laments that no one is really listening to him, especially not God. He wants God to write down the charges against him, and the associated sentences. Job suggests that he would proudly approach God with God's own declaration of Job's righteousness—because that is what Job is certain the prosecutor would have to write when the investigation was over (35-37). Notice that he would give God an accounting of all his steps, but in verse 4 Job has already said that God knows all of his steps.

- If the land cries about against Job and he has been unjust in his dealings with it or its owners (38-39) then he deserves thistles and weeds instead of useful crops.

All these bullet points make a good checklist for those of us who claim to be righteous.

Job's words end on this note. He is innocent of any accusation that might be brought against him. Indeed, he is a sinner, but he is also a good man. But it does seem to me that he has shown a lack of patience and humility before God in his many words. Be careful of talking too much...

There is more work to do with this chapter. As I preached through it, I discovered a number of NT parallels in James, 1 Timothy, Matthew, etc. which I should summarize in a short note that deals with the theology of Job.

Job 32-37 – Elihu Enters the Debate – July 18, 2018

Dr. Robert V. McCabe wrote his doctoral dissertation on this section of Job. A later article condensed this work and is entitled "Elihu's Contribution to the Thought of the Book of Job,"

DBSJ 2 (Fall 1997): 47-80 (available at <http://www.dbts.edu/journal/>). In the article, he lists many different ways that Job 32-37 is interpreted. Suggestions range from reverent to irreverent, and there is just a lot of confusion about it. McCabe's thesis is that the Elihu speeches, as this section is called, function primarily as a transition from the dialog of the three friends in chapters 3-31 to God's speeches in 38-41. He concludes this way:

“We have interpreted Elihu's contribution in terms of his function in the book, rather than interpreting him strictly in terms of his own words and self-appointed role. Consequently, the Joban author uses Elihu to serve as a transition from the dialogue to the Yahweh speeches. As a transition, the Elihu speeches serve a twofold purpose of **summarizing** the content of the dialogue, with many of Elihu's ideas serving as a recapitulation of earlier views, and of **preparing for the God speeches**. With Elihu's **summary role**, the Joban author basically uses him to review the **key issues of the debate, Job's innocence and God's justice**. With Elihu's **preparatory role**, the Joban author significantly uses him to provide a **theocentric perspective of God's control of the natural realms** and to **serve as a theological foil for God**.” (p. 80). (Emphasis mine).

This leaves us only a little mystified because we might not know what a foil is. Wikipedia gives a good definition:

A foil is a character who contrasts with another character—usually the protagonist—to highlight particular qualities of the other character.

I would treat the speech with more focus upon the words in the text. Still, I agree with Dr. McCabe that **literarily**, this section serves to transition to the climax of the book, the God speeches. In terms of **content**, there is review and summarization going on.

But there is something a little more. Despite Elihu's youth, I do see *some* advance in the theological understanding that Elihu offers. We will see in the notes on chapter 33 that he does really try to listen to Job and put together what he is saying and offer a substantive response. We won't be able to agree Biblically with everything that Elihu says, but we can discern some differences with the general message that the other three friends gave. He does focus the attention on God. He does say that God is just and sovereign and that God does speak to man, despite Job's pessimism that has a level of doubt about all of those facts. But ultimately, Elihu's reasoning is lacking just like the older friends, so God enters the debate in chapter 38 to straighten them (and us) out.

Job 32: The Youngster is Compelled to Speak

I believe that when verse 1 records the phrase, “because he was righteous in his own eyes,” this is how the friends thought of Job, and how Elihu thought of Job. This is not a negative comment about how God considered Job, nor how the book's author considered Job, as if Job were being “self-righteous.” As we have said repeatedly, Job was in fact righteous, so his self-examination was largely correct. This objective fact (Job 1:1, 1:8) doesn't make him self-righteous in the least. We also know that he trusted the Lord, as Job 13:15 and 23:10 clearly state.

I will grant some credence, however, to the idea that Job justified himself rather than God (v. 2). Much of Job's speeches focused upon himself and how his behavior did not deserve the affliction he received. He did not offer an explanation of how God was good and just in all of His dealings. He never mentioned the devil, nor how God could be demonstrating his administration

of justice in a just way even as it seemed to the human eye to be unjust. He does claim that God has wronged him and there is no justice (19:6-7).

Thankfully, the friends stopped talking. We have had enough of their theology!

But now another and perhaps worse fate awaits Job: the zealous anger of a younger man who claims he is more informed than the older men.² “Everyone here is wrong” was the thought in Elihu’s mind. Verse 2 says that he was angry at Job because as he saw it, Job justified himself rather than God. The idea seems to be that Job needed to put aside the truth of his righteous conduct and simply accede to the “obvious truth” that God is righteous and Job was not at all righteous. Verse 3 (and 5) adds that Elihu was also angry at the three friends because they condemned Job but were unable to back up their condemnation. They were unconvincing in that they offered no hard evidence. So, his plan is to step into the verbal fray and straighten out everyone. He had to wait until now because he was younger (v. 4, 6-7).

Elihu is correct in verses 8-9 that God gives understanding to men, and without discrimination in regard to age. Men who are older or prominent are not always wise or knowledgeable about justice. Elihu means that although he may not be great or well-aged, he does have the spirit of the Almighty God in him too, so they should listen to him.

Elihu then states that the friends’ answers were inadequate (v. 10-16). The friends were casting about for the right way to explain the “truth” to Job, but fell short. They did not find wisdom (13), so Elihu is not going to answer with the same words they used (14). We will have to see if that is the case in fact. The friends have nothing more to say. They have exhausted their wisdom (15-16).

Back in v. 13, Elihu says something that has to do with God, not man, vanquishing Job. There is some question here as to what he is saying. It may well be correct that Elihu is saying, “Lest you say, ‘We have found wisdom: *namely* God will refute Job, not man.’” Elihu doesn’t want them to say that; rather, he wants them to think that man can in fact get the job done, and the right man for the job is on the scene—Elihu! If the quotation marks are changed, Elihu would be saying God will have to take care of Job. In reality, man will not be able to answer Job’s inquiry in any fully convincing or satisfying way.

The whole story is a bit frustrating to this reader, because a suffering servant of God has been roped into a huge debate about God’s justice, man’s suffering, and related themes. He didn’t need that right then. He needed comfort, encouragement, practical help, prayer, and those sorts of things.

Finally in this chapter, Elihu re-states that he will give an answer. This seems a bit long-winded to me as I read it, because it takes up verses 17-22, and he has already said he will answer in v. 10. He says that he has many words to say. This indicates the dangerous ground that he is on. Note that he says he must speak so that he can find relief (v. 20). He does not say that he is compelled to speak for God as much as he is compelled to speak for himself, although I think it is safe to say that he wants to justify God, something that he feels Job did not do.

² It is not that younger always equates to wrong. Youth often does mean that the younger person is not as wise in life experience. But it doesn’t necessarily mean he is lesser in the knowledge of God, depending on how he has applied himself to the spiritual disciplines. Still, the common cultural understanding, and not without some basis, is that young people are not as well versed to speak as older ones.

It is also noteworthy that he doesn't want to show partiality toward anyone (21-22). He certainly won't be showing favoritism toward Job. We'll have to study all that he says before we can pass a final judgment on the partiality issue, or on any other matters of content.

Let's do a little evaluation and application. First, I appreciate Elihu's patience and respect. He had to wait a long time to speak, and he did wait. He respected his elders. He observed an important cultural convention—which is often a cross-cultural and cross-age convention.

Second, when your anger is aroused like Elihu, you have to be extremely careful and self-controlled. Usually, as I have said many times, you must not allow your anger to be aroused in the first place. We know from our prior knowledge of the entire story that God was not well pleased with what Job's friends said to him (Job 42:7). Later we will see that Elihu's contribution to the book rehashes much of the ground that they went on, so he is indicted by this same evaluation. Therefore, it was not good for him to be angry at all—because he was wrong!

Third, added to that, when you feel like you are going to burst if you don't say something, that can also be a bad sign. It would be wise to vent the words some other way. Usually, thinking about them awhile is a better approach.

July 25, 2018

Elihu became angry (32:2). Was he right or wrong to do that?

Was it legitimate for him to be angry at a man who was suffering terribly, even if that man said some things that were wrong? Was the stated cause of his anger actually the truth? A case can be made that Elihu touched on something that did have some truth to it. Although that could have frustrated him, he should consider the situation as well so that his emotions don't get away from him.

Job 33 – Elihu Continues His First Speech: God is Not Silent

Elihu offers four speeches, or a four-part speech if you prefer. Each chapter (33, 34, 35, and 36) start with an introduction to a continuation of Elihu's speaking.

Although we may discern some mistakes in what he says, we have to give Elihu a lot of credit. He has listened for a long time. He has noted particular quotations of Job. He has distilled some of what Job says and then tries to respond to it. For example:

1. Job complains that God does not respond. Elihu says that God does speak to us.
2. Job complains that God is unjust. Elihu responds that God is just and not wicked.
3. Job complains that God does not care about his righteousness. Elihu says that God is sovereign.³

He has also synthesized the three friends' arguments and found them lacking. They have accused Job of wrongdoing, but not at all convincingly.

