

A common kind of story across cultures in the Ancient Near East (ANE):¹

- A completely pious person suffers.
- The sufferer is innocent of wrongdoing, to the best of his knowledge.
- The sufferer is confused about why his god has deserted him.
- The sufferer assumes that he has offended the god by neglecting some religious ritual rather than some ethical infraction.

Comparing other ANE suffering stories with the biblical Book of Job:

| “Righteous sufferer” stories from Babylonia, Mesopotamia, etc. | The Book of Job = a very Israelite perspective |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Many gods; sometimes uncertainty about which god is offended. ➤ Because the gods were believed to be capricious and unknowable, the sufferers were quick to believe that they had indeed committed some offense against a god/gods. ➤ “<i>The great symbiosis</i>” = the gods and humans were mutually dependent on one another. No one served a god “for | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No hint of polytheism—there is only one God, Yahweh. (Read Job 31:24–28.) ➤ Job never considers the possibility that he is unrighteous and deserving of punishment. ➤ Symbiosis thinking is completely absent; in fact, “the whole premise of the book turns on a denial of the great symbiosis.”² |

¹ The information in these charts is synthesized from chapter 3 of *How to Read Job*, Walton and Longman.

² Walton and Longman, 28.

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| <p>nothing”; devotion was always about giving to the god in order to get something from him.</p> <p>➤ The offense is assumed to be related to ritual, and the most common response is to appease the angry god.</p> | <p>➤ Yahweh is not angry, and none of the characters consider appeasing him with sacrifices.</p> |
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The Structure and Focus of the Book of Job

The book's PURPOSE: "How to think well about God when disaster strikes."³

The book's PERSPECTIVE:

WISDOM, rather than JUSTICE, is the starting point and foundation of grappling with the tough questions the book proposes. As we read God's speeches at the end of the book, the message is: "I am God, who is supremely wise and powerful, so I want you to trust me even when you don't understand."⁴

Questions to ponder:

- ❖ What are the things that threaten to shake our trust in God's wisdom? How do we choose to trust in the midst of those things?
- ❖ Why is it important to remember that Job is not a "stand-alone" book? Why should we read it as part of the larger canon (what Wesley called "the whole counsel of Scripture")? What do we learn about God in the rest of the biblical witness that provides balance for the narrow focus of the Book of Job?

The book's STRUCTURE:

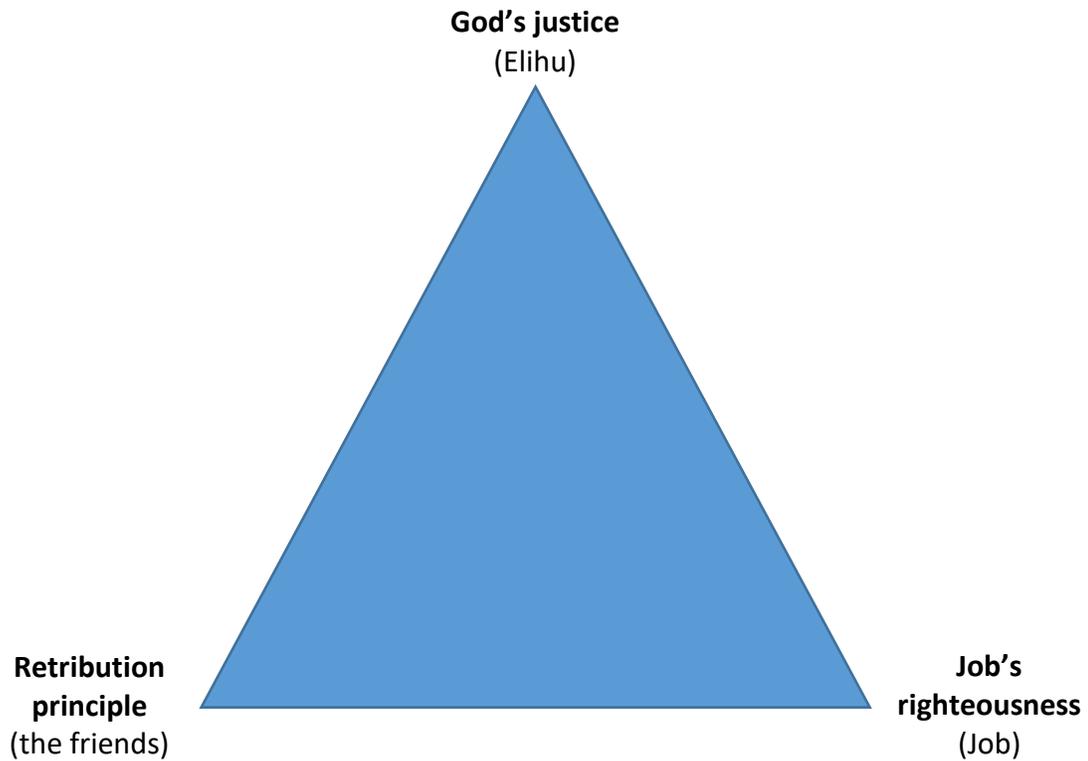
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| Narrative frame: JOB 1–3 Prologue Job's opening lament |
| Dialogues: JOB 4–27 CYCLE 1—Three friends and Job (chap. 4–14) CYCLE 2—Three friends and Job (chap. 15–21) CYCLE 3—Two friends and Job (chap. 22–27) |
| Wisdom Hymn: JOB 28 (spoken by the narrator) |
| Speeches: JOB 29–41 Job (chap. 29–31) Elihu (chap. 32–37) God (chap. 38–41) |
| Narrative frame: JOB 42 Job's closing statement Epilogue |

