

THE WONDER OF IT ALL

A Study Guide for

The Book of Job

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DEDICATION

To

The Members of

Providence Baptist Church

Point, Louisiana

INTRODUCTION

The Wonder of It All! The wonder of it all is not that bad things happen to good people - there are no good people. The Bible tells us so. Only God is absolutely good. Bad things happen, and bad things happen to people. Some of those people are bad people and some are people we would call good. But the wonder of it all is not that good things keep on happening to fallen men and women. The wonder of it all is what God does to see His faithful people through the trials of life, whether these trials come as the result of God's permissive will or His directive will. And more to the point, the wonder of it all is the Sovereignty of Almighty God.

The wonder of it all is that any creature would question the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. The wonder of it all is - well, wait until God speaks, and then you will understand just a little of the wonder of it all.

The author of a small commentary on the Book of Job reasoned that Job was lost at the beginning of the book, and that through all the trials recorded in the book the Lord led him to salvation. A number of people were influenced by this and taught it to others. A famous radio preacher made the baseless statement that Job was suffering from "I-itis", wallowing first in pride, then self pity. He claimed that Job offered sacrifices for his children but not for himself (implying that he did think he needed it). These and similar claims fly in the face of the introduction to Job in the first few verses. If you do not get it right at the beginning you are going to have trouble staying on track as you move on through the book.

ORIGIN. The human author of the Book of Job remains a mystery. Speculations have included Job, his friends, and even Moses. What we do know is that Job is the product of the Holy Spirit.

The date is subject to much debate, with dates ranges from the age of the patriarchs (like Abraham) to Moses, the Law giver. Since the patriarch Job assumed the role of priest and offered sacrifices for himself and his family it is assumed in this study that Job lived very early in antiquity, The Period of the Patriarchs.

RELEVANCE. We will probably agree with that writer who said, "Every intelligent person knows that he lives every minute of his life on the brink of disaster" (author unknown). Anyone who has ever had to wrestle with the problem of pain, sickness, suffering, grief, divorce, bankruptcy, or any other serious problem will find the Book of Job relevant. Anyone who has, for any significant period of time, dreaded the next visit to the doctor, answering the door bell or the telephone will benefit from a study of this book.

UNITY. A thread of unity runs throughout the book, including sin, suffering, wisdom, and God's response to man's cry for help. The Prologue, Epilogue, and the Wisdom Chapter (Ch. 28) form the nucleus about which the rest of the book is bound. A progression of understanding is seen in the

book. The reader should note this and remind himself to (1) Let the book say what it says rather than what he wants it to say. (2) Interpret the speeches of Job's friends from the religious philosophy of the speaker, not the theology of Scripture. Job's friends will say a lot of high sounding things that are simply not Scriptural.

BASIC THEMES AND SUBJECTS

GOD. The supreme, transcendent Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer is seen as the source of wisdom. This book reveals that (1) He cares about us, and (2) He has the answer (His grace is sufficient, whatever our needs may be).

SUFFERING. The Book of Job deals with important issues:

- (1) Why do the righteous often suffer, while many unrighteous people seem never to suffer?
- (2) Is all suffering the direct result of some sin?

Job really does not answer the problem of suffering, but the unexplained presence of suffering in the world is one of the themes.

SATAN. Satan is revealed in the Book of Job as a real person, man's enemy, God's eternal foe. Some render the word for Satan, "the adversary" because of the article which appears in the Hebrew. I was in seminary at time when some professors were denying the existence of Satan. For example, my professor for an intensive in Revelation admitted that he did not believe in the existence of a personal devil because you cannot have two infinite beings (who ever said Satan is infinite?). A former seminary professor whom I saw frequently when I was in seminary wrote a commentary which included the temptations of Christ, yet he did not believe in the existence of Satan. I was aware of students who were being influenced by these men. A friend and I wrote letters to a number of well known pastors to ask their views about Satan. I was surprised at the response from one of the best known conservative pastors of the day. He told me he did not have time to write, "but suffice it to say, I believe what the Bible says." Then I received the response from Dr. R. G. Lee, whom I had heard so many times that he was almost like a second pastor. I got home from our services in time to hear Dr. Lee on TV every Sunday for several years. His response is included as an APPENDIX to this study. Please read it - copy it if you like.

WISDOM. This is Wisdom Literature and since there is more to the theme of the book than suffering, wisdom must be considered very carefully. In Job the wisdom of the world will clash with the wisdom of God. There is suffering and pain so Job's friends must have a culprit, a judge, and a victim. In reality, Job was the victim but since his friends had to place the blame on someone, made him the guilty party. Their speeches reflect the wisdom of the world and when abstractly considered their counsel seems brilliant, but when applied to Job's situation their wisdom offers no comfort. The

real high-water mark of ancient wisdom is found in chapter 28, the Wisdom Chapter.

ASSURANCE. From the pit of loneliness, despair, and self-pity, Job lifted his heart to the Lord, Who then lifted him to a mountain peak experience of comfort and hope - "I may know that my Redeemer live..." (19:25). Job continually fights back from despair to hope and assurance.

CHARACTERS IN THE BOOK OF JOB

JOB. "There was a man" (1:1): with these words we are introduced to an ancient patriarch who was healthy, wealthy, and wise. He was a man of vast wealth, rare faith, and uncommon devotion, a righteous man who had been blessed beyond all his peers. This is not a myth or legend but real history. Job was a real man at a real place at a real time.

The so-called "patience of Job" is proverbial, yet at times he was not only impatient but almost blasphemous in his effort to get God's attention. But in spite of those outcries, Job was a man of impeccable character, unbelievable endurance, and incredible faith. The severe test to which Job's faith was put might have led one of lesser faith to curse God or even commit suicide, but it presented Job with an opportunity to search for the wisdom to cope with his situation, the wisdom to understand his God. No doubt, there might have been a time when the wisdom of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar might have been sufficient for Job, but not now! In the final analysis, God Himself is the answer Job needs, not religious clichés, philosophical speculation, or a psychological quick-fix.

Through Job's suffering God was not trying to break Job's faith - that is the way Satan works. God was seeking to validate it and demonstrate it. The Lord allowed Job a lot of time to search for answers before He responded to His faithful servant. Job's faith may have wavered at times, but God's grace never wavers, and the God who watches over us never sleeps.

JOB'S FAMILY. Job had a wife, seven sons, and three daughters. His wife became a source of temptation (2:9), but his children reflect a strong spiritual influence. Job had not only trained them well, he continued to "sanctify" them and to offer sacrifices for them.

ELIPHAZ. The Temanite was from Edom, south of Palestine along side the Dead Sea. Some writers suggest that Edom was known for wisdom at this time. The Edomites were descended from Esau and in the time of Amos the Edomites were targeted for the judgment of God. But at this point in history this Edomite put forth the time and effort to travel to Uz to try to comfort his friend, Job.

Dr. J. J. Owens said, "His speeches were well composed and judicial - too coldly academic, but abstractly considered they were full of good religious counsel." Some hold that Eliphaz approached suffering from a psychological standpoint, but one can hardly miss the theological argument, even if it was flawed. To Eliphaz, prosperity meant that God had blessed that individual for his righteousness. Therefore, if one was poor or suffered for some reason, he concluded that God was punishing him for

his sin.

BILDAD. The Shuhite represents the wisdom of the distant east, possible Babylon or Persia. He appeals to tradition. Some have claimed that his was a philosophical approach, but if you examine his speeches you will discover that they are also theological.

ZOPHAR. The Naamathite (from Asia Minor) was a zealot. He is intensely dogmatic - the first to accuse Job of wickedness.

ELIHU. A younger and more radical man, Elihu attacked Job for claiming to be innocent, and the three friends for not being able to convince him to confess his guilt. Like the other comforters, Elihu is very cognizant of the wisdom of the world.

OUTLINE AND PLAN OF THE BOOK

In the Prologue, we are introduced to Job and given the basic story. This is a prose section. The Dialogue section which follows is some of the most beautiful poetry ever written. The Dialogue section begins with Job's Lament, his response to the affliction that had befallen him (Ch. 3).

There are three cycles of speeches of speeches in the Dialogue section. Each friend (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar) make a speech in the first two cycles and Job responds to each. In the third cycle only Eliphaz and Bildad speak and Job responds to each of them.

At times Job seems to be dealing more with the basic problem of his suffering, his righteousness, and his effort to get a word from the Lord than in simply responding to one of his friends. In some speeches he simply dismisses a friend with a comment and then returns to the basic problem.