So let's look at some details next and see what we can learn.

Elihu requests Job to listen (v. 1-2). Next, the Bible accurately records Elihu's claim that he has an upright heart and he speaks pure knowledge (3). That doesn't sound too humble, but let's suspend judgment for the moment until we find out more about what he is going to say.

³ Adapted from Roy B. Zuck, "Job" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, p. 756.

Verse 4 has a true statement about Elihu's maker and the giver of all life. The idea is that because he is made by God, he has something useful to say.

In verse 5, Elihu sets up a very adversarial situation, challenging Job to "gird up his loins" (so to speak) to be ready to give an answer to the soon-to-be-displayed theological brilliance and logic of Elihu (OK, I admit, I'm biasing the conversation a bit too soon, based on verse 3!). But the nature of what Elihu is doing is somewhat negative here. He is inviting the worn-out Job to re-engage in the debate, but now with a supposedly better debate opponent than the first three friends.

In verses 6-7, Elihu puts himself off of a pedestal by saying that he is like Job, made of dirt, and as such he should not seem to be terrifying or hard for Job to understand or handle. The NKJV idea of spokesman is unique to that translation. It arises because the Hebrew says something like "Behold, I am like your mouth before God." It is not an easy phrase to understand, but it seems to bring Elihu to a similar level as Job, not necessarily as a go-between for God and Job.

In 8-11, Elihu accurately gives a fairly accurate report of what Job has been saying. Job has said he is without transgression, but God has found reason to harass him anyway. When Elihu reports Job as saying, "there is no iniquity in me," I have to pull back a full endorsement of Elihu's summary, because in 7:21 it seems that Job does acknowledge that he might have some sin that God could forgive him. Godly people know that they are sinners (1 John 1:8, 10) and that they even sin in ways that they themselves don't recognize. Job is that kind of godly person. Notice that in 13:23 and 23:1, Job speaks of his general character of righteousness, but never says that he has absolutely no sin in his life now or ever. At least that's how I read it.

Elihu attacks Job's basic character of righteousness in verse 12. We acknowledge with Elihu that God is greater than man, but I can't see Job denying that fact. Further, Elihu is speaking against God's evaluation of Job's character as basically righteous.

Verse 13: The assertion is correct that Job was contending with God. But is it true that God does not give an accounting of *any* of His words? This pointed again back to the Hebrew to double check what Elihu is saying. I believe we should translate the verse not like this:

Why do you contend with Him? For He does not give an accounting of His words.

But instead we should translate like this:

Why do you contend with Him that he does not give an answer about anyone's words?

Do you notice the difference? The first way sounds like it is useless for Job to contend with God because, Elihu says, the truth is that God will never give you any justification of what He does. The second way sounds like Job is contending that God does not answer Job's words (or anyone's words, for that matter).

Truly God does not have to respond to anyone's inquiry or give an accounting of what He does. He is free and independent of all humans. He is not beholden to us or obligated to us in any way, other than what he has bound himself to do in His promises to humanity and His people. But indeed, he has not promised to explain everything to us. We should not get frustrated with circumstances and demand God answer us!

August 1, 2018

See Prov 30:10. It appears that the three friends have maligned Job to his master (God).

In verses 14-18: Elihu replies to Job's assertion that God doesn't answer him. God does in fact speak in a couple of different ways, but man does not perceive it. Elihu **first** emphasizes the importance of dreams as a vehicle of receiving information from God. Supposedly these dreams can guide us away from evil and keep us from pride. By this means (v. 18), God keeps man from awful death.

Of course, dreams can also lead people astray, either because they are not from God, or because they are incorrectly interpreted. The reality is that dreams are things that have no divine revelation component to them. That is true 100% of the time today, and 99.9999999% of the time throughout the course of world history. They are merely human thoughts and imaginations. God may providentially inform us through the Word, advice, experience, observations, etc. and these things can and should give us guidance. We might even dream with our minds informed by these things, and those dreams could "guide" us, but only because they were previously informed by divine revelation. But we should not think of our dreams as special revelation or mystical communication from God. Remember too that Nebuchadnezzar had important dreams, but most people could not interpret them correctly.

Starting in verse 19, it appears that Elihu explains a **second** way that God communicates with humanity, and that is through sickness. One problem with this proposed means of divine communication is that it is not propositional. It may be that God is telling us something specific, but we can't know what that is from the sickness. It may be simply a general means that God uses to get our attention.

Elihu explains to Job that man is punished (chastened) with pain, so much so that he does not want to eat and his body wastes away. He draws near to death. That takes us through verse 22.

But, verse 23 suggests there is a **third** way that God can get a message across to man. And that is if there is another person who can show the sick one how to be righteous, then either that person or God will say that the person has a ransom to be delivered from death (24). This ransom seems to be able to deal with the sin problem that the person has. The messenger is a mediator or interpreter someone who stands between God and man.

Pause here and look ahead. How does God speak to Job and the others in chapters 38 and following? By a dream? Sickness? Or an intermediary? None of those. To Elihu's surprise, God speaks directly to them from the midst of a whirlwind (38:1), the similar kind of weather that killed Job's four children (1:19).

The suffering person represents Job (3:24, 6:7, 19:20). The messenger seems to be Elihu, who pictures himself as being able to step into the situation and save Job from his calamity. He may be one out of a thousand men who can do this—after all, the three friends couldn't manage to get the job done.

Verses 25-26 show the possibility of physical restoration after the sickness and messenger do their work. In other words, God will deliver and the person's flesh will not be full of boils; rather it will be like new. He will be youthful again, God will hear his prayers, there will be joy and righteousness.

All of this relies upon the idea that Job is a sinner; he has not been turned back from his pride or bad deeds as of yet, and someone needs to come along and provide some help to him to get back to righteousness. But that is not much different than what the three friends had said—that Job was a sinner and that is what brought upon him the calamitous events of his recent life. The new

idea that Elihu proposes is that the sickness itself is not only a punishment for sin, but in the sickness itself, God is *communicating* to Job. God is not silent!

There is next Elihu’s description of what must be done by this man who is healed. He has to admit that he was wrong. This will be a redemptive repentance (27-28). God runs us through this cycle of “speaking to us” two or three times to bring us back from death and grace us with the gift of life (29-30).

Elihu concludes this chapter with a call to Job to listen. He wants to interact directly with Job and be that mediator between God and Job. He wants to justify Job if Job has anything to say. If not, he wants Job to just listen and learn wisdom. This takes me back to the comment I made about arrogance. Elihu seems to have some of that.

Zuck (cited above, p. 758), pointed out that none of Job’s friends used his personal name. I found that he was correct. From Job 3-29, Job’s name only appears in statements like “Then Job answered and said...” But Elihu, to his credit, directly used Job’s personal name several times.

Job 34 – Elihu’s Second Speech: August 8, 2018

In the Bible Knowledge Commentary (OT), Zuck says this chapter is about God’s justice; the NKJV chapter heading agrees with this. By the end of the chapter, we will be wondering about Elihu’s justice.

In verse 2-4, Elihu calls for the attention of the listeners. He says that just like we taste food with our palate and know by that means whether we like it or not, we also test words. We do that not with our palate, but with our ears. The ears here are a metonym for the mind and understanding of a person. So he calls on the listeners to *think* in order to figure out about justice and good.

Elihu quotes Job in verses 5-6 and 9. In between, he criticizes Job as being a scornful man who keeps company with sinners and wicked people. Now, we could simply trust that Elihu is making accurate quotes of his interlocutor, but we should double check to be sure.

5 "For Job has said, 'I am righteous,	Disagrees with John 9:2; in 9:15 and 20 and 10:15 Job doesn't say that he is righteous, but supposes if he were...and Job is not saying he is sinless; he is arguing that he is innocent of a great transgression that his friends accuse him of being guilty.
But God has taken away my justice;	Agrees with Job 27:2
6 Should I lie concerning my right?	This seems to suggest that Job thinks that he is right, that he is not a sinner, that he is innocent. Then, it is a bit difficult to figure out. It could be that since he feels that way, he cannot lie just to get his friends approval. Or, it could mean that his friends consider him a liar, claiming to be innocent when he is not.
My wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.'	The first part seems to be a reasonable quote given the great affliction Job was in.

	The second part of this does not look like a quote from Job either. Elihu has said something like this in 33:9 and again here in 34:6. Job has indicated in 7:21 that he is hoping that God would pardon whatever transgression he did. See also 13:23 and 13:26. These are not the words of an arrogant self-righteous person.
7 What man is like Job, who drinks scorn like water,	This is not a quote of Job, but rather Elihu's evaluation of Job. It is wrong, because Job was a godly man; he was not a scorner. Actually, the friends were the ones scorning (16:20).
8 who goes in company with the workers of iniquity, and walks with wicked men?	This is not a quote of Job, but rather Elihu's evaluation of Job. It is definitely false that Job walks with the wicked.
9 For he has said, 'It profits a man nothing That he should delight in God.'	In 27:10 Job speaks of not finding delight in the Almighty. Maybe Elihu is referring to the idea in Job 21:15 about profit from prayer? Elsewhere, Eliphaz (not Job) seems to indicate that man cannot be profitable to God (a different idea, 22:2). It seems that words were being attributed to Job that he neither said nor meant.