³ *How to Read Job*, Walton and Longman, 19.

⁴ Walton and Longman, 20.

The book's PROGRESS:

There are three principles or realities held in tension in the book—the retribution principle, God's justice, and Job's righteousness. "We can follow the progress of the book as we consider which [principle] the various parties desire to defend and which they are willing to release."⁵ (See the diagram on the next page.)



⁵ Walton and Longman, 23.

RETRIBUTION and THEODICY:

Two big words (and even bigger concept) related to the Book of Job⁶

The RETRIBUTION principle: Simply stated, *the righteous will prosper and the wicked will suffer*.

- Corollary principle: If someone suffers, that person is wicked; if someone prospers, that person is righteous.

Defining the terms:

| <i>righteous</i> | <i>prosper</i> | <i>wicked</i> | <i>suffer</i> |
|--|--|--|--|
| Behavior (moral or ritual) that pleases God and wins his favor | Anything perceived to be a blessing or benefit | Behavior that is displeasing to God and/or unacceptable in society | The general category of negative experiences |

Point to ponder:

Why do you think it is so common for human cultures to hold this kind of belief about the way life works? Why is this a “comforting” perspective?

The retribution principle in Job: **Notice that ALL the human characters (and the accuser) accept without question that this is the way things work.

- The friends: Job’s dramatic change of fortune *must* indicate that something is wrong in his behavior
- The accuser: Claims that the retribution principle keeps human beings from developing true righteousness because it provides ulterior motive for pleasing God.
- Job: God ought to enforce the retribution principle, or his justice will become suspect.

⁶ This outline is based on chap. 11 of *How to Read Job*, Walton and Longman

The conflict between the retribution principle and human experience: Good people suffer and bad people prosper! So what attempts are made to resolve this tension between theory and experience?

1. *Qualifications regarding the nature of God/the gods.* Especially in the Ancient Near East, the gods were thought to be inscrutable (mysterious, hard to understand), so it was easy to offend them through ignorance. (Those offenses were appeased through ritual sacrifice.)
2. *Qualifications regarding the purpose of suffering.* Suffering is educational or builds character or provides some kind of benefit.
3. *Qualifications regarding the timing of the fulfillment of the principle.* The full execution of the blessing/punishment may not be in this life but extends into the afterlife.
4. *Qualifications regarding the role of justice in the world.* Justice is complex, rarely transparent, and often based on information not readily available to the human understanding. This position accepts the basic principle but rejects the corollary (see above).

THEODICY: The “question of evil,” specifically, what is God’s role in suffering and what is his relationship to evil?