The Wisdom Hymn follows in chapter 28, with Job doing the speaking, and the Job speeches continue in chapters 29-31. The Elihu speeches are recorded in chapters 32-37. In these speeches the zealous young man blasts Job for not confessing that his suffering is the result of some sin; and he blasts Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar for not being able to convince Job that he was guilty of some horrible sin that had caused all his suffering.

The Yahweh speeches, 38:1-42:6, record some of the most amazing statements ever made, which should surprise no one. After all, He is God. However, even the Christian reader of the Book of Job may be surprised that God does not respond either to Job or his friends as one would expect. His response is beyond anything either of them might have expected.

John D. W. Watts, who was still teaching Hebrew and Old Testament at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary when I was there, lists the central issues of Job as:

- (1) Wisdom and human existence
- (2) Suffering
- (3) The Doctrine of God.
- (4) Retribution
- (5) A Mediator (compare Job with the Law and the Prophets).

For many years students used Dr. Watts' two volume survey of the Old Testament in OT survey classes. Watts states, "Thus Job is not so much a statement of theology as a challenge for theology to be realistic and relevant, while also being true to the majestic grandeur of both God and man in the perplexing and disturbing problems of life and existence."

LITERARY VALUE OF JOB

TENNYSON: "The Greatest poem of ancient or modern times."

LUTHER: "Magnificent and sublime."

CARLYSLE: "There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it of equal literary merit."

I. THE PROLOGUE, CHAPTERS 1- 2

A. "There Was a Man"...(1:1-5).

1. Job was a godly, complete man.
 - a. He was blameless (whole, complete - not sinlessly perfect).
 - b. He was upright (straight, a man of godly integrity).
 - c. He continually feared God.
 - d. He continually turned from evil.

This is the picture of a righteous man who was about to be subjected to suffering and trials beyond our comprehension, not an ungodly man who found God through suffering and trials. We can learn a lot about how we should face trials from Job, but, theologically speaking, there is a limit to what we can learn from the trials of lost people.

2. Job was a man of substance (1:3).
3. There was an unusual degree of harmony in his family (1:4).
4. Job's devotion to God is seen in his intercession for his children (1:5).

Job was a patriarch, like Abraham. He assumed priestly responsibilities for his family and offered sacrifices for himself and his children. This was centuries before God gave Moses the sacrificial system at Sinai.

B. A HEAVENLY COUNCIL (1:6-12).

1. “Sons of God” may refer to a heavenly court of angels. However, this may well refer to children of God who are assembled for worship. Whichever, Satan is still going to church!

2. The adversary attended the meeting. No problem if this refers to congregation of believers, but even if it refers to angels, Satan cannot go where he is forbidden by God. The point here which we cannot miss is that Satan is a real person - an evil and sinister liar, who is cunning and deceptive. He is the bitter enemy of every person created in the image of God.

3. The Lord called attention to His faithful servant Job. “My servant” suggests a position with the great Old Testament saints like Moses, Caleb, and others. The four primary attributes are repeated (1:1).

4. Satan challenges God’s assessment of Job’s faithfulness (1:9).

5. God permitted Job to be tested.

The purpose of the testing was obviously not to harm Job but to see his faith manifested and validated. The Lord will deal with us according to His sovereign will and purpose, so when the tests come we should go to the Lord through prayer and His Word and trust the Holy Spirit to reveal the meaning, purpose, and desired results. We have every advantage over Job. We have the whole Bible - and we are on this side of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit will guide us. That does not mean that He is going to give you some “word of knowledge” that will enable you to diagnose causes and prescribe for your neighbor. That was the problem Job had with his friends.

C. JOB’S CHILDREN AND WEALTH ALL DESTROYED (1:13-19).

Many lesser men and women have committed suicide under similar circumstances (suicide was often the response to people who lost everything during the Great Depression). Job’s losses were sudden, complete, and phenomenal. While all our questions are not answered, there is much more involved here than a bet between God and Satan. This is certainly not God’s normal way of dealing with faithful servants, but we must remember that God is sovereign and His grace is always sufficient.

D. JOB’S RESPONSE TO HIS GREAT LOSSES (1:20-22).

1. He tore his outer robe and shaved his head, outward signs of mourning.

2. Inwardly, his attitude was one of resignation to the will of God. However, this is not to be misinterpreted. Perhaps the prayer of Alcoholics Anonymous, adapted from St. Francis of Assisi, will help:

“Almighty God, give me the strength to change the things that ought to be changed,

and the grace to accept those things that cannot be changed, and the sense enough to know the difference.”

3. Job passed the test.

He did not accuse God of evil. He trusted his Lord and insisted that he would maintain his integrity.

E. THE SECOND HEAVENLY COUNCIL (2:1-6).

1. God again called attention to Job, pointing out that he had passed the test.

2. Satan again argues with God (“skin for skin”) - a free translation might be, “There is skin beneath the skin”, meaning that he had only scratched the surface.

3. Job was stricken with ulcerous sores and possibly forced outside the city in a dump where lepers were forced to live.

4. Job’s wife tried to get him to “curse God and die,” but Job rebuked her - though not too harshly, by telling her that she was speaking as a foolish woman.

5. Instead of cursing God as Satan predicted, Job praised Him (2:10).

6. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar visit Job (2:11-13).

- a. These wise men had a quote for every situation.
- b. They were the best counselors to be found any where.
- c. They were compassionate - for seven days.
- d. They were sincere.
- e. They were religious.
- f. Theirs, however, was the wisdom of the world.

They were comforters for seven days while they sat with Job and offered support, but when they began to speak they became “Job’s Comforters”. There are a lot of “Job’s Comforters” in the church today.

II. THE DIALOGUE SECTION, CHAPTERS 3-27

A. JOB’S LAMENT, CH. 3.

Job finally broke the long silence to curse the day of his birth. This does not mean that he used profanity. He treated as insignificant the day of his birth, wishing that he had never been born. He obviously spoke in full confidence that his friends would be sympathetic. Was he ever wrong! His pain and suffering were intensified by their lack of compassion, by their insensitivity, and finally by

their attacks on his faith. Next, his grief was intensified by the feeling that His Lord has forsaken him.

PLEASE NOTE: It is much easier to praise the poetic section of Job than it is to explain it. To cry that the date of one's birth be blotted out was apparently not too uncommon in Job's day. It was a powerful expression of despair.

Job's understanding of death and that which lies beyond was not as clear as the picture we see in the New Testament. There is a progressive revelation of God's redemptive purpose, including His Messianic Covenant, the subject of life after death, and Heaven and hell in the Old Testament. There is also a progressive revelation of God's dealings with His servants in the Book of Job, so we should not judge Job too harshly based on the cry of this chapter, in isolation from the rest of the Book.

B. THE FIRST CYCLE OF SPEECHES, CHAPTERS 4-14.

1a. ELIPHAZ MAKES HIS FIRST SPEECH, CHS. 4-5.

4:1 - Eliphaz began his speech with understanding and grace, showing the courtesy of the Middle East. When considered in the abstract, and when considered from the perspective of many lost people and some Christians, his speech seems to contain brilliant religious counsel.

4:7 - Eliphaz states the theme around which the comforters will make most of their speeches. It is the idea of material retributive justice - if you are healthy, wealthy, and wise it means that God has blessed you because you are righteous, but if you are suffering or in poverty, you are being punished for sin (see 4:7-8).

4:12 - The vision of Eliphaz.

4:17 - "Can a man be declared righteous by God?"

5:1 - Eliphaz appeals to Job to ask for an intercessor (mediator).

ARBITER (9:33)

WITNESS (16:19)

REDEEMER (19:25)

In a masterful mixture of truth and error Eliphaz suggests that if the wicked prosper it will be for only a short time. That sounds good and the Pharisees would have agreed, regardless of evidence to the contrary. There are individuals, and families who have prospered for generations while engaged in questionable activities. Some brewers and distillers invest millions in charity, but their product has cost society billions, broken countless lives, destroyed homes and fueled all sorts of crime. Yet they prosper.

5:8 - Eliphaz resorts to the "If I were you approach."