People can sometimes hear but not listen. I wonder if Elihu was in that situation. He was not paying attention to what Job was really saying. Job could respond: "I did not say that I am righteous; I said IF I were righteous..."

Elihu gives more calls to listen (v. 10, 16). He then lays out the following, much of which is good and true:

- 10 - God does not do sin. True. See James 1:13.
- 11 – God rewards a man according to his works. True, with the qualification that his reward is not always immediate, and with the qualification that the gospel means I do not get remunerated according to my sins as I deserve.
- 12 - God is perfectly just.
- 13 – God has not been delegated His authority by anyone! There is none higher than He. Authority over the world is His naturally because of Who He is.
- 14-15 – God is all powerful. This general truth is communicated by specific example: If God wanted to, He could take away the life of every living thing in a moment. This verse alludes to the fact that it is God's breath and Spirit which give life to every living thing. God is the life giver and sustainer. Sin has damaged that connection so that we cannot experience it in this sinful existence forever.
- 17 – Again, God is perfectly just. This makes Him a perfect "governor" for the world.

- 18-19 – God does not show partiality. He will tell the king or nobles if they are wrong; He does not regard the rich more than the poor. This is because He created them all!
- 20 – related to the above about impartiality, the mighty die without God having to lift a finger, so to speak. It is no effort on His part that the rich and powerful die just like the rest of humanity.
- 21-22 – God is omniscient. Not even the dark hides anything from God.

FILL IN. The latter part of the chapter, verses 23-33, speaks of God not having to inquire about people before He judges them. He knows everything. It seems to me that Elihu implies that Job is one of these mighty men whom God is crushing. The idea is that they are wicked, they oppressed the poor (28). God’s acts are irrevocable (29). He doesn’t allow a hypocrite to reign.

August 15, 2018

In verses 31-33, we have to turn up the power on our thinking caps. Elihu supposes that someone might say to God that he has gotten his punishment, so now he will stop sinning. To paraphrase verse 31: “I’ve taken my punishment now, I will stop (and expect my chastening to stop too).”

In verse 32, the anonymous “anyone” (here picturing Job), asks God to teach him, and then he will do no more iniquity, if he has any. Elihu’s question is this: does God chasten according to our schedule or measure? Just because you have agreed with God about some wrong you committed, or don’t like his terms and conditions (you reject them), this doesn’t mean that God is done chastening you. Verse 33 challenges Job that God will not repay on our terms, and that we have to make a choice about our behavior.

This certainly fits the friends’ feelings about Job. He might not be sinning *right now*, but he was formerly involved in some sin that brought this punishment (their view, not mine, nor God’s)!

Elihu closes 33 with a call to Job to decide about all of this. Job has to make a decision about how he is going to conduct himself.

One commentator (Hartley), NICOT p. 460, suggests that we can look at what Elihu says above as a formulation of a confession. He is instructing Job as to what to say to God about this matter—that he has done iniquity and will not do it anymore. But that is not the full picture. He seems to be asking a question or making a supposition about someone acting this way, and responding that God will not judge us on our terms.

Elihu is angry at Job because he believes Job has improperly called God to a trial.

After verse 33, we can imagine a pause, where Elihu waits for Job to respond. After a minute, it becomes apparent that Job is not going to respond favorably to Elihu’s reasoning. That’s because Job can’t. His situation is different than all the friends have imagined. There is another thing behind all of this that is outside of their “box” and they have missed it.

Elihu lays into Job in verses 34-37. He calls upon wise men to agree with his analysis of Job. He makes a number of claims that, evidently, all wise people should agree with:

1. Job speaks without knowledge.
2. Job’s words don’t come from wisdom.
3. Job’s answers are like those of a wicked person.
4. Job adds rebellion against God to his other sins.
5. Job is arrogant or scornful (claps his hands?)

6. Job multiplies words against God.

Either we are not very wise, or none of this is actually true. In fact, we know the latter to be the case. Even so, Elihu wishes in verse 36 that Job will be tested to the max. That is to say, he believes Job deserves every bit of what he has gotten, *and then some more*. This is not very helpful. On a human level, this kind of talk only serves to heighten anxieties that something worse is coming; these are not comforting words at all.

What Elihu is doing is a bit different than the friends, in this respect: he is saying that Job deserves punishment not for his prior sins *per se*, but for his disrespecting of God in his current mindset. This is not substantially better, however, than the previous three friends.

Overall, however, my view of Elihu is growing dim because of his very unfavorable evaluation of righteous Job.

Job 35 – Elihu’s Third Speech: August 15, 2018

Zuck says this chapter is about God’s sovereignty. I’m not convinced about that. That said, we have to acknowledge that interpreting in Job, particularly in these chapters, is tough sledding, and some differences will be evident between expositors.

We have to consider once again whether Elihu is making correct quotations of Job. So in verse 2, he claims that Job is saying, “My righteousness is more than God’s.” Is that right? I don’t find any verse in Job that says that. He does hold fast to his righteousness (27:6; 29:14). These two verses, and possibly 6:29 depending on translation (vindication, integrity, righteousness), are the only ones that Job speaks with the word righteousness, at least in NAS and NKJV. The rest of the uses of “righteousness” are in the mouth of Elihu in chapters 33, 35, and 36. I think he is terribly misreading what Job has said, or taking something out of context and warping it into this false statement. Job does not think of himself as more righteous than God.

Then he quotes Job as saying “what advantage” and “what profit shall I have, more than if I had sinned?” The idea is that being righteous does not provide any benefit. We saw the same basic idea in 34:9 about profit arising from delighting in God, and found that Elihu was at best stretching something to fit onto Job. Job did indicate in 21:15 something of a doubt about whether there was any profit in praying to God, but a closer read indicates that these were words that Job attributed to *the wicked*, not as coming from himself.

August 22, 2018

Elihu teaches something like what we might call the impassibility of God. This term, according to Wikipedia, “describes the theological doctrine that God does not experience pain or pleasure from the actions of another being.” God is so high (v. 5), that if you sin, you do not move Him (6). If on the other hand you are righteous (7), that doesn’t improve God. Our wickedness and righteousness don’t affect God; they affect mankind (8).

Elihu now enters into an explanation now of how people are afflicted and cry out for help against those who afflict them (9). But, evidently like Job, they do not really seek the Lord. Job did not seek God, who gives joy (songs in the night, 10) and wisdom (11) If he did seek God, he was not heard because of his pride (12). God also did not listen to Job’s request because of Job’s empty talk (13). Job also must learn to have patience (14). These three things are sufficient reasons that God would not answer Job when he called.

Actually verses 14-15 are quite difficult in Hebrew. If we follow the NKJV translation, Elihu says that God has not punished Job in His anger. God has done *something*, but He has not *really* punished Job. In fact, God has overlooked a lot of Job's folly (and thank God that He does that for us all!). So God has not really punished Job nor taken notice of Job's foolishness (15), yet Job is opening his mouth in emptiness. Elihu claims that Job is multiplying words without knowledge (16).

Is this true? No. But it is the report of Elihu's mind on the situation. And, I suspect that there are thoughts or kernels here that Job can benefit from. Things that are said by Elihu or the three friends may not be entirely true, but they can, as Hartley suggests, provide some thoughts to Job that will help him in the final analysis (and final confrontation with God).⁴

Job 36 – Elihu's Fourth and Final Speech

This is Elihu's fourth and final speech. I am counting by the "Elihu...said" statements that are written at 32:6, 34:1, 35:1, and here at 36:1. There is not such a statement in 37:1.

Elihu says that there are more words that need to be spoken for God (2). He indeed sees himself as the messenger of God. He gets his knowledge from a far place (heaven?, v. 3) and in his mind, he thinks of God as righteous.

His claim to be speaking on God's behalf should raise our antennas already, but where things go really sideways is in verse 4 where he claims that he is speaking true words and that perfect knowledge is in his possession, so that Job and the other friends are graced with someone who is very smart. The fact that he has already made some false claims, and this arrogance about himself, makes for an almost total breakdown in the reader's trust of what he is saying. We have to be very careful about what we believe of what he says.

Tension: are these words inspired by God? Am I saying there are falsehoods in the Bible? That sounds blasphemous on the surface. Certainly, Elihu's words are accurately recorded. But the later negative evaluation of the friends' "wisdom" by God helps us understand that not everything written here is "truth." This doesn't cause me to worry because I know that even some words of Satan are recorded in Scripture (Genesis 3:1-4, Matthew 4:3, etc.). They are recorded accurately, and they are profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Sometimes instruction is best done from statements that show a contrast with the truth.

Elihu now drops into the same argument that the friends have been using for the entire book. It is good that he says that God is mighty, full of understanding, and despises none (5). But then he advocates that God kills the wicked and gives justice to those who are oppressed (6).