“In Israel, the absence of any source of divine authority other than Yahweh limited the philosophical possibilities regarding the origin of evil and the source of suffering (1 Sam 2:6; Job 2:10; Eccl 7:14; Isa 45:7). No supernatural power alongside Yahweh or outside of Yahweh’s sphere of power existed. At the same time, Yahweh was considered powerful, good and just. Thus one might say that the theodicy question bloomed in Israel, and in this hothouse of theological tension, the retribution principle provided the traditional explanation despite its inconsistencies in account for human experience. . . The role of the book of Job is to perform the radical surgery that separates theology from theodicy, contending that **in the end Yahweh’s justice must be taken on faith rather than worked out philosophically. He does not need to be defended; he wants to be trusted.** The entire constellation of God’s attributes is at work in a complex, coordinated manner. Justice is part of that constellation but does not trump all other attributes” (Walton and Longman, 95).

Point to ponder:

When a single characteristic or aspect of God’s character is lifted up as THE defining element for understanding how God works, our perspectives on life and God can get distorted or severely limited. In the case of Job, we’re looking at the limitations when a particular view of God’s JUSTICE is isolated from the rest of his character. Are there other divine traits that have at times been equally isolated and held up as if they could operate apart from the fullness and complexity of the rest of God’s character? What are the consequences?

Was Job a historical character or a literary creation?

Does it make any difference to the message of the book?⁷

First point to consider: GENRE. What kind of book is this? WISDOM literature.

- “As wisdom literature, it makes no claims about the nature of the events; rather, it provides a ‘thought experiment’ in order to explore an important question.”
- But is this a “true” story, in the sense that Job was a real, historical person? “The Bible contains all sorts of literature, and therefore we cannot assume that Job must be a person who actually lived just because the story is in the Bible. After all, the good Samaritan did not actually live, yet the story presents truth. Since the book of Job is unanimously classified as wisdom literature, nothing of the truth of the book is lost if it is not a reflection of historical events. Job’s suffering is not redemptive, but rather didactic [it teaches us something]; it provides an occasion for an important discussion about motivations for righteousness, wisdom, and suffering.”
- On the other hand: “Wisdom literature can employ real life people and their circumstances.”
- References to Job elsewhere in the Bible seem to point to his historical existence:
 - a. Ezekiel 14:14, 20
 - b. James 5:11

THE IMPORTANT POINT TO REMEMBER: “We lose nothing by accepting Job’s story as historical, and we gain nothing by concluding that he is a fictional character. But these statements could be switched and remain true.”

⁷ This handout is based on Chap. 4 of Longman and Walton, *How to Read Job*

GOD in Job⁸

The problem:

“God has often taken a beating at the hands of readers of the book of Job. He is portrayed as unaware of Satan’s intent; he wagers with a man’s life; he ruins Job without cause (by his own admission), including wiping out his family; and he ignores Job’s repeated pleas for some explanation of the charges that brought his undoing. In the end he intimidates Job with what is perceived to be an I-am-God-and-you-are-not speech, tells Job how he made two creatures of legendary power and mystery, and then restores Job’s prosperity with no defense of explanation.”

- Ponder this: How is each of the above “problems” with God-in-Job countered by the larger portrait of God in Scripture?

An important strategy for readers of Job:

“We need to distinguish between the literary scenario of the book and the message of the book. The literary scenario portrays what could be considered a necessary caricature of God while the message conveys inspired teaching about God’s operation of the world: how it does and does not work, and what our posture toward God ought to be.”

It may be helpful to think about interpreting the portrait of God in the narrative frame of the book in the same way that we do with the portrait of God in Jesus’ parables. “Parables show a similar resistance to being interpreted as providing portraits of God. When we consider numerous parable sin which God is represented by the characters in the parable, we would be remiss to think that any of them are intended to tell us what God is really like.” There are numerous examples where drawing a one-for-one correspondence between the figure in the parable and God’s character would result in a badly distorted portrait of God (e.g., Matt 20, the parable of the vineyard; Luke 16, the shrewd manager; Matt 18, the unmerciful servant), but perhaps the best example is the parable of the late-night request (Lk 11:5-8). “Here the character that represent God is reluctant to help and needs to be badgered into action by the nagging of the one in need. Surely this would be an extreme portrayal of God in order to make a point.”