NOTE: When I first wrote those words, I was walking around on strong, healthy feet and had never

had a serious health problem. Little did I realize what I would be going through within a few years. I went to a foot specialist with what I later learned later was a pinched nerve. Within months of that time medical errors had all but wiped out my feet. I would sit on a bar stool to preach for 25 years and make hospital calls in a wheel chair for twenty years. You want to know one of the most frustrating thing I had to deal with during all that time? It was the people who asked, “What happened to you?” Then I would go through the explanation, knowing that before I got half way through it they had already stopped listening and started their “If I were you” response - “If I were you I would sue those doctors.” “If I were you I would have done thus and so.” Some of their suggestions were so simple that I could not help but wonder if they thought I was too stupid to think of it! For example, “You ought to get out and walk around the block - oh, you can’t, can you?”

5:17 - Eliphaz believes that if Job repents all his possessions will be returned to him.

5:26 - The vigor of an aged man was thought to indicate his righteousness.

5:27 - Eliphaz boasts of his wisdom, the authority of his counsel: “Behold this, we have investigated it, thus it is; Hear it, and know for yourself.” What arrogance, but I doubt that he thought of it as such.

ANDREW BLACKWOOD LISTS THE PRINCIPLE ARGUMENTS OF THE COMFORTERS:

1. The righteous are blessed
2. God is transcendent
3. Man is unworthy of divine love
4. Evil is punished (here and now is implied)
5. Sorrow closely connected with sin
6. Suffering has disciplinary value
7. God will forgive the one who repents.

There is a lot of truth in all of this, but their application left a lot to be desired.

1b. JOB’S FIRST REPLY TO ELIPHAZ, CHS. 6-7.

Job was willing to listen - or maybe we should say he was forced to listen to his friends - but in his reply he does not always deal with the previous speech. Suffering or grief will do that to you. Sometimes he simply dismisses the speech and goes back to the basic issue. Too many people get side tracked and never go far enough to find an answer.

6:1ff - Job defends his right to present his case to God (even to complain).

6:2-4 - He implies that God has been unfair. Job seems to imply that his friend’s own case and his prosperity have made him incapable of real sympathy for one who is suffering.

6:6 - Job has lost his desire to live.

6:8-13 - Job repeats his death wish. However, at no time does he contemplate suicide. Only God has the right to end life. Still, Job sees death as his only way out. He seems to be saying, "I had rather be dead than in my present condition, but I will maintain my integrity no matter what happens."

6:14ff - Job expresses how deeply he has been hurt by his friends' unkindness. He is not moved by their arguments.

6:20f - Job's friends came to comfort but stayed to confound and torment.

6:22 - In all his suffering Job never asks his friends for anything. He has lost everything but does not expect anyone else to replace his losses. He is looking to God. To whom do people look today? To God or government (tax payers)?

6:24 - Job is still willing to be taught - but so far Eliphaz has not taught him anything.

"Adversity usually makes the undisciplined person bitter, hostile, aggressive, and antagonistic toward his environment. On the other hand, adversity makes the self-disciplined and whole person search deeper for the meaning which lies at the root of suffering" (B. R. Faulkner). Thus far Job has found no answer but he is still seeking - and enduring.

7:1 - Job continues to grieve over his circumstances and the trials of life, and he continues his complaints against the Lord.

7:7 - 20 - Job seems to turn his attention from Eliphaz to address God as he continues in these verses. In this passage he examines the possibility of life after death. What we have to remember here is that Job had never seen a Bible. He had never read the words of Christ in red. He had never held a copy of the Book of Revelation. As a matter of fact, this may well be the earliest Scripture ever written! Yet, he believes there is something beyond death. How could he know that? God instructed Noah and Noah instructed his sons, who in turn instructed their children and grandchildren. And while only a few people remained faithful to the Lord, His word was never lost. Some have claimed that Moses based the Law on the Code of Hammurabi. They never stop to consider the likelihood that the Code of Hammurabi was based on the teachings handed down from Noah following the Flood, even if the oral law had been diluted by the time Hammurabi codified his system of law and ethics.

Some writers have referred to this as one of the most amazing prayers ever recorded. It begins on a plaintive note, rises to a bellow of pure rage, then fades into a whisper. This is desperation praying.

7:20 - Job uses the word sin for the first time in the Book: "Have I sinned? What have I done to Thee, O watcher of men? Why hast Thou set me as Thy target, So that I am a burden to myself?" What effect does sin have on man? What effect does man's sin have on God?

2a. BILDAD'S FIRST SPEECH, CH. 8.

8:11-2 - Bildad is more critical than Eliphaz in his first speech, possibly because it was his nature, but possibly because he felt that Eliphaz had failed and he needed to apply more pressure on Job. He accuses Job of making windy speeches. He hints at Job's guilt and implies that his children had been slain because of their guilt. His was a reward/punishment philosophy of religion. He appeals to traditional wisdom to prove his point. He was well versed in the wisdom of the world, and his theology, though flawed, was simple, and had an appeal to those who are religious but without a true knowledge of the holiness of God.

Bildad "plunges into a biting condemnation that, for sheer rudeness, would be difficult to excel. First he calls Job a windbag. Then he twists the knife in Job's wound by announcing that his children were killed as punishment for their sins" (Blackwood).

Any facts that do not agree with Bildad's theology are disregarded and if any fact is missing he will supply. He had good intentions but he was a miserable comforter. Bildad does not concern himself as much as Eliphaz with what Job may have done to cause his suffering. He is more interested in what he ought to do now to get relief from the suffering - only trust the Lord and everything will be all right! Can those who hold this view not see that many who have suffered have been people of deep faith? For example, there is Joni Erickson Tada, who earnestly desires to go to Heaven where she can dance on streets of gold, but every day she remains on earth blesses countless others.

2b. JOB'S FIRST RESPONSE TO BILDAD, CHS. 9-10.

Job ostensibly is answering Bildad but seems to respond more to the comments of Eliphaz (the finite cannot understand the infinite). One writer says, "Job, sensing his helplessness, cries for an arbiter who can intercede with God for him. In the valley of the shadow, Job discovers the need for Christ" (Blackwood).

9:1-2a - Job dismisses Bildad impatiently if not contemptuously: "In truth I know that this is so..." In essence, he is saying, "Yes, what you are saying is true - as far as it goes."

9:2 - Job immediately turns from Bildad's argument to respond to Eliphaz' claim in 4:17 that God is just and man is not: "But how can a man be in the right before God?" The KJV has "just" with God. The word translated "just" was a word used to designate an innocent party in a lawsuit. The idea of a lawsuit between God and man is beginning to dominate Job's thoughts at this point. He feels that he is not getting justice at this point.

Psychologists tell us that it is natural for man to question God, and even to curse God when they he going through a prolonged period of suffering, or when some catastrophe befalls him. I was thirty-six years old when I went to a "foot specialist" with what I would learn years later was a pinched nerve between two metatarsal joints in my left foot. After seeing a series of doctors who had not specialized in the joints of the feet, I was referred to Dr. Edwin Hemnes in Clarksdale, Mississippi, an orthopaedist who specialized in the bones of the feet. He helped immensely before having a heart attack and having to give up his practice. It was two more years before friends Andy and Jan Mercer

persuaded me to see Dr. Henry McDonald at the Fort Worth Bone and Joint Clinic. With some stretching exercise his therapist gave me I began to make progress.

I prayed fervently for healing. I prayed for relief from pain and begged the Lord to give me relief from the intense burning in my feet. I suffered from pain, grieved over the inability to do things with my sons I had previously done, and prayed daily that the Lord would lift me up, let me stand and walk so that I could do the work to which He had called me. In all this, I never became angry with God. It never occurred to me to curse God. He was my hope. I sought medical help, but understood that the healing process was in His hands. Was I somehow superior to Job? Or more righteous than he? Of course not! But I had read Job, and I had read Romans 8:28. I had a lot of advantages Job never had - plus the fact that I had not lost all my children and I had a wife of deep faith and keen spiritual insight.

You and I should thank God for the experience of Job, and for the fact that the Holy Spirit inspired the writing of this account, and that He has miraculously preserved it. Furthermore, He is with us to illuminate our hearts so that we may understand the message and make an application of it in our own lives.

9:3-10 - Job acknowledges God's omnipotence and declares that it is impossible to contend with Him. However, he continues to do just that - to contend with God. He wanted to question God but knew that it is impossible to put Him on the witness stand.

9:11-16 - Job realizes that his only hope was to fall on the mercy of the court.

9:17-24 - There are several low-water marks in Job's experience, but here in the ninth chapter is probably the lowest point in his spiritual pilgrimage (of course one tends to feel that way at various points). Surely, here he remembers his wife's counsel - curse God and die.