In the long run that is true, sort of, but for some exceptions. Like (1) God doesn't execute justice immediately or on man's schedule; (2) if the wicked forsakes their wickedness, God will have mercy (Isaiah 55:7; Ezekiel 18:21-22); (3) if the righteous turns away to evil, God will dole out retributive justice at some point (18:24). There are multiplied examples of these in the Scriptures.

And so much of the following text is compromised by poor theological understanding on the part of Elihu. We start with verses 7-15, which are presented as general "truth."

Verse 7: The righteous are not always exalted with kings.

⁴ Hartley, NICOT Job 467.

Verses 8-9: If the righteous are in afflictions, God does not always tell them why, nor is it the case that they have always acted defiantly.

Verses 10: Sometimes God opens the ears of the afflicted righteous to hear His words, but evidently this had not happened for Job, at least yet.

Verse 11: This is a prosperity gospel teaching that is not a general truism.

Verse 12: Ditto, but on the negative side.

Verses 13-14: Hypocrites die young and in company of perverted persons, Elihu says. Sometimes, that is true. I think he is putting Job into this category. That's false.

Verse 15: God always helps the poor, Elihu affirms. Not so.

August 29, 2018

In verses 16 and following, Elihu begins to address "you," which I take as a signal that the general "truth" he is speaking now transitions to a specific application to Job.

Verse 16: Job, God wants to draw you out of your distress and put you in a place of richness.

Verse 17: But instead, you are experiencing judgment that is due to the wicked. This is happening because, it is understood here, Elihu condemns Job as actually being wicked.

Verses 18-19: Wealth cannot help Job avoid the problems that he is having. Also, mighty strength will not keep him from that distress either. Job needs to be wary because, in his situation under God's wrath, he is on the edge of total destruction.

Verses 20-21 is a warning that Job should not look forward to the darkness when bad things can be done "under cover." He is to take warning that he should not turn to iniquity, although it seems that Job has chosen the sinful path rather than embracing the affliction of God (which Psalm 119:71 says is good for the believing person). Elihu claims that Job wants the iniquity but not affliction!

Verses 22-33 correctly extol the greatness of God in a number of areas. He is full of power (22), no one has directed Him (23). His work is to be magnified, and all men know it (24-25, from general revelation that is true). God is great (26). We can know him, contrary to Elihu's thought, but he is correct that we cannot know Him fully. His power extends to controlling the rain (27-28). This is something that is very difficult to understand (29), although we have a better idea about it today after further study and technological advancement. Speaking of the canopy (probably the sky) in v. 29, Elihu goes on to add that God sends light on it and the oceans below. God uses it and the sea to judge people (or govern, or nourish). God's control of weather gives Him control over the nations too (think of famines and other natural disasters). He gives food to the inhabitants of the earth through means of the light and water. Finally, in verses 32-33, Elihu extols God because he controls the lightning and thunder. It is interesting that he understands that thunder declares the oncoming storm (end of v. 33). Additionally, the animals indicate knowledge of imminent stormy weather. The NET Bible mentions that there are over 30 interpretations of this verse. I am following the main idea of the overwhelming majority of good English translations. Some suggest that the thunder declares the presence of God, whereas others take it to declare the presence of an oncoming storm.

Job 37 – Elihu’s Final Speech, Continued

Elihu continues to extol God’s greatness with regard to thunder (v. 1-5) and then transitions to speaking about snow (6) and then other weather (7-13). It would be good for us simply to reflect on these verses, and let our heart “leap from its place” when we consider these things that God does.

Elihu says that thunder comes from God’s mouth. He suggests that it has a communicative value. We know at least that it communicates the greatness of God, since to Him, thunder is relatively nothing. It is under His control. To us, it is fearful and even deadly, when its lightning comes too close. Verse 7 is speaking about the hand of man being stopped up from working because of bad weather. God can stop all agricultural or other work if he wants—simply by sending a huge snow storm. That stops everyone in their tracks. Elihu speaks of snow and ice and cold winds, and God’s guidance of the clouds.

God uses these things, Elihu well states, to correct man, or for the benefit of the land, or for mercy. Maybe a bad storm could be corrective; rain for the land and mercy toward man so that crops may grow. Clouds could be for shade, or darkness.

We have entered into a section of Job that is transitional, where Elihu is foreshadowing some of what God is going to do in the upcoming chapters, by showing Job about God’s greatness.

September 5, 2018

In verse 14, Elihu tells Job to listen, and consider the works of God. There are a few questions here, like verse 15 and 16. Ponder the answers for yourself: I don’t know when God dispatches clouds, or how they float along, carrying thousands of tons of water aloft to rain upon the earth (15-16). I think I understand the question of verse 17, to some extent, in that the south wind brings up warmer air from southerly climates, but even that, if you dig a little deeper, is not something we can understand. How did God originally design all of this, and then how does it all function now that the curse has changed the climate? Such a wind may quiet the earth in the sense that it slows down normal daily activities as people try to stay out of the heat.

Verse 18: Job, have you spread out the skies with God? Nope. Can’t say I did that or partnered with God in that endeavor.

So, verses 19 challenges Job as to what we should say to God. The answer is: nothing. Someone deigning to speak to God would be swallowed up (20). This is true, in a sense, but then note that God has *invited* us to come to Him in prayer through our Savior. What is a wonderful thing!

We continue reading in Elihu’s expression of God’s majesty. Here, he speaks of the brightness of God’s light (21), and His golden splendor (22). God cannot be fathomed, because He is so great (23). He does not oppress anyone (though Job may feel that God has done that to him). Because of this greatness, men fear God. God does not fear man, however. He shows no partiality to any who are wise of heart. I think we should add that God shows no partiality, period (Romans 2:11).

Overall, it is clear that Elihu’s evaluation of Job is negative. Elihu’s anger was aroused by the fact that the friends could not answer Job. He was certain that Job needed some instruction, and that Elihu was the one to give it, as a messenger of God and eon full of wisdom. He felt that Job was among the wicked (34:36-37).

Job 38-41 – God Enters the Debate

Introduction

Having exhausted themselves and every possible way of looking at this from their human perspective, it is now time for the divine resolution to come to the forefront.

God answers Job out of the whirlwind. Remember that Job’s children died because of a large wind (Job 1:18-19). Be sure to remember that it was not the direct act of God that caused that devastating wind to kill Job’s children. It was ultimately attributable to Satan. But the whirlwind is a fitting symbol for God’s power.

Pause and consider Job has longed for God to answer. For example: Job 23:4-5, 30:20 and 31:35.

Notice how God rebukes Job with his first question: “Who is this...without knowledge?” This negative evaluation might confuse you when you set it next to God’s positive evaluation of Job in 42:7. Both statements are true. And this gives us the hope that even if we may speak out of turn with God, He still can have a positive evaluation of us!

This is how I have pictured the judgment seat of Christ. It is not a decision time as to whether you are saved; your very presence at that judgment shows that question has already been answered in the affirmative. But there are “good” and “bad” that are evaluated at this judgment. Still, even though God finds negative in His assessment of your conduct as a Christian (and He will always find such), there is the great hope of positive, that the basic character of your life has been in the godly direction, and *that* pleases God. We therefore ought not live in morbid fear of the judgment seat of Christ as if it all depends on us, for it does not. We are there in the first place because of Jesus Christ, and any good that we have as part of our evaluation is done on the basis and in the power of Christ also.

But how, precisely, are both evaluations true? That question is food for further thought.

The fact remains that Job has uttered words that are not backed with true knowledge. We have mentioned this to some extent already. For example, there is no mention of the theology of Satan by Job or the friends. That is a major omission. As another example, they have not really plumbed to any depth the notion that God’s administration of justice is not “small enough” that it fits inside of our human minds.

In verse 3, God challenges Job to answer God’s questions “like a man.” It sounds like God wants Job to “man up” and not be a child. If Job can say the things that he said throughout his speeches, then he should be able to answer God’s inquiries at this point. Job has said that he would do so multiple times.

God’s Questions

It is a mammoth task just to catalog and get a little grasp on the questions that God asks Job in this section. The other friends are probably left reeling, just like Job. And so are we.

In addition to the questions themselves, there are sometimes add-on statements of one sort or another. There are five types of these.

1. The questions are sometimes accompanied by a demand to answer the question, like in verse 4: “Tell Me, if you have understanding.” These challenges function to reduce the listener—Job in this case—and the reader—us—to a place of humility before God. These challenges are marked with a * symbol.

2. The questions are sometimes accompanied by statements that express the time that God did a work. Although this is not a question, it strengthens the question by showing that Job was not there “when” God did His work. See verse 7, for example. I have included these statements explicitly in the list, usually following a “when.”

3. Yet other times, poetic parallelism comes into play and a statement is made “repetitively” to make a point stronger or clearer. Look for example at verse 11. Such parallelisms are marked with a ** symbol and are not repeated here for sake of brevity.

For September 12, 2018

4. The questions are accompanied by explanatory statements. For example, 39:3-4 explain further the questions in verses 1-2. 39:6 explains further about the onager’s home in the wilderness. I have included these statements with their “controlling question.”