- Ponder this: Read Luke 11:5-8. Given the context and the occasion of the parable, what point was Jesus trying to make? Being able to discern the main point of a parable is the kind of skill that can be applied to discerning the message of Job.

⁸ The information on this handout is synthesized from Walton and Longman, *How to Read Job*, chap. 5.

So what does the MESSAGE of Job teach about God?

- God's **JUSTICE**. The Book of Job affirms that justice is central to the character of God—but also recognizes “the justice that emanates from him does not stamp itself indelibly on the world in which we live.” The book assumes God's justice but does not debate it. The focus is elsewhere.

Ponder this: If the focus of the book is not on divine justice, how should that affect the way we read it?

- God's **WISDOM**. The key issue at stake in the Book of Job.

Ponder this: If one of the strategies of the impressive speeches by God at the end of the book is to awe and amaze readers with God's wisdom, what kind of response do you think the writer wants from the reader? What should awareness of God's wisdom produce in the reader?

- God's **POLICIES**. “The book promotes the conclusion that the way God operates the world is more complicated than people can imagine and that, therefore, God's ways cannot be reduced to a simple equation (such as the retribution principle).” In other words, while the simple equation “God blesses the righteous with prosperity, health, and success” may be rooted in a truth about God's character, it is inadequate as a full explanation of how God works.

Ponder and share: What have you learned about God thus far in your wrestling with the Book of Job?

Today's reading: Job 41

JOB’S VIEW OF GOD vs. THE AUTHOR’S VIEW OF GOD⁹

Job is a model for us in FAITHFULNESS and PERSISTENT INTEGRITY, even in the face of suffering. However, he is not necessarily a model for us when it comes to THEOLOGY (his view of God). “We need to allow Job his human weakness: a deficient view of God. After all, if his view of God was impeccable, why would God address him out of a whirlwind at the end of the book (Job. 38:1)?” It is in God’s speeches at the end of the book that we get our glimpses of the author’s view of God.

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| | What do the following passages reveal about Job’s view of God? |
| Job 7:17-21 | |
| Job 10:4-8 | |
| Job 14:3-6 | |
| | How do the above passages compare or contrast with the view of God presented in Psalm 103:8-18? |
| | What do the following passages reveal about Job’s view of God? |
| Job 9:19-22 | |
| Job 27:2 | |
| | How do the above passages compare or contrast with the view of God presented in Genesis 18:25? What does Job 40:8 reveal about <u>God’s</u> perspective? |

Job is not to be condemned because his theology is flawed, especially since at the very end, he shows himself to be open to instruction.

QUESTION: What is our defense against flawed theology?

⁹ This handout is based on chapter 12 of *How to Read Job*, Walton and Longman.

“The satan” in Job¹⁰

What we know for sure about this character:

1. He is not presented in Hebrew as “Satan” (a personal name), but as “the satan” (the adversary, challenger, or accuser).
2. He only appears in the opening narrative, then disappears. He does not reappear for a curtain call at the end of the book.
3. He is a catalyst for the scenario that unfolds in chap. 1 and 2.

How did the ancient Hebrews use *satan*?

1. Sometimes it was a VERB. In those cases, it means “to oppose (as an adversary),” “to challenge,” or “to accuse.” Check out Psalm 38:20; 71:13; 109:4, 20, 29; Zechariah 3:1.
2. Sometimes it was a NOUN.
 - a.) Sometimes it referred to human beings, who were adversaries of some sort. Check out 1 Samuel 29:4; 2 Samuel 19:22; 1 Kings 5:4; 11:14, 23, 25; Psalm 109:6.
 - b.) Sometimes it referred to a non-human being. Check out, in addition to Job 1 and 2, Numbers 22:22, 32; 1 Chronicles 21:1; Zechariah 3:1-2.

If the only information we had about this character were in Job 1 and 2, what conclusions could we draw?

1. He has access to “the heavenly council” (Ps. 89:5-8), although he is perhaps there as an intruder.
2. He does not initiate the discussion of Job, but once God points out “my servant Job,” the satan offers an alternative rationale for Job’s righteousness. “Though it is common for the *satan*’s job to be portrayed as seeking out human failings, it is God’s policies that are the true focus of the challenge. Job’s character is only the test case.”