In despair he declares that he will not find justice from God. Here, a righteous man shocks us with blasphemous words. But then we should not be shocked. I had rather elect an official hypocrite and cast verbal stones at him than to admit that I might have any hypocrisy in me - and we all do, or at least there is the temptation to be hypocritical. I know too much theology to ever be tempted to make blasphemous statements about God, right? Francis Shaeffer stressed that we should never be surprised at what fallen man will do. If you have never surprised yourself with your own sinfulness, you are far superior to Paul!

Job states some sound sociological ideas in this chapter but in verse 23 he states some bad theology: "If the scourge kills suddenly, He mocks the despair of the innocent." That is not the God of the New Testament. That is not even the God of Psalms. But Job had never read either the NT or Psalms. This, however, is the cry of a tormented soul and does not reflect his final conclusion - a conclusion, by the way, which has special significance to us today.

9:30-35 - **Job again stresses the need for a mediator.** He cannot cleanse himself (vs. 30). If he goes to court he needs a mediator, but has not assurance there will be one: "Nor is there any mediator

between us, Who may lay his hand on us both.” “Job clearly recognizes that there is a difference between the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man, which the latter cannot bridge. Consequently, Job longs for a mediator” [Believer’s Study Bible Notes - BSB].

10:1ff - Once again Job turns to God in prayer - this one is a sort of lamentation. The suffering patriarch is both emotionally and physically exhausted. He questions God’s motives. Despair is piled upon despair as Job accuses God of being unfair. He cries, “Your hands have made me and fashioned me, An intricate unity; Yet You would destroy me” (10:8, NKJV). Job had never read Psalm 139.

10:20 -21 - Job once again ponders death and wonders what lies beyond: “Are not my days few? Cease! Leave me alone, that I may take a little comfort, Before I go to the place from which I shall not return, To the land of darkness and the shadow of death...”

3a. ZOPHAR’S FIRST SPEECH, CHAPTER 11.

After listening to Job’s response to Eliphaz and Bildad, and having listened to Job declare his innocence, Zophar was apparently convinced there was no reason to be tactful. Blackwood writes, “Where Bildad scourged with a whip, Zophar uses scorpions.” His attitude is that it is impossible for man to understand God and the effort would only bring added frustration. It is the old, “it must be God’s will” approach. God is sovereign, but He permits man to make decisions and to face the consequences of those decisions.

11:5 - “Oh, that God would speak...” Zophar was absolutely sure he knew what God would say if He did speak, and he was also absolutely sure he could speak for God. I seem to remember some people like that! When God does speak (38:1-42:6), Job’s problems were solved, his questions were answered, and the issues were put into perspective - but He did not say exactly what Zophar thought he would say.

11:6 - There are two thoughts expressed here:

- 1) God’s wisdom is beyond human comprehension.
- 2) Job deserved greater punishment (according to Zophar).

11:13 - Zophar calls on Job to repent. We can only imagine what torment this comforter brought to Job. His frustration was almost more than he could bear without the accusations and demands of his friends.

3b. JOB’S FIRST RESPONSE TO ZOPHAR, CHAPTERS 12-14.

12:2 - Job cuts Zophar down with biting humor: “Wisdom shall die with you!”

12:3 - Job was aware of the proverbs and wise saying his friends were throwing at him, and he could quote them himself - but they did not help him now. The wisdom of the world may help in normal

situations, but there are times when the wisdom of the world falls far short of solutions or relief.

12:6 - AN OBSERVATION: Job refutes what all three comforters have been saying. They claim that the wicked are always made to suffer for their sins in this world. Job points out that while we may think this is true, neither experience nor observation will support their claim. Thieves and godless men often live long lives in luxury and comfort, many of them living to an advanced age.

12:12-20 - Here again, Job tells his friends that the world shows God's power, but he still insists that his cry for justice has gone unheard.

CHAPTER 13. Job forsakes the defensive position and goes on the offensive against these friends who came to comfort but stayed to torment him. His friends had based their argument on a false premise, and when one bases his position on a false premise he will always reach a false conclusion.

Since this was the best argument the wisdom of the world had to offer in Job's day, we should be especially thankful that the Lord permitted His servant to go through all the suffering to which he was subjected so that we might learn something about God's dealing with His people during the trials of life. Nearly two thousand years later the Pharisees were still regurgitating the same arguments made by Job's friends. Sadly, many do not seem to be able to get beyond that point today.

13:1-10 - Someone has described Job's attitude in this section one of "magnificent inconsistency." He denies that God has dealt with him justly, but then acknowledges God's justice to his comforters. In reality, his heart is still crying out to God. There may be times when you cannot figure your way out of a situation and all you know to do is to continue to cry out to the Lord.

13:13-15 - His friends have continued to accuse Job of sin and he continues to deny it and to maintain his integrity.

13:16a - Paul quotes this statement while he was still in prison awaiting the decision of the court - "Because I know this will lead to my deliverance through your prayers and help from the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (HCSB). Like Paul, Job looked to God as his only hope.

13:20-28 - In this section it seems that Job shares at least some of his comforters' theology. He wonders if his suffering is the result of some sin, but cannot determine what that sin might have been.

CHAPTER 14. In verse 1, Job declares that man's days are full of trouble.

14:2-12 - Job wrestles with the matter of man's mortality. Will an infinite God deal with finite man? In verses 7-12, Job deals with that which lies beyond death. First of all he expresses doubt. Remember, he has never seen a Bible, has never read that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life, and has never been indwelt by the Holy Spirit as NT saints have. He sees hope for a tree that has been cut down, but what about a man. In verse 12, he declares that there is no life after death. However, God is not through with His servant, and Job will wrestle with the problem until he arrives at a better

answer.

14:13-22 - A VITAL QUESTION: "If a man die shall he live again?" Job is facing some basic question his friends have not addressed at this point. But, having seen a ray of light - just a brief flash - the patriarch lapses back into the shadows of doubt once again. Thankfully, the Book of Job does not end on this note of defeat. There is more and those who do not grow weary with the repetition will be rewarded as they continue.

C. THE SECOND CYCLE OF SPEECHES, CHS. 15-21.

1a. THE SECOND SPEECH OF ELIPHAZ, CH. 15.

In 15:1-6, Eliphaz attacks Job directly. Job has stubbornly maintained his innocence and his friends just as stubbornly try to persuade him to admit to some sin which has caused all his suffering. There is a great deal of repetition here and the reader may grow weary at times, but as the full story is unveiled the master plan is seen more clearly. God intended to expose the hollowness of the popular faith in material retributive justice, and no one can say He failed in this. He expressed with vivid insight and keen logic a faith that was inadequate, in Job's day, and in our day.

15:7 - 16 - Eliphaz accuses Job of pride. Unconsciously, he is talking in circles about the inevitability of sin and doom of the wicked.

15:17-35 - Eliphaz holds out no hope for Job - no mercy or grace. There is no word about repentance or God's love, only a gloomy reiteration of divine wrath against sinful man. This might remind of the "fire and brimstone" preacher who can only see the wrath of God, never His mercy.

1b. JOB'S SECOND REPLY TO ELIPHAZ (HIS FOURTH SPEECH), CHS. 16-17.

16:1-2 - "Job's Comforters" - they go to comfort, stay to torment.

A woman, criminally assaulted, savagely beaten, and viciously stabbed some forty times was in critical condition in a hospital with a police guard at the door. She asked the nurse to call me. She had heard of me because a relative was a member of the church I served as pastor. When I arrived, she asked, "Did God do this to me?" I assured her this was the work of the devil, not the Lord. She snapped, "The next person who comes through that door and tells me that this was God's will, I'm going to throw that glass at him!" You couldn't blame her!

Let us face one fact: God knows what is going to happen and can intervene in any situation as it serves His purpose. There are things that happen according to His permissive will, and things that happen according to His directive will (see the Book of Amos for more on that).

16:4-5 - "If I were the comforter and you were in my condition...?" If he were the comforter and Eliphaz the sufferer Job says, "I could compose words against you, And shake my head at you." Picture Eliphaz sitting there shaking his head at Job as a sign of derision.

16:8-17 - In this description of his fate, Job seems to suspect Satan's part in his dilemma (11f). In this passage Job in despair wrongly accuses God of:

- (1) mauling him as would a beast (v. 9)
- (2) turning him over to wicked men (v. 11)
- (3) using him as would an archer for target practice (vv. 12-13)
- (4) attacking him as would a warrior (v. 14).