5. Sometimes the questions are followed by a challenge of this sort: “If you can do that, then go ahead and do all these other powerful things.” The example of this is in 40:10-14.

Some of the questions are in groups of several verses that deal with a similar thing. I have tried to color code some of these groupings in alternating red and black to help note what would be paragraph divisions in a modern translation layout.

Here is the list of questions with some topical headings:

Planet Earth

- | | | |
|-------------------|--|--------------|
| 1. Who is this | who darkens counsel without knowledge? | 38:2 |
| 2. Where were you | when I laid the foundation of the earth?* | 38:4 |
| 3. Who | determined its measurements? | 38:5 |
| 4. To what | were its foundations fastened? | 38:6 |
| 5. Who | laid its cornerstone? | 38:6 |
| when | the morning stars sang | 38:7 |
| | and all the sons of God shouted for joy. | |
| 6. Who | shut in the sea? | 38:8-11 |
| when | it came forth | |
| when | I made the clouds its garment | 38:9 |
| [when | I made thick darkness its band | 38:9 |
| when | I fixed a limit for it [the sea] | 38:10 |
| when | I said this far you may come, but no farther | 38:11 |
| 7. Have you | commanded the morning? | 38:12 |
| and | caused the dawn to know its place? | 38:12 |
| that | it might take hold of the ends of the earth | 38:13 |
| and | the wicked be shaken out of it | 38:13 ??? |
| | | 38:14-15 ??? |
| 8. Have you | entered the springs of the sea? | 38:16 |
| 9. Have you | walked in search of the depths? | 38:16 |
| 10. Have | the gates of death been revealed to you? | 38:17 |
| 11. Have you | seen the doors of the shadow of death? | 38:17 |
| 12. Have you | comprehended the breadth of the earth?* | 38:18 |
| 13. What | is the way to the dwelling of light? | 38:19 |

14. What	is the place of darkness?	38:19
That you	may take it to its home	38:20
15. Do you	know because you were born then?***	38:21
16. Have you	entered the treasury of snow?	38:22
17. Have you	seen the treasury of hail?	38:22
which	I have reserved for trouble and battle	38:23

This poetic language does not refer to a literal place where God stores snow and hail. Of course, the clouds “store” these things, but only very temporarily. The question has to do with the origin of those elements of the weather.

Weather, Part 1

18. By what way	is light diffused?	38:24
19. [By what way]	is the east wind scattered over the earth?	38:24
20. Who	divided a channel for overflowing water?	38:25
21. [Who]	[made a] path for the thunderbolt?	38:25
	to cause it to rain on uninhabited land	38:26
	to satisfy the desolate wasteland	38:27
22. Does	rain have a father?	38:28
23. Who	has begotten the dew?	38:28

God is the answer to all of these, and man still today has to answer the same way as Job did. Despite major advancements in science, the questions of where and why and how all of creation came about still are impossible to answer.

24. From whom	comes the ice?	38:29
25. Who	gives birth to the frost?	38:29
	Waters harden like a stone...frozen	38:30

Stars

26. Can you	bind Pleiades (Taurus)?	38:31
27. [Can you]	loose Orion’s belt?	38:31
28. Can you	bring out Mazzaroth in its season?	38:32
29. Can you	guide the great bear with its cubs?	38:32
30. Do you know	the ordinances of the heavens?	38:33
31. Can you	set their dominions over the earth?	38:33

The farthest that mankind has reached from the earth—in person—is the moon. We have barely escaped the outer edges of our solar system. The nearest star is four light years away; the constellations are much farther. We have no hope of answering any of the astronomical things questioned here.

Now we move to more weather questions.

Weather, Part 2

32. Can you	tell the clouds to release their rain?	38:34
33. Can you	send out lightning so it responds to you?	38:35

34. Who	has put wisdom in the mind?**)	38:36
35. Who	can count the clouds?	38:37
36. [Who]	can pour out the bottles of heaven?	38:37
when	there are drought conditions	38:38

Animal Kingdom

37. Can you	hunt prey for the lion?**)	38:39
when	they crouch in their dens....	38:40
38. Who	provides food for the raven?	38:41
when	its young cry and wander for lack of food?	38:41
39. Do you know	the time when the goats bear young?	39:1
40. Can you mark when	the deer gives birth?	39:1
41. Can you number	the months (gestation?) they fulfill?	39:2
42. Do you know	the time when they bear young?	39:2
	birthing and growth of animal young	39:3-4
43. Who	set the wild donkey free?	39:5
44. Who	loosed the bonds of the onager?	39:5
	whose home is the wilderness	39:6
	he dwells away from people (paraphrase)	39:7-8
45. Will	the wild ox serve you?	39:9
46. Will	[the wild ox] stay near you?	39:9
47. Can you	bind the wild ox in the furrow?	39:10a
48. Will he	plow the valleys behind you?	39:10b
49. Will you	trust him because of his great strength?	39:11a
50. Will you	leave your labor to him?	39:11b
51. Will you	trust him to bring home your grain?	39:12a
52. [Will you]	[trust him] to gather it...?	39:12b
53.	The wings of the ostrich wave proudly	39:13a
but are	her wings/pinions like the stork's?	39:13b ⁵
	she leaves her eggs on the ground	39:14a
	and warms them in the dust	39:14b
	She forgets that a foot may crush them**)	39:15
	She treats her young harshly	39:16a
	Her labor is in vain, without fear	39:16b
	God has deprived her of wisdom**)	39:17
	She has no fear of horse and rider	39:18

The ostrich is portrayed as brave but stupid.

54. Have you	given the [war] horse strength?	39:19
55. Can you	frighten him?	39:20a
	he is fearless and likes war	39:20b-25
56. Does	the hawk fly by your wisdom?	39:26

⁵ This section seems different than the others. It does not focus on questions, but rather on giving of facts. Perhaps we could understand all of this as implying the question: "Do you understand how or why this all is?"

57. Does	the eagle mount up at your command?	39:27a
	and make its nest on high?	39:27b
	on the rock in lives	39:28
	from there it sees its prey from afar	39:29
	its young suck up blood (?)	39:30a
	where the slain are, there it is	39:30b

The care and management of the animal kingdom is the general topic in the above verses. We have enough trouble managing in our own little “domains” of home, work, church, school. Much less are we able to maintain some control or knowledge or management over the affairs of the universe.

Since we have also recently studied Daniel chapters 4-5, we are learning a lot about humility.

Direct Confrontation by God

58. Shall the one	who contends with God correct Him?*	40:1-2
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The text now comes to an intermediate conclusion, or we might say, an intermission in the interrogation to apply what has been said so far by God.

We should have understood by now that the answer to most of these questions is “I can’t. God can. It was not me. It was God. Things don’t work the way they do because of me. They work the way they do because of God. I cannot control these things. God controls them.”

Job then responds (3-5). Job has gotten the point already. He first recognizes that he is “vile.” This means not wicked, but insignificant, nothing, small. He acknowledges that he is of a despicable character before God. He has nothing to answer, so he expresses that by the body language of covering his mouth with his hand.

Furthermore, He sees that he spoke “once” and “twice” – meaning everything he had said in his speeches earlier – but he won’t say anymore. He has been humbled by God’s greatness. In his personal view, he now acknowledges that his own speeches consisted of far too much pride, and speaking “out of turn” without proper knowledge. We must take his self-understanding seriously here. He is generally a good man, and the humble self-evaluation of such a good man is instructive.

The lesson that we have to learn is that our insignificant knowledge, wisdom, power, and longevity, disqualifies us from fully understanding the ways of God, from questioning him, from accusing him, from becoming angry at him, etc. Submissive, repentant trust is what we need to do before God. The need for this approach to life does not lessen in times of darkness like Job experienced. Indeed, His ways are higher than our ways.

We have previously connected the ideas of Job’s righteousness (declared so by God in Job 2:3—before Job’s speeches—and Job 42:7—after Job’s speeches and repentance), with God’s rebuke of him in these speeches. We did this by saying that Job was generally righteous, but not perfectly so. Thankfully God can declare and treat a person as righteous who is not perfectly so in practice, giving us hope that we, though imperfect sinners, can still be commended by God. All of this does not make a careful distinction between imputed and imparted righteousness, but we can do that too. God imputed His righteousness to Job, so that Job was saved. But Job was not perfect in practice and needed more imparted righteousness. God was able to commend Job

because of both kinds of righteousness—that which was imputed by God and that which was practiced generally in Job’s life.

But furthermore, one of the practices of a righteous person is repentance. Job evidenced that he was a righteous person by the fact that he was repentant when confronted by God about the things that he had done or said that were sinful. By repenting, Job was confirming that he was a righteous person. It is the *unrighteous* who do not repent.

Then the Almighty God continues to speak out of the whirlwind (see 38:1). He demands Job to prepare himself like a man and answer the questions He poses (6-7). If we were to complain that God is piling on with these additional questions, then we haven’t fully repented and understood the lesson we are being taught. If God decides to add more, that’s His business!

With the first two questions, it appears that God is implying those things that Job was doing in his earlier speeches.

