

## **Job Chapters 4 – 37**

The one thing all the friends and Job left out...they didn't pray!

### **Chapters 4-5, 15, 22, 25: Eliphaz the Temanite**

#### **The voice of experience**

Eliphaz's council tends to be based on mystical or subjective experience. He is compelled to speak up and counsel Job. He advises him to remember the advice he has given to others as a helper of the weak. Eliphaz claims to have had a vision from God. He heard a voice saying "Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?" No mortal can be righteous before Him. So he determined that Job, who was obviously not prospering, must have done something wrong and he was forsaken by God. No *innocent* person can encounter so much suffering. He believes that Job is hiding his sins but God sees into his heart. Eliphaz accuses Job of mistreating the poor, the weary, the hungry, the widows and orphans. He also charges him of all kinds with sin including hypocrisy, bribery, trouble-making and lying His perception is that Job is following the wicked men of previous generations. He should confess and repent of his sin in order to be restored.

Eliphaz gets so caught up in himself that he forgets the sorrows for which he came to comfort. He is not impressed by Job's dependence on God. He seeks to discourage him from his self-defense. He sharply rebukes Job, accusing him of empty knowledge and unprofitable talk. The only words Job should speak are words of humble repentance for the sin that put him in this place. He assumed that if Job rejected his friend's advice, he was virtually attacking God. Eliphaz explains that the wicked may seem to succeed for a while (as Job did), but their success is only an illusion. As the discussion deepens we see all three of the friends growing more and more convinced that Job is his own worst enemy and that his trials are entirely of his own making.

Eliphaz feels that God doesn't really care about those who do not benefit Him. God removes Himself from evil on this earth. We know that none of this is true because God himself declared Job righteous in His eyes.

### **Bildad the Shuhite Voice of Tradition**

**Chapter 8, 19:** Bildad's insights are largely based on proverbs, aphorisms, wisdom literature. focuses on the theme that God punishes the wicked. He rebukes Job for talking so much, comparing his discourse to a strong wind. He suggests that his children were taken because of their sins. He implies his wealth was a result of his righteousness but he was not pure and upright and that is why God took it all away. He maintains that God does not oppress the innocent nor does He give us more than we deserve. Bildad believes that Job should repent of his wrong, that all that he lost will be restored. The problem here is that Job is innocent and does not deserve punishment.

Bildad told Job, "Just look at yourself. You are tearing yourself to pieces in anger. The wicked have terrible problems with their skin. That means you are among the wicked, Job. Your condition is all the evidence anyone needs to see that you are in sin and need to repent." Bildad wanted to teach Job about

the life and fate of the wicked, and in doing so he hoped that Job would get the idea that he was among the wicked that Bildad described. Trying to wake Job up from his self-deception, he made an especially cruel statement that he no longer has descendants (children) to carry on his legacy.

### **Zophar the Naamathite – The voice of personal assumptions**

**Chapter 11, 20:** Zophar is a theological dogmatist, he feels he knows more about God than anyone else. He feels compelled to answer Job's rebuttal. Zophar, like Bildad, lacks compassion and is ruthlessly judgmental. He speaks without feeling or pity. Perhaps he had enough of Job's protests to innocence. He is losing his patience. In Zophar's mind, not only is Job wrong to claim to be either pure or clean (even though Job never claimed to be either), he is actually so guilty that he deserves far worse than he had suffered. He felt Job is wrong to question God and that he should just accept the punishment. If he confessed his sin, God will bless and honor him and restore what was taken from him.

He dwells on his accusation that Job's problem is wickedness and that the loss of his prosperity is a direct consequence. Without repentance, Job deserves his suffering. He says that wicked men may prosper for a time. They rejoice in their wealth and power, they rejoice over their poor, honest neighbors whom they oppress but then their joy will quickly end in sorrow.