In verse 11, he claims that God has turned him over to ungodly people who then turned him over to the wicked. Does he have Satan in mind here? Regardless of what Job understood about Satan, he was definitely involved!

16:18 - Job cries, "O earth, do not cover my blood, And let there be no resting place for my cry." He has already cried out that he saw death as the only escape from his suffering, but here he cries for vindication - as did Abel's blood (Gen. 4:10).

16:19- 20 - Job still clings to the hope that he has a witness (Mediator) in Heaven. "My friends are my scoffers; My eye weeps to God." Even though he felt self-pity and defeat, he is not giving up. Even though his friends scoff, he still looks to Heaven for a Witness (Advocate) Who will plead his case.

16:21 - Job cries, "O that a man might plead with God As a man with his neighbor!" In desperation, he cries that he cannot plead directly with God as he would a neighbor. We cannot stress too strongly the fact that Job had never read the Book of Psalms, Isaiah or Jeremiah, or any of the New Testament. He had never heard Jesus say, "I will be with you always, even unto the end of the earth."

17:1-2 - Job is facing the reality of death, and does not seem to be bothered by that as much as he is by the scoffers. Some have suggested that at this point Job is no longer fighting for survival, but for recognition in Heaven that he is righteous. It would be interesting to know how many believers alive today can appreciate this attitude - "I am not afraid to die, I just want my lie to mean something."

17:3-5 - Job again goes to God in prayer, this time asking God to post his bond. His friends have become scoffers, so he turns to the only One Who might understand and help.

17:6-16 - Despair is again seen in the cry, "But He has made me a byword of the people, And I am one at whom men spit." He has become a byword among the people and they pass by and spit on him. Once highly respected, he is not held in derision, the object of cruel jokes and vile behavior. The word Sheol (vv. 13, 16) is used 65 times in the OT. Sheol may refer to the grave, where the body is placed at death (Num. 16:30, 33; Ps. 16:10), or it may also refer to the place of departed spirits - speaking of both the righteous (as here) and the wicked (Prov. 9:18).

2a. BILDAD'S SECOND SPEECH, CH. 18.

18:1:f - Bildad goes for the jugular as his attack on Job intensifies. Rather than a friend who has come to comfort, he is now a religious zealot who is determined to bring Job to his knees. He demands, "Why are we regarded as beasts, As stupid in your eyes?" (18:3).

18:11 - Bildad has made it clear that he thinks Job is wicked (1-10). Read his vivid description of the fate of sinners.

The more stubbornly Job maintains his innocence, the less tolerant his friends become. It would seem that the validity of their whole philosophy depends upon their being able to convince Job of his guilt. If that seems strange, think of the intensity of the hatred of the Muslims in the Middle East for the Jews. What is the basis for that? Is it racial? Many of the Muslims are Semitic! The source of the conflict is religious. The existence of Israel as a state makes a lie of Islam and the only way many see to vindicate their religion is to destroy Israel. Religion has spawned hatred and wars down through the centuries, and Job's friends are now attacking him with religious fervor. Religion, by the way, is man's quest for God - his effort to appease or gain the favor of a god. Christianity is not a religion, it is a relationship! Jesus came to seek and save the lost. God seeks us before we have any concept of our need for Him.

2b. JOB'S SECOND REPLY TO BILDAD, CH. 19.

19:1 - Job's response is now more heated as he responds to the attack of Bildad. In frustration, he cries, "How long will you torment me?"

19:3 - "These ten times you have insulted me, You are not ashamed to wrong me." We do not have to look for ten insults in Bildad's last speech. Ten here is used in the sense of "many".

19:5 - "If indeed you vaunt yourselves against me" means that they were building up a high opinion of themselves by tearing Job down.

19:6-12 - Job again turns from his visitors to accuse God: "Know then that God has wronged me, And has closed His net around me. Behold, I cry, 'Violence!' but I get no answer; I shout for help, but there is no justice" (vv. 6-7). Job makes God the culprit in what he considers an injustice.

19:13- 22 - Job feels forsaken by his friends and abandoned by God:

"All my associates abhor me, And those I love have turned against me. My bone clings to my skin and my flesh, And I have escaped only by the skin of my teeth. Pity me, pity me, O you my friends, For the hand of God has struck me. Why do you persecute me as God does, And are not satisfied with my flesh?" (19-22) .

19:23 - Job calls upon his posterity to examine his cause. He declares, "Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book!" Little did he realize that his words would be

recorded in a book, a book that would bear his name - and what a book it is!

19:25-26 - Suddenly, amidst all the dark shadows and doubts a ray of light breaks through. Mark this down a high water mark in the Book of Job! He declares, “And as for me, **I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth.** Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God.”

The word “know” here means to know by experience. “Redeemer” refers to the next of kin who would act as an avenger in the event that an individual was murdered, or pay the ransom for a kinsman who had been sold into slavery. He might also be called upon to assume the responsibilities of one who had died (as in the case of Boaz).

Here, Job is looking for a Vindicator who is more than human, one who will be living after Job is gone, one who would usher him into the presence of God and declare him righteous. His Messianic understand was limited, but he was very much aware of his need for a Mediator. When Job declared, “I shall see God,” he had never read the NT. He had never read the words of Jesus in red! This is amazing. If this was the first book of the Bible to have been written, it is even more amazing that Job had such hope.

3a. ZOPHAR’S SECOND SPEECH, CH. 20.

20:1-3 - Job’s last speech caught Zophar off guard for a moment, but he quickly recovered to begin a fresh assault with the same old charges.

20:4-11 - Zophar announces that the prosperity of the wicked will be very brief. He points to Job’s suffering as proof of his sin.

From time to time someone will say, “Crime does not pay.” Some criminals are arrested and made to pay, others continue to commit crimes and rake in the money. We have to be careful when making a blanket statement about people and about behavior. What we have to remember is that God is sovereign and He will deal with each person as He wills.

There are others who are not criminals, but whose values are ungodly. Some of those prosper here on earth, but some do not. Ann Counter wrote in a column released August 20, 2003, that billionaire Warren Buffett has been a strong advocate of abortion. That is an ungodly position, yet he is one of the richest men in the world, reportedly worth over thirty-five billion dollars. However, he still has an appointment at the judgment bar of God!

20:12-17 - That which tastes sweet will become poison to the wicked.

20:18-29 - Zophar declares that he wicked will never escape the penalty for their sins. His speech is moving and powerful; religious but faulty.

3b. JOB'S SECOND RESPONSE TO ZOPHAR, CH. 21.

Job makes a significant contribution to theology and philosophy in this speech: material retributive justice simply will not hold up in the end. It sounds good to some people but it is bad theology.

21:2-3 - Job demands the attention of his friends: "Listen carefully to my speech, And let this be your way of consolation. Bear with me that I may speak; Then after I have spoken, you may mock."

21:7-15 - The wicked often live a life of ease, comfort, and luxury. They often enjoy the life promised by certain tel-evangelists - they are healthy, wealthy, and wise. Many also live a long life. All evil men do not suffer in this world. This brings us to one of the basic issues of this book: Why does God permit wicked people to prosper while righteous people often suffer? I have an answer which I could not have used when I first prepared this study before teaching the Book of Job in a number of churches. In the computer age we understand the term, "User Friendly." Well, the world is user friendly to those who are of the world - Satan will see to it that enough evil people prosper in this world to attract more and more people to their lifestyle. At times we hear one of those singers whose music glorifies immorality, substance abuse, and all sorts of evil things tell us that they got their start singing in a church choir. How many people are there in America who are willing to compromise everything they have ever been taught at home or in the church for the glory of Hollywood? But for every person who becomes a star, how many end up broken and in despair?

21:16-33 - How often do the wicked pay for their sins? Job asks his friends to look for some actual cases. We can ask the same thing today. Have you looked at the Kennedys lately? And what about former president Bill Clinton, or Senator Hillary Clinton? Can you imagine either of them being elected to public office when America truly was a Christian nation. Could you imagine what the Founding Fathers would have said if someone had told them that profane and immoral people would be elected to the highest offices in the land?

21:34 - Job nails his comforters: "How then will you vainly comfort me, For your answers remain full of falsehood?"

D. THE THIRD CYCLE OF SPEECHES, CHAPTERS 22-27.

1a. ELIPHAZ MAKES HIS THIRD SPEECH, CH. 22.