Today’s reading: Job 1–2; Zechariah 3:1–2

¹⁰ The information on this handout is synthesized from Walton and Longman, *How to Read Job*, chap. 6.

What is Job's Role in the Book of Job?¹¹

"The book of Job, despite its title, is not about Job. Regardless of all the accolades that we could muster, and there are many, Job's role is in posing the problem of the book rather than in providing answers. Though his comments are less flawed than those of his friends, they are nevertheless flawed. As a character in the book, he represents yet one more wrong way to respond to suffering, and he also illustrates inadequate wisdom. He is commended not for how he responds to suffering but for the quality and motivation of his righteousness. His ideas as to why he suffers (God is unjust) and his prescription for the remedy to his pain (confront God) are both incorrect, thus showing that he is not as wise as he thinks."

Four aspects of Job's character are shown in the book, both in the narrative frame (what is said *about* Job by God) and in the first-person speeches (what Job says about himself):

1. Job the righteous. The most comparable figure to Job in the OT is probably Noah (Gen. 6:9). Both men demonstrate a righteousness that distinguishes them from the world around them. The accuser's view of Job's righteousness = he is righteous (i.e., living a life pleasing to God) precisely because of the benefits he can gain from such a life (i.e., God's blessing). God's view of Job's righteousness (and Job's view, in the speeches) = righteousness has independent value regardless of the benefits.
2. Job the pious. "Piety" = performing the ritual acts of religious duty (e.g., sacrifices, offerings, etc.). "Piety" never enters the equation in this book as either the cause of Job's suffering or its solution. However, there is a tiny clue about Job's piety in 1:4–5. What does it imply about Job and/or his faith?
3. Job, the person of integrity. Read Job 27:1–6 and James 5:11.
4. Job, the self-righteous. Self-righteousness = being so confident of one's own righteousness that one is ready to denigrate God's justice in order to defend one's own character.

¹¹ Adapted from Chap 7 of *Reading Job*

The role of Job’s three friends, part I

Job’s three friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar), after their initial silent, empathetic grieving with Job, break into speech. There are three cycles of speeches, with a progression in negativity towards Job:

1. Cycle 1 (Job 4–14): The friends offer advice to Job. “They use generalizations peppered with exhortations as they hold out the hope of restoration.”¹²
2. Cycle 2 (Job 15–21): The friends talk about the fate of the wicked; they indirectly insult Job rather than commiserating with him.
3. Cycle 3 (Job 22–27): The friends accuse Job directly

What role do the three friends play in the book?

1. They represent the sages (“wise men”) of the ancient world.
2. They represent the typical reciprocity thinking of the ancient world.
3. They take on, in the body of the book, the challenge offered by the Satan in the narrative frame.

The mixture of truth and distortion in the friends’ speeches (Cycle 1):

| Truth | Falsehood or distorted truth |
|---|--|
| <p><u>Eliphaz</u> (Job 4 and 5)</p> <p>4: 3, 4</p> | <p>4:2</p> <p>4:6–11</p> <p>4:12–21</p> |

¹² Walton and Longman, *How to Read Job*, 67.

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| <p>5:8–16</p> <p>5:17a</p> | <p>5:1–7</p> <p>5:17b</p> <p>5:19–26</p> <p>5:27</p> |
| <p><u>Bildad</u> (Job 8)</p> <p>8:8–10</p> <p>8:11–19</p> <p>8:20–22</p> | <p>8:2, 3</p> <p>8:4</p> <p>8:5–7</p> |
| <p><u>Zophar</u> (Job 11)</p> <p>11:7–12</p> | <p>11:2–6</p> <p>11:13–20</p> |

**Job’s Advisors (Friends? ____?)
Part 2**

ELIHU, the young whipper-snapper (Job 32-37)

Read Job 32:1-9. What do you learn about this new character who suddenly appears on the scene? What is your initial reaction to him?