### **Job's dialog**

**Chapter 6-7, 9-10, 12-14, 16-17, 21:** When Job finally speaks up, he complains about the severe and chronic pain he is suffering. As Job describes his intense and prolonged physical condition in detail, he loses all hope for healing. He asks his friends for comfort but they only point out the condemnation that he "surely deserves". They are convinced that he has done some heinous, yet secret sin and that is why Job is suffering. He then lashes out at his friends; they just don't know the pain he is going through. They are making his suffering worse and causing him to be even more depressed than he already is. He admits that his words are rash but it is only because he is grieving so. The words they speak are not helping the situation and aren't providing sympathy. Job's friends insisted that the disasters of his life are upon him because of the wickedness within him. Job insists again and again that he is innocent. They should know him well enough to know that the accusations they are making against him are not true and that should tell him what sins he committed.

His friends perceive that wicked men are punished in this life but righteous men are rewarded. His friends are very confident in their ability to speak for God, but since what they said is not true, they actually misrepresented Him. Job warns his friends to prepare themselves for a taste of reality. Wicked men can and do prosper in this life. They can be very wealthy, they may live long and so do their children. They don't serve God because they have everything they want. However, death will come to wicked men whose lives are so perfect. Then they will face God who will say "I never knew you".

No one should be treated the way his friends are treating him. Job just wants his friends to stop their windy speeches that are full of condemnation. If he speaks up, his unsympathetic friends just criticize him; yet by being silent, his grief is overwhelming. He is concerned that if he dies before he can be vindicated that his peers will never know the injustice being done to him.

Job feels he is under attack from God. He feels that God wants to destroy him. At first he believes that only death will ease his pain. He wishes that he could die to escape life, suffering and God. He just cannot understand what he did that was so wrong that God would abandon him. He hopes for a restoration of relationship with God after death, and feels it will not happen in this life.

After a while, he begins to think there might be a sin he committed that he isn't aware of. He lost everything he had including his sense of spiritual well-being but if he denies the truth, he will surely perish. Job believes that to admit to something he has not done goes against his integrity. We know that Job was innocent of most of the things he was accused

Now he does not want God to abandon him in spite of what he said earlier. He desperately wants to argue his case to God. As we often do, he has the whole conversation worked out in his head. What he would say? He fears what God would say to him if he was in His presence. In spite of everything, Job speaks honorably of God. He acknowledges that man is an unequal to God. Job states that God has infinite wisdom and power; He knows everything and can do everything. So how could he justify himself to God? He doesn't ask for God to take away his illness but rather tell him why he is being punished. He knows that it would be useless to debate his innocence with God. He feels his righteousness is not good enough. Job just wants to tell God he is innocent but God is nowhere to be found.

How Job longs for things to go back to before all this tragedy. Job was proud of all he did for so many and now they mock him. He remembers how well respected he was in the community. He tended to the needs of the many. He lists all the sins he has not committed. But then he realized that the respect he received was superficial. The ones he helped were now mocking him and avoiding him. He searches for an answer for all his sorrows.

### **Chapter 32-34 Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite:**

Elihu is the youngest of all present and up to this point has kept his peace and respectfully waits until they have finished. Then he cannot hold his tongue any longer, his temper flairs and he lashes out. He begins by justifying why he must speak up. He feels that neither Job nor his friends have understood the situation. He feels that that Job's friends are incompetent to verbalize Job's predicament.

Then he spends the next several verses to summarize Job's defense that he is righteous. Elihu exaggerates much of what Job said to make his point, which Job's transgressions are in his speeches. Elihu implies that Job is being chastened. He feels that Job's problem is the fact that he has dwelled on the problem too much. He feels Job is resisting God and that he should not accuse God of being "out to get him".

Elihu restates the same incorrect points as the others but more candidly. He believes that Job's nightmares are God speaking to him and Elihu has been chosen to interpret these dreams. He claims that his words come directly from God. He is directly denies Job's perception of his own righteousness and wisdom.