NOTE: In the third cycle of speeches Zophar does not speak and Bildad cuts his speech short. Job seems more restrained in this beautiful poetic section. The beauty and poetic quality of the Book of Job has never been surpassed, not by the ancient Greek and Roman writers, the Elizabethan poets, nor by modern writers. Is it not interesting that Job is not studied as Shakespeare?

22:2-20 - Eliphaz goes immediately to the attack with cold, cruel, academic, remorseless logic. If Job is stubborn, Eliphaz is even more so. He now even names sins for Job.

22:13-18 - Blackwood points out that Eliphaz uses some dirty tricks in “misquoting” what Job has said in chapter 21. 22:17-18 is an almost direct quote of 21:14-16. In chapter 21, Job spoke bitterly about the godless man who prospers. Here Eliphaz identifies Job with them and seems to glory in his conviction that they will be destroyed. He refers to God’s transcendence but his view is inadequate (vv12-20).

22:21-20 - Eliphaz makes some good points about repentance but he is still trying to get Job to repent of sins he has not committed. Note his advice:

- 1) “Make peace with God” (vs 21).
- 2) “You must humbly return to God” (23-24).

1b. JOB’S THIRD RESPONSE TO ELIPHAZ, CHS. 23-24.

23:1-9 - In desperation (and in), Job cries out, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him, That I might come to His seat! I would present my case before Him And fill my mouth with arguments. I would learn the words which He would answer, And perceive what He would say to me” (3-5). In verse 8 he says, “Behold, I go forward but He is not there, And backward, but I cannot perceive Him.”

Job cannot find God; nevertheless, he is confident that God knows about him. He has remained faithful and commits himself to God despite his great trials and lack of understanding. He reaffirms the character of God: (1) His reasonableness and justice (v. 7); (2) His uniqueness and unchangeableness (v. 13); and (3) His awesomeness (vv. 16, 17) [BSB].

Job’s “half-prayer” in this passage is not a prayer of repentance or praise, but a complaint. He claims he searches for God and God flees from him. Job overlooks the fact that God always takes the initiative in our relationship with Him.

23:10-17 - Job continues to proclaim his innocence: “But He knows the way I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (v. 10). The last part of this verse does not refer to the refining effect of suffering, but to his innocence. “When the ‘Assayer’ tries him, He will find not secret dross cleverly concealed from men (as his friends charged), but gold” [RSB].

24:1-12 - Job turns from his own suffering to consider suffering in general. Why does God permit a righteous man to suffer? Parenthetically, one might respond to that question by saying He doesn’t because there aren’t any! (There is none righteous, no not one). However, there are children of God who have been clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ who do suffer in this world. Why does God permit them to suffer? Job sees the problem more clearly than his friends but he still does not have the answer. In 1-12, he describes the plight of those who suffer, with attention given in 5-8 and 10-11 to the poverty stricken.

24:13-17 - Job turns from the wicked who persecute the poor to those who rebel against the light. Three kinds of sinners are mentioned who work under cover of darkness: (1) thieves, (2) murderers, and (3) adulterers. Since some of these types of sins are committed in the light, it seems that the thought goes beyond the evening time. Darkness symbolizes the realm in which ungodly people operate. In contrast, God is the eternal Light; He is eternally the Light.

24:18-25 - Divine justice is certain. Job claims he has been denied justice, yet he continues to call on the Lord. He knows the wicked will be destroyed. Delayed justice is implied. Job, however, is wrong when he assumes that God does not care.

2a. BILDAD'S THIRD SPEECH, CH. 25.

Bildad was shocked by Job's words but he could not refute them. Often wicked do prosper while the righteous have accidents, contract cancer, lose sons and daughters, and suffer business failures. Just as Job is wrong when he claims that God does not care when the wicked sin, Bildad is wrong when in assuming that only evil men die young, lose loved ones, and suffer from diseases. He begins with a false premise and reaches a false conclusion.

25:1-5 - Bildad is right when he claims that God is omnipotent (all powerful), but he shows his misunderstanding of God when he asks, "How then can a man be just with God?" (Vs. 4).

25:6 - Man is not worthy of God's care, but he is worth enough for God to care. Man is not worthy, but neither is he worthless.

2b. JOB'S THIRD RESPONSE TO BILDAD, CHS 26-27.

26:1-4 - Job responds with biting sarcasm.

"What a help you are to the weak!" (v. 2) - Job is fed up with Bildad and his response is now more pointed and personal.

"What counsel you have given to one without wisdom!" (Vs 3). Job is saying that he has never had an original thought in his head!

26:5-14 - Job goes on to acknowledge the greatness and the sovereignty of God. This part of this speech deals with the infinite majesty of the Almighty. To Andrew Blackwood, this is the most beautiful section of the book. He adds, "nature with all its glory, beauty, and mystery, is but the whispering echo of God's voice. It does not reveal the mind of God. Only God can do that. But the man who is caught up in the grip of nature - and a crushing grip it is - can, by faith, know the Creator." Though the man or woman of faith does not understand all this, he/she can still trust.

CHAPTER 27. Job's three friends have had their say (Eliphaz and Bildad have spoken in all three cycles of speeches, and Zophar in the first two rounds). They have had their say and the speeches are

drawing to a close. Without realizing it, Job has, with passionate sincerity, exposed the barrier between himself and his Creator. That barrier was not placed there by God but by Job. What was that barrier? It was PRIDE! And it deserves the CAPS. Job has tried every way to make a case for his innocence, and at times one can detect pride in his former state. However, I do not want to overdo the charge at this point, as some writers seem to do. When I accuse Job of pride I am very much aware of God's assessment of Job's character, faith, and devotion: "He was a man of perfect integrity, who feared God and turned away from evil" (Job 1:1, HCSB). This is high praise for a godly man in whom God is well pleased - not as He was compared with His own Son, but well pleased when considered with other human beings.

27:1 - Job continues his final response to his friends:

- 1) He is getting back to the basic problem.
- 2) He continues a rather lengthy discourse.

27:2 - "As God lives" - Job takes an oath to seal his testimony - "Who has taken away my right, And the Almighty, who has embittered my soul" - Job does not know why, but he is convinced that the Almighty is behind his suffering. A long-time servant of our Lord lamented to me, "I am having a problem with my faith. I served the Lord for fifty years, and now (as his health continually deteriorates) I can't find Anyone behind me" (he knew better, but felt neglected). Job was neither the first, nor the last to question God's involvement in his suffering, with an implication that He has not been fair.

NOTE: Believers may pray and receive an blessing, praise the Lord, and then move on with their life and soon forget about it. The person who prays for help, deliverance, or some other blessing and either sees no answer, or sees his situation grow worse must make some decisions. He may:

- 1) stop praying
- 2) become angry with God
- 3) continue to call on the Lord

If he chooses the latter, he has a significant advantage over Job. He has the entire Bible and he has the Holy Spirit, the divine Author, to guide him as he seeks answers. If he will remain faithful and continue to call on the Lord (as the three Hebrew Children who were facing the fiery furnace), they stand to experience lessons they will never forget.

I speak from experience. I had been very strong physically when I was a young person and young adult. I did pushups with one hand and knee bends one leg at a time. I walked a mile and a quarter in all kinds of weather to catch the school bus and the last two days I missed was when I was in the eighty grade. I walked the cotton fields of Quitman County ever summer for five years working for the USDA. I was the last person I expected to have serious foot trouble, but it happened. I went to a foot specialist my secretary recommended when a pain in my left foot began continued for a couple of weeks. By the time a series of doctors missed the diagnosis and the prescription they had all but

wiped me out, and it was by the grace of God that I was able to continue in the ministry. An orthopedist who specialized in the bones of the feet assured me that a series of doctors had missed the diagnosis and their prescription for appliances were wrong and they were applied incorrectly. For twenty-five years I sat on a bar stool to preach and my sons often pushed me in a wheel chair when I made hospital calls.

When this first happened I was pastor of a very strong church in Texas and I had visions of church growth and expansion that really excited me. I loved preaching to a packed house, and I loved seeing people walking the aisles. But suddenly, I was in severe pain, and the ever present burning in the bottom of my feet was maddening. I would go to bed at night and pray as fervently as I knew how - and get up the next morning only to discover that my feet were worse than the day before. That happened over and over.

