

The Book of Job

The Curse Causeless?

Lesson #6 for November 5, 2016

Scriptures: Psalm 119:65-72; Job 2:11-13; 4:1-21; Romans 3:19-20; 1 Corinthians 3:19; Hebrews 12:5; Matthew 7:1.

1. What do we know about Job's three friends? Truthfully, not very much! Teman is a city in northwestern Arabia. Shuah is an area in northeastern Arabia. Naamah is a common name, and there are a number of villages and cities in ancient times with that name. (Job 2:11) Thus, it is difficult to know which Naamah was being referred to. The ancient spice route ran across northern Arabia. Did the spice traders know Job and his friends?
2. How long do you think it was before the news about Job's plight reached these three men who were apparently scattered over a considerable distance? Did they confer together before arriving at Job's place? Did these four men get together often? How did they become friends?
3. What kind of rumors do you think the three friends received that caused them to rush to Job's place? During those seven days while they were sitting in silence and perhaps even weeping in Job's presence, were they making up their minds about what they should say to Job? Did the friends confer among themselves about how to deal with Job?
4. If you had traveled many miles to go and see Job, what would you do or say? Would you dare to hug him? Or, even touch him? Did Job even want to be hugged?
5. Did Job's friends really try to find out what had happened before making their judgments? Was Eliphaz really thinking about what he was saying? Was Eliphaz really suggesting that Job was responsible because of his sin or sins even for the death of his children? How often are people really helped by open rebuke?
6. After sitting with Job for a full week without saying anything, the "friends" heard Job speak up and curse the day he was born. After Job had spoken, Eliphaz, their apparent leader, decided that the time had come for him to speak up. (Job 4:1-22)
7. Do you think Eliphaz received his nighttime vision while he was at Job's place? Surely, taking a condemnatory message from the Devil to a suffering person will never, never help!
8. Try to put yourself in the position of Job. Then, try to put yourself in the position of Job's three friends. Do you feel more comfortable in the position of Job? Or, in the position of Job's three friends? Many of us have had experiences with suffering or perhaps experienced the sufferings of a close friend or family member. Most of the rest of the book of Job—chapters 3 through 27—will be taken up with the dialogues back and forth between Job and those three so-called friends of his.
9. Let us remind ourselves before we move on that the most important part of the book of Job happens in Job 1&2 and Job 42. We get a picture of how close the union is between the supernatural world of heaven, surrounding the throne of God, and our world.
10. In looking forward into the dialogue between Job and his friends, we will discover that there were a number of facts about which they all agreed. But, let us not forget Job 42:7-8. God said that Job had spoken the truth about Him while the three friends had not. So, as we move along through the book, we must look at places where Job's statements contradict the statements of the three friends. Was Job a terrible sinner?

11. Is there ever a time when God punishes not out of vengeance but for discipline? Read Psalm 119:65-72. Does God ever lose control of His emotions?
12. When adversity comes, is it easy for us to tell when it is a result of our own behavior or some action by God? Is it easy to accept discipline even at God's hands?
13. It should be easy for us to recognize that we live in a sinful world; and therefore, trouble will come. Could it even be possible that righteous people suffer more than the wicked?

2 Timothy 3:12 (GNB): "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in union with Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

Is that still true in our day?

14. How do you expect the experience of Job to compare with the experience of the righteous at the end of time? Satan hated Job because Job was a living example that serving God was not an impossibility. Throughout history, there have been many who have proved Satan wrong by relying totally upon their relationship with God. The righteous will be living those kinds of lives on this earth just before Jesus comes. (See Revelation 14:1-5; 15:2.) They, too, will stir up Satan's wrath, and he will do all he can to destroy them.

Unselfishness, the principle of God's kingdom, is the principle that Satan hates; its very existence he denies. From the beginning of the great controversy he has endeavored to prove God's principles of action to be selfish, and he deals in the same way with all who serve God. **To disprove Satan's claim is the work of Christ and of all who bear His name.**—Ellen G. White, *Education* 154.3. [Bold type is added.]