59. Would you	annul my judgment?	40:8a
60. Would you	condemn me to justify yourself?	40:8b
61. Do you have	an arm like God?	40:9a
62. Can you	thunder with a voice like His?*	40:9b
Then	take to yourself majesty, glory, beauty	40:10
	exercise your wrath	40:11a
	humble the proud**	40:11b-12a
	take down the wicked**	40:12b-13
Then	I will confess that you can save yourself	40:14 ⁶

The idea of “save yourself” is reminiscent of the mocking that Jesus took on the cross—“Save yourself, and come down from the cross!” Not that God was mocking Job; rather, He was saying that if Job demonstrated the kind of power necessary to save himself, then God would confess that Job was indeed able. The fact is that Job couldn’t save himself but would have. Jesus could save himself but would not.

Behemoth 10/3/2018

At this point, God turns to a non-question section of his speech. He tells Job to consider Behemoth, and gives a detailed description of a magnificent and huge creature. We do well to recognize that this creature is a particular kind of huge dinosaur, with which not only God, but also Job and his friends, would be familiar. We too are familiar with such creatures, because we have seen their skeletons and fossils in museums and many documentaries.

The word *Behemoth* is used only one time in the Bible. But it has been transliterated into English so that the word has come to us in common usage. It means a huge or monstrous creature, or a very large organization.⁷

Notice some key features of this creature.

1. God said that he made behemoth “along with you.” Dinosaurs and man were created at roughly the same time, on day six of the creation week. (Note that the sea creatures were made a day earlier, but this behemoth is mainly an herbivorous land-animal. A massive sea creature called Leviathan will be considered in chapter 41.

⁶ This is a challenge for Job to take God’s office “for a day” and if he does, then God will acknowledge Job.

⁷ Definition from Google.

2. He eats grass. The male pronoun is used here in the NKJV, drawing from later verses. Some translations use “which” and “its” to make it generic. We certainly expect that it had male and female variations.
3. He has awesome strength in his legs and stomach.
4. He has a huge tail, like a cedar tree. This does not sound like a hippopotamus or elephant! It could be more like a huge alligator, but you get the impression that it is taller than that kind of reptile.
5. His physique is amazing, with muscular thighs, bones like beams of bronze, and ribs like bars of iron.
6. He is called the “first of the ways of God.” This indicates that He is amazing even compared to the other amazing animal creations of God. Only God his maker could “submit” him (v. 19).
7. He is a creature that takes food somehow produced from the mountains.
8. He lies under lotus trees and hides out in reeds and marshes. He takes shade among trees near the water, including willows, so seems to be like a reptilian that is land-based but is also comfortable near a lot of water.
9. He is not alarmed by rushing waters. He is of a huge size, so that large rivers didn’t bother him. In fact, he was so big as to drink them up (figuratively).
10. He does not fear, like the war horse of 39:19-25, even if his eyes or nose are attacked.

Leviathan

Now another set of questions comes to the fore, where God introduces Leviathan. We continue our numbering from where we left off with God’s questions prior to Behemoth.

63. Can you	draw out Leviathan with a hook?***	41:1-2
	There are two 2-part questions here with the same point.	
64. Will he	make many supplications to you?***	41:3
65. Will he	make a covenant with you?	41:4a
66. Will you	take him as a servant?	41:4
67. Will you	play with him as a bird?	41:5a
68. Will you	leash him for your maidens?	41:5b
69. Will your	companions make a banquet of him?	41:6a
70. Will your	companions sell his parts?	41:6b
71. Can you	fill his skin with harpoons?***	41:7

The answer to every one of these rhetorical questions is a resounding “NO!”

Now, God challenges Job to lay his hand on this great sea creature and remember the battle that would ensue. No one could overcome this great monster (v. 9); even the sight of him would cause the bravest to faint, and no one is fierce enough to stir him up (10a).

Therefore, one would not even think to dare to confront the *creator* of such a powerful creature (10b). This is a classic argument from lesser to greater.

72. Who then	is able to stand against Me [God]?	41:10b
73. Who	has preceded me, that I [God] owe him?	41:11a
	Everything under heaven is mine.	41:11b
	God will explain about Leviathan’s limbs	41:12
	and about his power and proportions.	
74. Who	can remove his outer coat?	41:13a

75. Who	can approach him with a double bridle?	41:13b
76. Who	can open his face (mouth)?	41:14a
	with his terrible teeth.	41:14b

Now God transitions to further descriptions of Leviathan which are not in question form.

1. He has scales on his body which are spaced so closely as to be air-tight. They are like a unitary whole (15-17).
2. It appears that he breathes / sneezes out fire (18a, 19-21). This is a feature of legendary dragons, but could well have been of real dragons as well. The bombardier beetle is an example of a bug that does something like this.
3. The “eyelids of the morning” is probably a reference to how his eyes seem to have a sun-like ray coming from them.
4. He has a very strong neck. The phrase “sorrow dances before him” seems to suggest that when he applies that strength toward something, that something despairs of winning against him.
5. His flesh is strong, and his heart (likely chest) is like a rock (23-24).
6. He brings terrifying fear to all who face him (25).
7. He is impervious: no sword or sling, arrow or spear, dart or javelin can take him out (26, 28-29).
8. He is so strong that iron seems like straw to him, and bronze like rotten wood (27). Sling stones are nothing to him (28b).
9. He seems to have protective scales that are very hard like bone (30a) and very sharp. These leave telltale signs of his passing through the area (30b).
10. When he travels through the deep waters, he makes them seem to “boil.” That is, he roils them up severely because of his size and speed (31-32).
11. This Leviathan is unlike anything on earth. It has no fear of anything, and is king over all those who are proud. In other words, he puts them in their place when they see him (33-34). This touches on the pride/humility motif that is at the center of the long list of questions that God poses to Job.

This last point is interesting because the Behemoth is similar in its fearless nature. But God has placed them in different domains, so that they do not conflict with one another. You can have two fearless and extremely powerful things existing in a separated way, and peace will still be possible between them, simply because they do not interact. So it is with nations and individuals. A certain amount of separation and border between them is good to promote peace.

Notice Proverbs 30:4, which has a few similar kind of questions as we have seen in this long list.

Job 42 – Restoration of Job – October 10, 2018

Job’s Response

After a withering series of questions with a brief intermission, Job responds again in 42:1-6. He demonstrates his basic character of righteousness by acknowledging some things.

First (verse 2), he says that God is, in a word, omnipotent. God can do everything, including those humanly impossible tasks like constraining Behemoth and Leviathan. His purposes cannot be frustrated. What God sets out to do, He does. Not even a human adversary as well stationed as Job can force God off course.

Second (verse 3), Job reviews one of God's opening questions in 38:2 about who darkens counsel without knowledge. God was saying that Job tried to advise God what to do—and to do so out of a position of lack of knowledge. Then he answers the review question: it was me. He did not shift blame like Adam and Eve. He took responsibility for his actions. "I uttered what I did not understand." He agreed that it was he who spoke out of turn. He spoke about things too wonderful and about which he had no knowledge.

Third (verse 4-5), Job then requests God to hear just a bit more of his confession, in which he reviews another of God's opening questions from 38:3 and 40:7. That question is, "I will question you, and you shall answer Me." That summarizes the entire series of questions, which obviously Job cannot provide answers for. So, Job cannot respond to all, but to the basic question he can respond: I have heard about you, God, but now I see things a lot more clearly. He saw God's attributes of greatness and goodness, God's power, knowledge, and wisdom. He had not grasped them so well before. This is why he spoke in the demanding way that he did.

Pause for a second. This tells us something about carefully studying and thinking about the attributes of God. Most humans aren't likely to see God in this way (and that's fine—no complaint here!). But we can learn of Him in Scripture and come away with the same lessons Job has learned. God is great and infinite and powerful and righteous and all the rest of his attributes. Having a clear "vision" of these without seeing God as Job did is critical for us to live successfully in this dark world.

Fourth (v. 6) Job concludes with this: "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." His self-loathing is the feeling that we get when sin has been discovered in us. This feeling, based as it is upon the objective reality of God's broken law, reminds us of how unworthy we are.

It would do us well at this point to pause again, not to necessarily learn more facts, but to consider our own place before God. Have we done or said some things that indicate we are out of line like Job was?

God's Directives to the Friends

Starting in verse 7, God turns from speaking to Job toward the three friends. He addresses Eliphaz directly. Why Eliphaz? Probably because he was the first to speak, and perhaps he was the oldest and ringleader of the three, so to speak.

God was not happy with him. Note what he says, "My wrath is aroused against you..." Uh oh! Why was God angry? Well, He says why. "For you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has." This phrase is repeated in verse 8. The first thing that stands out about this is that God was just done working Job over for speaking out of turn, *yet* He says that Job spoke what was right. Not all of Job's speeches were bad or sinful. In fact, in much of them, they were right on the truth. The second thing that stands out is that God tells the friends they are way in the wrong. While they made some correct statements along the way, their incorrect theology and false allegations against Job were completely inappropriate.

By argument from lesser to greater, if Job repented in dust and ashes, the friends must have *really* had to repent in dust and ashes!