Over the years, I prayed for the Lord to “lift me up and let me stand and walk” that I might serve Him more effectively. I discovered what it mean to walk with the Lord, trusting Him to get me through each day, each worship service, each hospital call, each funeral, each wedding. I discovered over and over that when I had to attempt what seemed the impossible, the Lord gave me the strength for that task. When I tried to walk the same distance of stand the same length of time the next day I would get a set back that required weeks to overcome.

When John left for Mississippi College, I wondered how I would do my work - a deacon asked me how I would be able to function without John. Well, I had Mark coming on, but the Lord gave me a giant step toward recovery at that time, just when I needed it most. In time, another specialist put me on an active therapy program and after a few months I was walking better and in time I began standing for funeral and weddings.

Then, in the Spring of 2001, I noticed that I was walking more in the yard (checking on my daylilies and other plants), and walking with fewer problems when I made hospital calls. Then one morning I stood to preach at the morning worship service. The next Sunday I stood for both services and I have never sat on a barstool to preach since that time. I have walked with the Lord each day, depending on Him for the strength, recovery, and relief from pain. I am amazed at what I learned because of the way the Lord ministered to me. If He had healed me the first time I asked Him I might well have forgotten the problem and the Lord’s healing. I thank the Lord for doing it His way.

There is one other point I need to make. I never cursed God. I was never angry with God. And I still do not understand why many psychologists insist that it is natural for one who is suffering to curse God. I disagree! That may sound like good psychology or good philosophy, but it is very poor theology. Why curse the only One who can help you?

27:3 - “For as long as life is in me, And the breath of God is in my nostrils...” Job will continue to proclaim his innocence.

27:5 - “Till I die I will not put away my integrity from me.” He began by proclaiming his innocence

and no amount of debate has changed his mind.

27:7-10 - Job sarcastically summarizes his friend's case again. Job had an open mind but his friends closed their minds completely.

III. A HYMN OF WISDOM, CHAPTER 28 (The Great Wisdom Chapter)

- A. There Is a Wisdom That Is More Elusive Than Gems in the Mine, 28:1-12.
- B. There Is a Wisdom That Is More Precious Than Gold and Rubies, 28:13-19.
- C. Only God Knows the Way of This Wisdom, 28:20-28.

This hymn is a high water mark of wisdom literature. The source of the wisdom described here is not in the proverbs of man or in man's experiences with the wisdom of the world. The wisdom of this hymn is not man's wisdom, but God's.

28:1-12 - Job felt that such a job as mining was a credit to man's ability. This may not seem like much to one who has sat in his living room and watched a blast-off from the moon on his color television, or to one who surfs the Internet on his own person computer, but the application is really the same. Many living today have witnessed the horse and buggy age, the dawning of the automotive age, propeller planes and the jet age, the rocket age, and the computer age. On January 8, 2004, Bill Gates revealed the next step in computers, entertainment, and the Internet. One remote unit will control everything, and you will see displayed on a screen at home (or away from home) whatever you are working on, or what ever entertainment you choose. What man is doing is more amazing all the time. In January, 2004, America landed a craft on Mars - and now we are enjoying high definition pictures from the surface of that distant planet. It took longer for the color pictures than the black and white ones because all that information has to travel one hundred, five million miles to get here! That is amazing - as is man's accomplishments. Yet, the source of the wisdom described in this chapter is still not found in the skill or inventions of man, but in God.

Man's technological accomplishments have been a major source of pride. That was the distinct impression I had when I witnessed the celebration when the first astronauts returned from the moon. I was shocked by the brashness with which man toasted the wisdom of man. God was left out of that celebration almost completely. Yet, the scripture teaches that the wisdom of man is foolishness with God. In 28:12, Job asks, "But where can wisdom be found?" The Lord has the answer.

28:13-28 - Job has asked, in verse 12, "But where can wisdom be found?" In verse 13, we he says, "Man does not know its value, Nor is it found in the land of the living." The wisdom man needs to meet the problems of life is not found in wealth or precious stones. It is not in the sea or on land. Man cannot find it through manipulation of stocks and bonds. What is the answer?

29:20-28 - The answer: THE FEAR OF THE LORD. Human wisdom will never discern this; the wisdom of the world disdains the wisdom the godly person professes. True wisdom is God's gift to man. What kind of wisdom is this? It is the wisdom to live in righteousness and to deal with the problems he must deal with in this life. In Job's case, it is the wisdom to deal with his suffering, losses, and grief.

“Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; And to depart from evil is understanding” (28:28; 3:13; 9:10; 15:33;).

IV. JOB'S FINAL SUMMARY, CHS. 29-31.

A. Job Recalls Happier Days, Ch. 29 (monologue).

29:1-8 - The basis for Job's prior happiness:

- 1) The friendship and love of God.
- 2) The love and respect of family.
- 3) The respect of his fellow man.

29:12-17 - Job maintained a right relationship with God and man. In verses 15-16, one sees why God called him righteous: *“I was eyes to the blind, And feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy, And I investigated the case which I did not know.”* There is no reason to assume that this was an expression of pride, though some do. He was a man of sincere compassion.

29:18-19 - He had been virtuous and expected virtue to be rewarded.

29:20-25 - Job was a leader of men, the greatest man in the east.

B. Job Turns Again to His Present Troubles, Ch. 30.

30:1-10 - He was once respected but now the scum of the earth spit on him. He did not complain about his loss of wealth but it broke his heart when his friends turned against him.

30:15-31 - Job looks toward heaven and for the last time accuses God of injustice. In vs. 21, he calls God cruel: *“Thou hast become cruel to me; With the might of Thy hand Thou dost persecute me.”* The TEV has, *“You are persecuting me with all your power.”*

30:25ff - Job feels that since he had wept with those who were grieved and helped the needy, his friends should have stood by him in his time of suffering. In verses 30-31, the patriarch has suffered and now he mourns and faces death.

C. Job's Oath of Innocence, Ch. 31.

This is Job's last speech in the monologue section - between the dialogue section and the Elihu speeches. Chapter 31 reflects a standard of conduct unexcelled in ancient times. Compare this section with the Sermon on the Mount, which sets forth the highest system of ethics the world has ever known - one to which the world could never aspire. However, it is noteworthy that the only two people who have ever been taken up to heaven without having to die physically (Enoch and Elijah) lived a long time before Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount.

31:1-4 - Job claimed to be innocent of sexual sins. He did not even look lustfully upon a woman (Matt. 5:27-28). He gives reasons for avoiding these sins:

- 1) Sin would cut him off from God, 31:2.
- 2) Fear of judgment.
- 3) The knowledge that God's eyes were on him.
- 4) He felt that God would punish him immediately with some disaster.

31:5-8 - Job continues to insist on his innocence.

31:9-12 - It seems strange that Job returns to sex related sins so quickly. Obviously this was a critical issue in his day, as it is today. Let us note here that the way women dressed in his day was an advantage. Designers today design clothes to make the women who buy them look "sexy", not knowing that there is beauty in modest dress that the world cannot appreciate. Lust is a problem, both for the one who is looking and for the one who dresses to encourage lust. Solomon tells us in Proverbs that there were serious temptations everywhere, be it a look, a word, or some other subtle form of temptation.

31:13-15 - Here we find one of the highest ethical revelations in all of Scripture. Job was taking the initiative in establishing a right relationship with his neighbors and his servants.

31:16-23 - The one who loves God must also love others (1 John 4). Unlike Cain, Job did consider himself to be his brother's keeper. He was especially concerned about the underprivileged. In Deuteronomy, Moses wrote what God told him to write, and one serious emphasis is upon one's responsibilities toward those in need.

31:24-28 - Worship is essential to a good relationship with God. Work, service and good relationships with neighbors are important but not enough.

31:29-34 - Generosity was especially desirable and appreciated in ancient times. There were no government programs to help the needy. The Lord expected His people to care for the elderly and those who were helpless. Hospitality was absolutely essential, and Job was sincere both in hospitality and charity. Sadly, many of us think this is the responsibility of government to take care of our own parents and grandparents. When President George W. Bush introduced a faith-based initiative in order to get churches back into the business of providing care for those in need, many people opposed it on the grounds of separation of church and state, which has been totally misrepresented in

our day. The same congress that gave us the First Amendment also gave us chaplains for the military and for congress - at taxpayers' expense.

31:35-37 - The chapter ends on a low note as Job protests again. "Job's oath of innocence is magnificent in every sense. Her in a few words have been gathered the principles of moral conduct that fill the Old Testament" (Blackwood). We might add, that this was probably the earliest book in the Bible.