15. Which part of the attacks on Job wore him down the most? Was it the events recorded in first two chapters that caused Job's biggest problems? Or, was it the accusations of his "friends"—the "theologians"? Look at *Desire of Ages* 471.

It was generally believed by the Jews that sin is punished in this life. Every affliction was regarded as the penalty of some wrongdoing, either of the sufferer himself or of his parents. It is true that all suffering results from the transgression of God's law, but this truth had become perverted. **Satan, the author of sin and all its results, had led men to look upon disease and death as proceeding from God,—as punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin. Hence one upon whom some great affliction or calamity had fallen had the additional burden of being regarded as a great sinner.**

Thus the way was prepared for the Jews to reject Jesus. He who "hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" was looked upon by the Jews as "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;" and they hid their faces from Him. Isaiah 53:4, 3.

God had given a lesson designed to prevent this. The history of Job had shown that suffering is inflicted by Satan, and is overruled by God for purposes of mercy. But Israel did not understand the lesson. The same error for which God had reproved the friends of Job was repeated by the Jews in their rejection of Christ.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 471.1-3. [Bold type is added.]

16. Notice how Ellen White used Isaiah 53 in this context! Ellen White went on to say that the

Jews had not understood the book of Job! The book of Job is not just a question about one man's suffering! Instead, Job is about a basic issue in the great controversy! Could this be part of what will trouble the people of God in the end? Something that was going on in the life of Job was impacting what happened around the throne of God in heaven. Will a similar situation also be true in the time of the end?

17. Read Job 4:1-11. Is it true that God always rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked? After observing Job for a full week and realizing to a considerable extent how much he was suffering, would you dare to say, "You must have deserved this"? Job's friends were certain that Job's suffering came directly from God.
18. Read Job 4:12-21. What kind of experience was it that Eliphaz had? In light of the information we have from Job 1&2, would you say that his supernatural revelation—something perhaps even miraculous that happened to Eliphaz—represents Satan's view? Or, God's view?
19. What kind of picture of God did Eliphaz and his friends have? Was it more like the real God that we know? Or, more like Satan's misrepresentations? Remember that Satan often succeeds in his accusations of God because he mixes truth and error.

The problem with Eliphaz's words isn't just the questionable theology; the bigger issue is his insensitivity to Job and all that he is going through.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Monday, October 31.

20. Would you agree that Eliphaz's insensitivity was a bigger problem than his bad theology?
21. In this lesson we will consider Eliphaz's first response to Job. Look at Job 4:17. Compare the *NKJV* translation and the *Good News Bible* translation. Which one makes more sense to you?

Job 4:17 (NKJV): " "Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?" ' "

Job 4:17 (GNB): " "Can anyone be righteous in the sight of God or be pure before his Creator?" ' " [Bold type is added.]

22. Should we be using as a key text or memory verse a statement from the midst of a nightmare made by a ghost or apparition—no doubt, from Satan himself—who appeared to a theologian whom God said had erroneous ideas? (See Job 4:17.) Could such words be considered as inspired Scripture? What was it that Eliphaz was using to support his arguments? Who do you think appeared to him? Have you ever heard a story begin: "I woke up, and there was someone standing at the foot of my bed ..."? **Eliphaz wanted to impress Job with the miraculous. Did that give his statements authority? Notice that this "ghost" directly challenged God's statements about Job as recorded in Job 1&2!** (Job 4:18-19) The whole book of Job is about God's trust in Job because He was able to judge Job correctly! How often do we hear people try to get us to believe falsehood by supporting it with the miraculous? How many television evangelists in our day are claiming miraculous healings and other miraculous actions to support their claims about their interpretation of the Bible and their own teachings?
23. The incredible thing about Eliphaz's speech is that he honestly seemed to believe that he was defending the character of God! Could words almost directly quoted from the Devil defend the character of God?
24. As we have already noted, some of what Eliphaz said was very true. Compare Psalm 103:14; Isaiah 64:7; and Romans 3:19-20. It is true that our lives on this earth are very

temporary in comparison to eternity. By mentioning that fact, does it make Eliphaz's statements "very sound theology" as our *Bible Study Guide* suggests? Or, is it error?