Elihu directs Job to humble himself before God for his sins and accept the punishment and move on. He should also pray to God and ask what sins he committed. If God doesn't remove the affliction, then it is because Job did not humble himself.

Elihu offers a defense of God's justice by explaining that suffering is God's way of teaching Job humility. He is the only character in the book of Job who attempts to defend God's justice in light of Job's innocent suffering. While he is right about God's character and power, his attempt to solve the puzzle of innocent suffering and God's justice is just as inadequate as Job's other friends. God is the only one who can explain why the innocent suffer.

### **Job 38-41 – God Speaks**

God speaks to Job in an angry, frightening storm. God's answer is not so much an explanation but rather a revelation. In a long list of rhetorical questions, God reveals Job's limited knowledge. He asks Job three questions. First, can Job explain His creation, second can he oversee His creation and third, can he subdue His creation. He speaks of the earth, the sea, the days and the vast dimensions of the universe.

God speaks to Job but surely the rest of them heard Him. They said so much but they really didn't expect for God to really speak. God tells Job to brace himself like a man. God begins by admonishing Job and says he has no knowledge of the plan of God. He has no ability to explain the ways of God in this world. God asks the series of questions to help Job (and us) to become humble. In the days of Job, they thought that the sun, the stars and the moon were alive. They were in constant movement.

Were you there at the creation when God made everything? Have you ever caused the day to begin, the light to shine, to expose the evil in the world? Do you know the mysteries of the Universe? God knows and controls everything that happens. He determines the course of creation. He alone has the authority because only He knows the grand outcome.

God knows just how long it takes for us to be nurtured before we can embark on a life of self-sufficiency. Of course we never lose our dependency from God. We need Him to continue to grow mentally and emotionally. He gives us what we need to survive. He provides our instincts. True freedom is being content in the place where God has placed us. We can endure all things through He who gives us strength. God takes care of everything on his earth, especially us.

What is God going to do about all the evil, the suffering, the brokenness? Job doesn't know yet that God is going to send a Savior to die on the cross in his place. He is going to take his punishment for all the sins he has committed. Remember he is righteous but not sinless. Jesus is going to put the world back together again, one heart at a time. He will redeem those who are willing to be saved. He will empower them to love and give praise and serve one another. How are we to explain the trials of the godly? Why do bad things happen to good people? Perhaps God has wise purposes that we cannot understand. If we all had things our way, what kind of world would we live in? God grants and withholds wisdom. It will be given to those who ask but we have to know we don't understand everything!

We expect God to be gentle, to be sympathetic toward us. We expect Him to give us what we want. We want to see God and understand Him and we can. When the apostles saw Jesus, they saw God. In the beginning, was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. What is the Bible? It is God's Words. Seek and you shall find the answers in the Bible!

Do we understand the animal eco system that God designed? Is it good or bad that vultures eat dead animals? What if they didn't? The dead would spread disease. The balance of life was created by God; can we create such a system? God created a perfect world and sin entered it. The bible teaches that He limits evil but we have the choice to obey God. For us to have real relationships and fellowship it we cannot be compelled, it must be voluntary. Love depends on choice. Without love, life is meaningless. All life would be evil. If all life was evil, we wouldn't even love ourselves.

When Job asks why, God shows up. He IS the answer to the most pressing questions we can ask. Trust that God has our best interests in mind and He knows what is best for us. He can make the best decisions because he can see everything before it happens. The answers to ALL our problems are in the pages of the Bible.

## **Job Chapter 42**

Job is now humbled. He listens but does not speak. He hears the answers and repents.

God is angry with Job's friends because of their false accusations about Him. He ordered them to offer burnt offerings for themselves. He affirms Job's truthfulness and faithfulness. He allows Job to pray for them and He will accept his answer. Job's friends obeyed and He forgave them.

Then God restored Job's health. He gave him twice as many animals as before. He blessed Job with seven sons and three beautiful daughters. He was granted a long life that he was alive to see his fourth generation grandchildren. When he died, he had a long, wonderful life.