The three older friends accused Job of some hidden sin (in the past) that would account for being “punished” by God. Elihu is different. He makes a specific accusation against Job in the present: he claims that Job is exceedingly self-righteous, and that it took the suffering to reveal the depth of Job’s sinful attitude. In other words, he is not questioning Job’s *motives* for righteousness; he is questioning that very righteousness itself. Elihu defends God’s policies (which is what Job has been questioning, chap. 29-31).

”Though Elihu defends God’s policies, he does so from a flawed foundation. When we finally arrive at Yahweh’s speeches, we will find that Job’s motives have been vindicated and Job’s righteousness affirmed (though his self-righteousness id condemned), but God’s policies have yet to be understood.”¹³

Elihu has a lot to say about **Job**, about **God**, and about **himself**. Consider these verses and think about whether they contain truth, half-truth, or outright wrong thinking:

| What Elihu says about JOB | What Elihu says about GOD | What Elihu says about himself |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | | 32:7-22 |
| | | 33:1-7 |
| 33:8-13 | | |
| | 33:14-28 | |

¹³ Walton and Longman, *How to Read Job*, 72.

| What Elihu says about JOB | What Elihu says about GOD | What Elihu says about himself |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | 33:29-30 | |
| 34:1-9 | | 33:31-33 |
| | 34:10-15 | |
| | 34:16-20 | |
| | 34:21-32 | |
| 34:33-37 | | 35:4 |
| 35:1-3 | 35:5-13 | |
| | 35:14-16 | 36:5-15 |
| 36:22-33 | | 37:2-13 |
| | 36:16-21 | 37:21-24 |
| 37:14-20 | | |

BEHEMOTH and LEVIATHAN

(Job 40 and 41)

“In Yahweh’s speeches, discussion of these creatures comes after Job has made his first response (Job 40:4–5), in which he has acknowledged his inability to answer God’s questions. Yahweh’s points in Job 38–39 address the complexity of the world and Job’s ignorance of the way that the world works. This point is significant because Job and his friends had confidently formulated a theory that reduced the operations of the world to a single, simple proposition—the retribution principle.”¹⁴

The three most common interpretations of who/what these two creatures are:

- Real, known creatures—possibly the hippopotamus and the crocodile.
- Creatures that are now extinct—possibly the brontosaurus and tyrannosaurus.
- Quintessential creatures—the most powerful land animal imaginable and the most power sea creature imaginable—whose abstract characteristics are represented to a lesser degree by creatures like the hippopotamus and crocodile.

| BEHEMOTH (the plural of “cattle” or “animal”)—used only in Job 40:15–24 | LEVIATHAN (Job 41:1–34; Psalm 74:13–14; 104:26; 148:7; Isaiah 27:1 |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What stands out to you about the description of the creature? • What does God want Job to learn from considering the creature • How does this fit in with the larger argument of God’s speeches? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What stands out to you about the description of the creature? • What does God want Job to learn from considering the creature • How does this fit in with the larger argument of God’s speeches? |

¹⁴ Walton and Longman, *How to Read Job*, 79.

JOB and JESUS¹⁵

Read: Job 9:33; 16:19–21; 19:23–27

Some hints for reading Job (and any OT book)—we really need TWO readings:

- **FIRST reading:** “It is critically important to read any OT book in its original setting. These books were written in order to address questions and concerns that were current at the time of composition and that still remain relevant for us today. God revealed himself to his people in terms that they could understand at the time, using language, metaphors, turns of phrases and genres that made sense to them. If we read an OT book like Job too quickly from our 21st-century perspective, we run the great risk of introducing meaning that wasn’t intended by either the human or the divine author. By reading the NT back into the OT, we also risk missing the rich theocentric (God-centered) meaning of the passage available to the OT reader.”
- **SECOND reading:** As Christian readers, “we should read the book a second time in the light of the whole Bible, including the NT. After all, now Job appears in a broader context—the canon—and we need to read the book in the light of the whole canon, including the NT. The NT gives us an inspired account of the continuation of the story of redemption that began in the book of Genesis; thus we can look back on the earlier story in the context of its continuation.”

The questions raised in Job, from a canonical perspective:

- Do we (Christians) fear God? If so, do we fear him “for nothing”—or for “the goodies”?