The solution for their sin—in the era in which they lived—was to make an animal sacrifice. In this case, a significant sacrifice was evidently required, because God directed them to kill seven bulls and seven rams. These were to be offered as a burnt offering to the Lord before Job. This

would serve as an acknowledgement and apology to Job as well as an atoning sacrifice before God.

Additionally, God says that Job will pray for them, and God will accept his prayer. If Job does not pray, then God will deal with the friends according to their folly (see Proverbs 26:4-5?). It almost sounds like God will deal with them in accordance with their own theology, and that might hurt! This is similar to Deuteronomy 19:18-19. God, in His infinite wisdom, may have decided that the best way to teach the friends was to give them a dose of their own medicine.

Although Elihu made some small contributions to the conversation, he is basically in the same camp as the other three friends. He would naturally be facing the same consequences that they were.

In verse 9, the friends obeyed God. God had accepted Job, and Job interceded for his friends, and God accepted that prayer as well. All of this could be put behind them now.

Job's Renewed Prosperity

At the time of Job's prayer, while he was still in a sickened state, he was praying in humble faith that God would deliver him—before the deliverance occurred. But then God brought Job tremendous health, family, and wealth. He had twice as much material possessions as before. His family came back to him and dined with him (11), which they would not do while he was sick. They wisely consoled Job about all the difficulties that the Lord had permitted in his life. Note the part that table fellowship plays in comfort and consolation in the midst of loss. Job did not isolate himself; his family had isolated him from themselves, but now they felt like they could come around. Job did not refuse them.

The animals that Job had lost were returned two-fold.

Animals	Before (1:3)	After (42:12)
Sheep	7,000	14,000
Camels	3,000	6,000
Yoke of Oxen	500	1,000
Female Donkeys	500	1,000

His children were not doubled. For one thing, children are not a commodity like farm animals. For another, assuming that the original 10 children feared God, he still had those children “in heaven.” In other words, his children *were* doubled. He just had to wait a while to see the first 10 again.

Particularly of note among the ten children were his three daughters (13-15). Dad surely doted on them, and the Bible tells that they were the most beautiful among women. Their names are given: Jemimah, Keziah, and Keren-Happuch. MacArthur suggests the meaning of the daughters' names: Jemimah is “daylight,” Keziah means “sweet smelling” and Keren-Happuch describes a makeup color. We probably can relate to the first two names (think the brand of syrup with a slight spelling change, and a little girl in our own assembly). But I'm not sure sure if we are accustomed to a name like the third one!

In addition to their personal beauty, Job gave them an equal inheritance as if they were his sons. According to normal tradition, daughters would be married off and have their needs met by their husbands, and the husbands' inheritance. Job was not only wealthy, but generous, and was able

to go beyond the traditional practice. Usually women only received an inheritance if there were no brothers. If a man had only daughters and no sons, then the law and precedent prescribed that the daughters would get the inheritance (Numbers 27:6-8, augmented by the instruction in Numbers 36:1-10; see also Joshua 17:6).

The text tells us in verse 16-17 that Job lived a long life after this point. The illness does not seem to have shortened his life span any considerable amount, for he lived 140 years after the illness—and he had already been a well-established and fairly old man before that. He lived so long that he saw his children's children down to the fourth generation beyond him. They could have had taken a five-generation picture if they had a camera in those days.

The death of the saints is described in very simple terms. He apparently died peacefully, like others who were "old and full of days." That, as they say, is not a bad way to go.

What We Learn from Job's Book

The Relationship of God and Man

We should summarize what we have learned. We start with a helpful statement by commentator Parsons:

The main purpose of Job is to show that the proper relationship between God and man is based solely on the sovereign grace of God and man's response of faith and submissive trust. This involves (in a negative fashion) the refutation of the retribution dogma and its corollary that man's relationship to God is a business contract binding in court. Three key themes (the dogma of divine retribution, the creation motif, and legal metaphors) were expertly employed in the development of this purpose.⁸

10-31-2018

Note carefully the point that our response is to be one of faith and submissive trust. These words are basically synonyms of one another because authentic faith cannot be un-submissive.

Here is another summary statement adapted and expanded from Bob McCabe:

God is incomprehensible in wisdom and incomparable in power. We know this because He created and sustains the world, its creatures, and its people.⁹ God is the one and only sovereign and He freely administers justice according to His perfect power, goodness and wisdom. Because we live in such a world, we must fearfully submit to the LORD and to His sovereign will, even in times of great difficulty.

The Perseverance of Job and the Mercy of God

We can use some other texts of Scripture to remind ourselves about what we learn from Job. One such passage is James 5:11 where Job is described as persevering—which we should be—and God is described as very compassionate and merciful.

⁸ Gregory W. Parsons, "The Structure and Purpose of the Book of Job" in *Bib Sac* 138 (550), April 1981, 139-57.

⁹ He is also perfectly holy in justice. We know this also because of his view of sin and the provision He made for it, but that is a bit beyond the reach of Joban theology.

Although it might not seem like it in the immediacy of the painful circumstances, it is still true that God is compassionate. Who knows what mercy He has extended toward you? Because of the darkness of the unknown, we cannot see the full light of God's mercy toward us, at least not yet. We can see some of His mercies already in what we *do* know. But when the end of your story is written, it will be evident that God has done the right thing in your life and all around your life. You just do not see it all at the moment.

Despite Job's talking out of turn toward God, he is still commended for his patient continuance in faith toward God despite the heavy burden he was carrying. Let us be like Job!

A Brief Theology of Satan

Another passage we need to remind ourselves of is 1 Peter 5:8. The devil is still looking to cause trouble in our day. He is the accuser of the brethren, as stated in Revelation 12:10 and illustrated in Zechariah 3:1.

Remember that Satan is limited by God's permission. God does permit Satan and evil in our world, for some good reasons that we do not fully understand. But that permission only extends to a certain pre-determined boundary. This is demonstrated in Job 1:12 and 2:6. We can certainly thank God for that. Although the 'god' of this world is Satan, He is not in total charge of everything!

Job as Priest

Before reading this paragraph, review Job 1:5 and 42:8-9. In the first, the Bible tells us that Job sanctified his children (how?), he would get up early and offer burnt offerings for each one, because he thought perhaps that they sinned and cursed God in their hearts. In the second passage, at the end of the book, God instructed the three friends to take a large number of animals and sacrifice them, at which time Job would also pray for them. God had accepted Job, but he had not (yet) accepted the friends because of their sin.

According to the first of these, Job demonstrated his godliness by doing these things. This was his priestly role in his family. At the time Job lived, this was especially important, because there was no Bible, no established priesthood, no clergy, no church, and no para-church entities like Awana or Truth Trackers, such as exists today. Each family had to implement their belief in God in practical ways. We have no knowledge that multiple families gathered for worship or mutual edification and instruction. It was up to Job to lead his family in religious matters. And that he did.

Parents today can demonstrate godliness by doing something like this for their children. Obviously the application of animal sacrifice has run its course and is now obsolete. But we can certainly be sensitive to the possibility that our children may have sinned and not dealt properly with it. In fact, our children may not know practically how to deal with sin. We must instruct them in this. We should pray for them regularly. We should do what we can to sanctify our children, that is, set them apart for God and godliness by example and by directive in their behavior.

The extra blessings that we possess today (Bible, churches, pastors, etc.) do not exempt us as parents from teaching our children. The Law of Moses explicitly taught the Jewish people to instruct their children constantly about the things of God. It seems to go without saying that the same principle applies to Christians today, even though we are not under the specific regulations of the Mosaic Law.

As I studied this, I wondered how I could implement the principle here with respect to my own children. I have sometimes prayed for my kids, having in my mind a thought like Job had in 1:5, but with the uncomfortable knowledge that no forgiveness would be extended by God without the child's own repentance.

So what is the point of us doing “priestly” activities today for others such as our children? There is no other mediator between God and men but the man Christ Jesus, so how can I as a parent be a kind of mediator, praying prayers that my children should pray, or offering confession that they should offer?

In the first place, I don't believe that God despises this parental prayer: “Lord, please forgive my children their sins.” This heart cry can be answered, though not in a direct fashion. God won't forgive the child merely for your prayer's sake, as if your prayer is of sufficient merit. But God hears the faithful and fervent prayer of the righteous parent, and answer by bringing the attitude of repentance to the child and thus forgiving the child through the normal means of confession and repentance on the basis of the blood of Christ.

Secondly, you can make that prayer more direct by asking God to grant repentance and forgiveness of sins to your offspring. God can do that—that is in fact the business that God is in today as He calls sinners to Himself. Salvation is not an accident. It depends completely on the grace of God. God uses means, such as parental instruction, and church ministry, to accomplish this.

Third, you can express confession for your own sins in raising your children, which may be reflected in some measure in their own misdeeds. Perhaps you have erred in teaching them, or erred in your example, in such a way that has misled them and been a factor causing their sin. That doesn't exempt them from responsibility or liability toward God, but it can be a factor.

Regarding the matter of interceding for adults in a sacrificial context as Job did in 42:8-9, that is similar to above. We cannot do this directly today. But we can pray for those who have sinned and ask the Lord to help them see their sin. We can direct them as to how to deal appropriately with their sin by appealing to God through Christ about it.