25. Review again Job 4:17 in the *NKJV*. Was anyone trying to suggest that any man could be more righteous than God? That is not the question in the book of Job. The question in the book of Job was/is: "Could a human being be truly righteous in the sight of God?" The Devil emphatically said, "No"; but, God had already said, "Yes." Eliphaz's statements were directly reflecting the thoughts of the Devil.
26. Is the Devil capable of sending visions to us in the night?
27. How does the position of Eliphaz in these two chapters compare with the teachings of the Pharisees and the scribes in Jesus's day?
28. Read Psalm 37:10; Proverbs 26:2; Luke 1:52; 1 Corinthians 3:19; and Psalm 34:6. Do any of these passages reflect Job's situation? We will see repeatedly throughout the book of Job that both Job and his friends recognized that, ultimately, God is sovereign. That is not one of the areas over which Job and his friends disagreed.
29. There are a number of things which Eliphaz said which are ultimately true. The part that should worry us are the statements he made that were not true! Which are those? Do we believe that a God of justice must punish evil? Or, does evil bring its own "punishment"? (Galatians 6:7) After reading Job 1&2, could we honestly say that it was God who was punishing Job? So, can you pick out the errors in Eliphaz's comments?
30. While it is true that all suffering is ultimately the result of sin—after all, it was God's plan that we should all still be living in the Garden of Eden—Eliphaz had no evidence whatsoever for his conclusions! He was going on pure speculation and assumptions!
31. Read Job 5:27 (*GNB*): "Job, we have learned this by long study. It is true, so now accept it." What argument was Eliphaz making? This is a very common argument given by people to support their views, rightly or wrongly. The claim, ultimately, is that everyone knows that what I am saying is correct! Therefore, I don't need to provide any evidence!
32. How often do people appeal to experience or research without presenting the evidence? It has been said: "No one can go down so deep, and stay down so long, and come up so dry, as a theologian!"

The Bible with its precious gems of truth was not written for the scholar alone. On the contrary, it was designed for the common people; and the interpretation given by the common people, when aided by the Holy Spirit, accords best with the truth as it is in Jesus. The great truths necessary for salvation are made clear as the noonday, and none will mistake and lose their way except those who follow their own judgment instead of the plainly revealed will of God.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 331.2 (1885). Compare *Signs of the Times*, July 11, 1906, par. 1.

33. We must learn to make up our minds for ourselves! Doesn't that mean asking a lot of questions and evaluating the answers, comparing them with Scripture? How will we be able to survive the time of the end unless we can do that?
34. How often do we bring trouble upon ourselves by our own actions? See James 1:13-14.

No truth does the Bible more clearly teach than that what we do is the result of what we are. To a great degree the experiences of life are the fruition of our own thoughts and deeds.—Ellen White, *Education* 146.2; CC 10.3.

35. God had said that Job was blameless and upright. (See Job 1:1,8; 2:3.) Would a righteous God turn around and punish such a person?
36. Do you think it helped Job in any way to hear that scathing rebuke from Eliphaz? How much better would it have been if Eliphaz had read the following quotation from Ellen White before giving his speech?

How little do we enter into sympathy with Christ on that which should be the strongest bond of union between us and Him—compassion for depraved, guilty, suffering souls, dead in trespasses and sins! **The inhumanity of man toward man is our greatest sin.** Many think that they are representing the justice of God while they wholly fail of representing His tenderness and His great love. Often the ones whom they meet with sternness and severity are under the stress of temptation. Satan is wrestling with these souls, and harsh, unsympathetic words discourage them and cause them to fall a prey to the tempter's power.—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* 163.2; *GW* 140.3. [Bold type is added.]