READ: Phil. 2:12–13; 1 Pet 1:17; 2:17; Luke 12:5; Acts 9:31; Rom 3:18.

READ: Matt 10:38–39; 2 Cor 6:4–10; Phil 2:6–8

- Who is wise?

READ: Luke 2:40, 47; Matt 11:19; John 1:1–4

- What about innocent sufferers?

READ: Matt 26:39; Gal 3:10–13; Phil 2:6–11; 1 Pet 2:21–25; 3:18

¹⁵ Some of the material in this handout is taken from chapter 17 of *How to Read Job*, Walton and Longman. The first/second reading paragraphs are from pp. 147-48.

Some final thoughts on reading and applying the Book of Job¹⁶

Thinking about God:

- “God is not petty; he is a God of grace who knows our frailty and has arranged for our sins to be addressed. He disciplines in love and punishes guided by wisdom.”

Read: Romans 11:33–35

- “God is not a chaos creature; his actions are perfectly in accord with his plans. Goodness, justice and wisdom flow from him and are characteristic of him. He is all-powerful but does not abuse his power as humans are inclined to do.”

“God is always good and you are always loved.” (Ann Voskamp)

- “We cannot do a better job than God; he cannot be charged with incompetence. We dare not think that we could focus on one issue (whether the suffering of a loved one or the starving children of the world) and think that if we could just fix that, somehow everything else could be adjusted.”

Ann Voskamp, on her gut reaction to tragedy: “If it were up to me. . . *I’d write this story differently!* I regret the words as soon as they leave me. They seem so un-Christian, so unaccepting—so *No, God!* I wish I could take them back, comb out their tangled madness, dress them in their calm Sunday best. But there they are, released and naked, raw and real, stripped of any theological cliché, my exposed serrated howl to the throne room.”

Then her brother-in-law, the one who’s just lost his second child to a terrible disease, ponders quietly: “Just that maybe. . . maybe you don’t want to change the story, because you don’t know what a different ending holds. . . Maybe. . . I guess. . . it’s accepting there are things we simply don’t understand. But He does.”

Pondering his loss, her own accumulated losses, she wonders: “I wonder. . . if the rent in the canvas of our life backdrop, the losses that puncture our world, our own emptiness, might actually become places to see. To see through to God. That that which tears open our souls, those holes that splatter our sight, may actually become the thin, open places to see through the mess of this place to the heart-aching beauty beyond. To Him. To the God whom we endlessly crave.”

¹⁶ Adapted from chap. 20 of *How to Read Job*, Walton and Longman.

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| <p>From the aria, "I Know that My Redeemer Liveth," Handel's <i>Messiah</i></p> <p><i>Bass Recitative:</i> Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall be chang'd, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. (1 Cor 15:51-52)</p> <p><i>Bass Aria:</i> The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be rais'd incorruptible, and we shall be chang'd. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (1 Cor 15:52-53)</p> <p><i>Alto Recitative:</i> Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallow'd up in victory. (1 Cor 15:54b)</p> <p><i>Alto and Tenor Duet:</i> O Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. (1 Cor 15:55-56)</p> <p><i>Chorus:</i> But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor 15:57)</p> | <p>"Is This Thy Justice, O Father?" W.E.B. Du Bois, 1906 (written during Atlanta race riots)</p> <p>O Silent God, Thou whose voice afar in mist and mystery hath left our ears a-hungered in these fearful days— <i>Hear us, good Lord!</i></p> <p>Listen to us, Thy children: our faces dark with doubt are made a mockery in Thy sanctuary. With uplifted hands we front Thy heaven, O God, crying: <i>We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord!</i></p> <p>Is this Thy justice, O Father, that guilt be easier than innocence, and the innocent crucified for the guilt of the untouched guilty? <i>Justice, O Judge of men!</i></p> <p>Bewildered we are, and passion-tossed, mad with the madness of a mobbed and mocked and murdered people; straining at the armposts of Thy Throne, we raise our shackled hands and charge Thee, God by the bones of our stolen fathers, by the tears of our dead mothers, by the very blood of Thy crucified Christ: What meaneth this? Tell us the Plan; give us the Sign! <i>Keep not Thou silent, O God!</i></p> |
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