Before all else, however, you have to concern yourself with your own spiritual life. It might sound selfish, but when I say you are concerned about it, that includes concern that you are not selfish! The point is that if you are not watching yourself, you will be of far less help to others with their struggles.

Genre and Form of the Book of Job – August 5, 2015 and revised 11/7/2018¹⁰

Genre is “a category of artistic composition, as in music or literature, characterized by similarities in form, style, or subject matter.”¹¹ The genre of the book of Job is “contemplative wisdom literature.” This is not connected to “contemplative” prayer by mystics, but rather it is a piece of literature that demands the reader to stop and think about what he is reading to gain wisdom from it. It is didactic, that is, it is meant to teach something. The book has a fairly unique genre but it shares a certain kinship with other “righteous sufferer” writings of the general time period because of its content.

¹⁰ Thanks to the help of Dr. Robert McCabe, DBTS class notes, 2003.

¹¹ Definition from Google.

Within this overall genre, the book uses several forms like narrative (Job 1-2), complaint (ch. 3), dispute (ch. 4, 5, etc.), laments (ch. 7), and lawsuit (ch. 13). Others are not as clear, but scholars identify the hymn (ch. 12), oath of innocence (ch. 31), apology (ch. 32), challenge (ch. 38-39, 40-41, by God toward Job). Sometimes these forms are mixed or interspersed.

For instance, there are multiple times when Job requests a court-type hearing before God. Read 13:22 as one example. He then claims that he will answer God. If you follow up by reading 38:1-3, you will see how God responds. In 38:3 God demands Job to answer. In 40:2 God again demands Job to answer. This adversarial format certainly sounds like a court setting. But the complainant is silenced, and no response is forthcoming by this point, because Job recognizes that what he has done is wrong. He should have kept quiet and silently waited for the Lord (Psalm 27:14, 37:7).

Message of the Book of Job

There are a variety of proposals concerning the message of Job. Some have suggested the book of Job explains how God is just in permitting evil to exist, but the book doesn't really give an *explanation* of that. Its message could revolve about the explanation of how God distributes his justice—not mechanically, and though that is true, it seems to serve a larger purpose. Its message has been taken to refer to the proper conduct of a sufferer, but it doesn't give a lot of teaching on that either.

The main character is never told what was happening behind the scenes. The reader is told, so it actually instructs us a bit more than perhaps it did Job. On the other hand, he probably learned a lot more through the experience and interaction with God than we learn by simply reading the book.

The message seems to be this: God is able and free to administer His world as He sees fit, and this should produce in us a submissive faith. God has wisdom, power, and freedom to do as He wishes. So we need to humbly submit to God and His wise rule of the universe.

We read in chapters 39-41 about God's incomprehensible wisdom and power, which is tied in with His decisions as to how to run His world. God's point is, "You don't know much, Job. How can you presume to talk to me?" The idea for us is that we must trust God. It is the only right response, for we do not and cannot know or understand enough to be a judge. Certainly we cannot do that over God.

This all should suffice to remind us of the need of humility, in that God knows far more than we do and can do incomparably more than we can. God rules the world according to perfect wisdom and is not subject to the questioning of his creation.

As a result, His administration of the world is not only free, it is in a sense inscrutable (impossible to understand or interpret) from our limited perspective.¹² This administration includes the distribution of justice and the bestowal of blessing. Besides this, His rule of the world includes all the routine matters that happen in the sub-human creation. These things are the subjects of His questions in chapters 38-41. We cannot understand God's administration of the world except to the extent He has revealed it.

God's administration of the world is NOT:

¹² We are limited in that we are finite and sinful.

a. **Flawed**, as Satan thinks. He believes that God has blessed Job simply because Job likes God. God uses the circumstances described in the book to show that Satan is wrong. The believer’s relationship to God is not shallow like Satan thought.

b. **Mechanical**, as Job’s friends think. All four of them basically all have the same view, namely, that God has a look-up table that directs him how to distribute justice and rewards. Sins result in certain punishment and good behavior merits blessing, every time, without fail. Job is experiencing bad things because he has been bad.

c. **Unfair**, as Job seems to think, perhaps based on a similar view as his friends. Job feels mistreated, neglected, and justified to sit in judgment over God. He holds steadfastly to his righteousness. But that doesn’t guarantee that he won’t suffer!

Examples of Good and Bad Theology in Job – August 12, 2015

In each speaker, we can find statements that look good, and then statements that are bad.

Speaker	Good Theology	Bad Theology
Job	13:15 – Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. This is a great word of trust that many after Job have repeated.	13:22 – Then call, and I will answer; Or let me speak, then You respond to me.
Eliphaz	4:7 – Who ever perished being innocent? This is true in a sense, in light of Eccl. 7:20 because all have sinned, and so no one is innocent and all do die because of sin.	4:7 –Eliphaz is saying that if someone is innocent, they will not suffer the kind of fate Job is suffering. Thus Eliphaz is wrong in saying this. He goes on in 4:8 to say those who plow iniquity reap the same, but this is not always true in this life, according to Eccl. 7:15. In 4:12ff he claims to have special revelation from God. Beware such people!
Bildad	8:9 – Our days on earth are a shadow. The brevity of life is understood by Job’s friends.	8:4-6 – Bildad claims that Job’s children sinned and thus God threw them out, and that if Job would just earnestly seek God (as if he wasn’t!), then God would hear and give him a blessing. This sounds an awful lot like a prosperity theology.
Zophar	11:7 – Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty? These two parallel phrases express a single concept that is true. But God evaluates the friends as being wrong (42:7) and as I studied the book, I found I was having to stretch to find good things in their theology.	11:5 – “But oh, that God would speak, and open His lips against you.” Zophar figures that once God explains the situation, Job will be “found out” and it will be clear that he has sinned. This is false according to Job 1:1, 1:8, and 2:3.

Elihu	33:12-13 – “God is greater than man...he does not give an accounting of any of His words.	32:20 – “I will speak, that I may find relief.” Elihu could just resolve to keep quiet; why should he have to find relief in speaking? In verse 22 he says, “I do not know how to flatter.” False!
Job	9:2 – How can a man be righteous before God? Job understands blessing for the righteous and punishment for the wicked—ultimately—but wonders how can he be counted in the camp of the righteous?	42:2-6 – Job admits that he has spoken out of turn in what he has said, recorded in this book, and repents before God.
Eliphaz	22:21 – “Now acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace.” A good statement in itself, but if it assumes the person is not acquainted with God and thus accuses them, it is bad.	22:6-9 make utterly false accusations against Job. There are no witnesses to prove this, and in fact Job defends himself against these wrong charges.
Bildad	25:4 – “How then can a man be righteous before God?” Sounds good, for no one is pure before God.	25:6 – “How much less man, who is a maggot...” Just prior he sounds orthodox, but he takes it too far. Man kind is the pinnacle of God’s creation, and it is not appropriate to call him a maggot. He is far more valuable than that.
Zophar	20:6-7 – Zophar argues that the wicked will not prosper forever but will perish.	20:14-19 – Later in the chapter he continues to say that the wicked will suffer immediate problems from their sin, which just is not true. It may occur, but it may not.
Elihu	36:26 – “Behold, God is great, and we do not know Him; Nor can the number of His years be discovered.” He is right about the incomprehensibility of God in this section.	34:8-9 – Elihu accuses Job of keeping wicked company, but that was not true.

Jesus and Job

Does Jesus “fulfill” the book of Job, as one recent message on the book was summarized? (See <https://www.cedarville.edu/Chapel/Watch/archive-recording/VIPyMGcEtEWZGwyzzP29JQ?y=3&t=739>).

Email sent 3/15/2018 in response to a devotional that suggests Job’s friends had a high view of God and that they understood God must punish sinners.

#1 - Exalted view of God. I see this as true to some extent, but I get the feeling that they sometimes hold this view in service to the overarching (in their mind) idea that God is so high as to be almost disconnected from Job and his problems (22:12-14). Or, their exalted view of God is misused to support their baseless claim that Job is a wicked sinner. I point out to our folks on this basis that truth can be misused.

#2 - Their understanding of divine justice is very flawed. They not only taught that man's sin must be punished by the holy God, but that it must be punished in essence **immediately** and **tit-for-tat**. They believed in a **mechanical retribution theory** of justice. You are absolutely right that they assumed without evidence that Job had committed great sin. More than assumed, actually. They flat-out charged him with such sin, and gave purported examples of his evil doing. You are also right that they neglected to address the possibility of **formative discipline** in addition to **punitive discipline**. They also missed the possibility of the involvement of Satan!

What they missed is what Job argued, for instance, in chapter 21, that the wicked sometimes do live long and prosper. Divine justice sometimes waits until after life is over. Divine justice is applied in a seemingly uneven way--from our perspective. Man's sin must and will be punished, but sometimes that doesn't happen until much later. Job's friends demanded that it must happen NOW. Not true.

Mainly on this second point, and some also on the first, they get called on the carpet by God at the end of the book.