37. Are we ever given the responsibility of judging others? In Corinthians Paul suggested that the church must deal with open sinners. However, generally, we should leave the judging to God. (Matthew 7:1-2; Romans 2:1-3; 1 Corinthians 4:5)
38. Even if Eliphaz had been right and even if Job had somehow brought at least some of his punishment upon himself, was a scathing rebuke really necessary? As a human family, we entered into the great controversy over the character and government of God by our own sinning. If there were a significant number of people living in our day who were as righteous as Job, wouldn't Christ return to take them home?
39. It is very interesting to note as in the quotation from Ellen White above that the Pharisees in their attitudes toward Jesus made the same mistake that Job's three friends had made. They accused Jesus of all sorts of things that were not true. But, they believed that they were representing God!
40. In relating to someone who is suffering, how can we know that our words are words that Jesus might have used? Is it always possible to be certain that we are doing what Jesus would have done? Could we ever be accused of more correctly representing the Devil instead of God?
41. If Jesus had been there to comfort Job, what would He have done and said? He certainly would not have echoed the sentiments of the Devil!
42. Have you ever felt that it was your Christian duty to judge someone else? Did you go to that person and speak to him/her directly?
43. We know so little about the reasons why someone else might be suffering that it is very unlikely that we could judge them correctly. In that light, we should be very cautious and very sympathetic.
44. In some places, the Bible encourages exhortation among Christians. Is exhorting someone to do better the same as judging him/her unfairly without even knowing the cause of his/her problems?
45. Surely, this lesson would teach us that if we ever feel that it is necessary to judge or rebuke the sins of another, we should be extremely cautious, if possible, using only the words of Scripture.

46. Our situation in 2016 is, of course, very different from the situation of Job and his friends. What is the right response in our day to personal suffering? Or, even to the suffering of a friend? Or, a family member? Or, a neighbor?
47. Professional counselors frequently have to deal with grief. Look at the following four points from the *Adult Teacher's Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* pages 82 and 83 which are very appropriate in dealing with grief:
1. The cause of our pain needs to be accepted as reality. There is an interesting tendency in the human mind to close our mental doors on the things we don't like, hoping that, in this way, they will somehow disappear. If you'd like to process your pain and suffering, the first step is to accept it as reality.
 2. The second step in the "grieving process" is the willingness to actually suffer pain and loss. Nobody likes to suffer. It's human instinct to avoid pain. However, if we'd like to move toward inner healing, we have to be willing to walk through the valley of the shadow of death, as Psalm 23:4 puts it. Pain needs to be confronted and expressed.
 3. If you want to process your pain, you need to reintegrate yourself into life. If your spouse or child has passed away, you might want to return to the familiar places you visited together. It is not healthy to live a life that tries to avoid everything that might remind you of your loved one. To walk along the same beach you've always walked together might be a painful experience but also the beginning of something new. Sometimes we spend so much time carefully framing our memories and filling our lives with them that there is no space for new life. Memories are good and important, but life goes on. Our life should not be a dusty museum of photographs of the deceased.
 4. The last step is saying goodbye to your loved one. Be it the late spouse or the lost fetus, the lost job or the deceased pet—the pain of loss occurs on all levels. But we have to reach the point where we consciously say, "Goodbye."
48. When Eliphaz finished his speech, was he convinced that what he had said was the truth from God?
49. How would you decide if a statement coming from another source was from God or from the Devil? Do we have a correct understanding of God's character in the great controversy? If he wants to identify a counterfeit, the most important skill a person can have is to have a very clear picture of the true. As we approach the end of time, we can be sure that the Devil will make his views seem as attractive as possible and as truthful as possible. Could we be sucked into believing certain views about God that are incorrect?

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