V. THE ELIHU SPEECHES, CHAPTERS 32-37.

A. Introduction to Elihu, 32:1-5.

The three friends had ceased speaking, having exhausted their charges without persuading Job to confess whatever sins they were convinced had caused his suffering. Job has defended himself. And now a new counselor enters the conversation. The youthful Elihu is almost ludicrous in his brashness. He is angry with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar because they have had ample opportunity to persuade Job to repent and they had failed. He is angry with Job because he refuses to repent and his friends because they could not convince Job. One can imagine that as he listened to the speeches he was seething with anger mounting by degrees.

B. Prologue to the Elihu Speeches, 32:6-22.

1. The genuine wise man, 32:6-10.

Elihu explains that he has remained silent through all the speeches out of respect for his elders, but now he is bursting to speak. He claims he has waited for the wisdom of the aged friends to convince Job but now he thinks then can profit from his opinion. He asserts that it is the Spirit of the Lord that gives wisdom - and guess what? He claims to have it!

2. The failure of the three comforters to convince Job, 32:11-14.

Elihu charges the older men with failure and questions their wisdom. "God must answer Job", he claims - implying that he is now ready to speak for God. How presumptuous! And how presumptuous those are today who are so quick to say, "God told me to tell you thus and so." I am rather skeptical of extra-biblical "word of knowledge" claims. A TV host whose program will be viewed by people all across America (and maybe replayed again that night) may proclaim, I have a word of knowledge: someone out there has lower back pain." And we all say, "that's me!!! How did he know that?"

3. Elihu feels an urgent need to answer Job, 32:15-22.

C. Elihu's First Speech, Ch. 33.

1. A personal challenge, 1-7.

Young Elihu is not suffering from low self-esteem! He is about to set Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar AND Job straight. Sadly, arrogance has not been purged from religion, even in this enlightened age.

2. Elihu summarizes Job's charges against God, 8-11.

He represents Job's position accurately and rebukes him for charging God with injustice. He gets it right - up to a point.

3. Elihu reveals his basis theme, 12-14.

His basic theme is that God is greater than man and cannot be brought into this controversy. God is above the fray! Job and his friends are condemned for wanting God to address the issue of sin and retribution. Elihu is not a deist - he does believe God reveals His will to people.

Elihu focuses upon God's use of suffering to correct wayward believers. Job had complained that God would not answer his questions (30:20). Elihu claims that God has indeed spoken, but that Job has not heeded His messages. For example, He speaks through dreams and visions (cf. 4:12-21), through the discipline of suffering (vv. 19-22), and even through a mediating angel (vv. 23-28) [BSB].

4. God speaks through dreams, 15-18.
5. God speaks through a mediating angel, 19-30.

- 1) Man is chastised with pain and suffering, v. 19.
- 2) God speaks through a mediating angel.

The word used for mediator refers to a spokesman or interpreter and parallels the word angel or messenger. Elihu did not have a fully developed theology of the Messiah, Who would come to ransom man from sin, but he was very much aware of man's need for a mediator. He was thinking of a deliverer, and angel/mediator who would come to Job's aid. We need a mediator today - Jesus is that Mediator, the one and only Mediator between God and man!

- D. Elihu's Second Speech, Ch. 34.
 1. Summary of Job's case, 1-9.

Elihu addresses these remarks to the three comforters. He is still as brash and egotistical as ever. He reminds one a little of a modern youth attacking the establishment: "What man is like Job, Who drinks up derision like water..." (34:7). He is asking, "Have you ever seen anything like Job?"

2. God cannot do that which is evil, 10-15.

Elihu vigorously defends God's justice, even to the neglect of His grace. He asserts His sovereignty and omnipotence. In vs. 11, he claims God treats people the way they should be treated (which means Job was getting what he deserves!).

3. Elihu stresses the impartiality of divine judgment, 16-20.

Elihu gives two reasons why God is just: (1) He is omnipotent, or all powerful (34:10-20), and (2) He is omniscient, or all knowing (21-28). God is omnipotent and He is omniscient, but Elihu does not have full knowledge of God's nature, character, or purpose.

5. Elihu closes this speech with a rebuke against Job, 34:31-37.

"Men of understanding will say to me, And a wise man who hears me, Job speaks without knowledge, And his words are without wisdom. Job ought to be tried to the limit, Because he answers like wicked men" (34-36). He is accusing Job of sinning in their presence by denying that and mocking God. Obviously, to disagree with Elihu is to mock God! He may have been a little closer to the truth than Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, but he is still off course.

E. Elihu's Third Speech, 35:1-16.

This speech does not have an introduction and it is briefer than the others, but in it Elihu deals more successfully with the barriers men erect against god. He shows that Job is just one of many who seek what God can give them rather than seeking God Himself. Many people want what He has to offer but do not desire Him as Savior and Lord.

1. Elihu states Job's claim again, 1-3.
2. He responds to that claim, 4-16.

Elihu takes the position of Eliphaz - that Man's sin does not effect God. He is holy and removed from us, and our sins cannot effect Him in any way. One writer states that, "He (Elihu) does not realize that God does gain what He desires most by the goodness of man, and loses what He loves most by their evil."

In verse 13, Elihu claims that God will not hear the cry of an unrighteous man. One question is raised by that assertion: If that is the case, how does he expect God to hear Job? He says God does not hear the unrighteous and he has called Job unrighteous. But he still wants him to call on God. Elihu makes some good points and in many ways he is closer to the truth than the three friends, but he still does not understand divine justice, divine purpose, or the will of God.

F. Elihu's Fourth Speech, Chs. 6-37.

1. He announces that he has more to say, 36: 1-4.
2. He points out how he believes God uses suffering, 36:5-15.

Elihu turns to the theme of the comforters - God is righteous and all who are righteous prosper in this world. All who are ungodly will suffer. The Pharisees in Jesus' time judged men the same way. To them the best evidence of a man's righteousness was his material possessions.

Elihu also considers the instructive value in suffering: "God teaches men through suffering" (v. 15). He is not as smug about the suffering of the innocent as was Zophar.

3. An admonition to Job, 36:16-21.

Elihu charged that Job had tried to dictate to God how he should be treated. He felt that Job was trying to force God's hand or make him answer on Job's terms.

4. The glory and greatness of God, 36:22-37:13.

- 1) In 22-23, Elihu seems to anticipate the speeches of Yahweh (Jehovah).
- 2) In ch. 37, he continues to praise God's greatness and power.
- 3) "Whether for correction, or for His world, or for lovingkindness, He causes it to happen" (37:13). (He claims God uses weather (the elements) to fulfill His purpose.)

5. A final appeal, 37:14-24.

Elihu expresses shock at Job's boldness in wanting to contend with God. He prefers to trust in divine justice. This young man has brought out some very sound points in his speeches. Unfortunately, he chose to close his series of speeches with a sneer. In vs. 23 he mistakenly assumes that God is unapproachable.

Job's friends all had an opportunity to speak to Job. They had ample time and opportunity, but when they spoke they had nothing to say that would offer him comfort and strength during his days of suffering and grief. There are a lot of Job's comforters visiting sick rooms, trying to encourage one who has lost a member of his family, or one who has just learned that "the cancer has spread." Surely any Christian should want to study the book to find out what helps and what hurts. We need to be able to determine the basic pitfalls so that we can avoid them.

VI. THE YAHWEH SPEECHES, 38:1-42:6.

In his first speech, Zophar declared “How I wish God would answer you back” (11:5, TEV). Job has begged time after time for the opportunity to present his case directly to God and now he has an audience with the Almighty.

Without a doubt, the most surprising and possibly the most disappointing thing to the modern reader is the fact that when God does speak He does not answer either Job’s questions or ours about why the righteous suffer, nor does He explain why the ungodly often prosper here on earth. Furthermore, He offers no explanation or apology for not answering these questions. Why do you suppose that is? I was a part of a whole generation of Christians who were blessed by the preaching of R. G. Lee, who more than anyone since Charles Haddon Spurgeon, was called the Prince of Preachers. Any preacher who preaches one sermon over twelve hundred times an extraordinary preacher. One of my favorite quotes from Dr. Lee was, “You cannot summon God to appear before the bar of human reason.”

Smith writes, “God has no intention of being cross-examined by man. He will ask the questions, not man.” That makes sense to me. In these chapters, God does not even address the problem of Job’s suffering. Instead, He deals with the limits of Job’s knowledge and with Job’s charges about the justice of God (19:7).

For the modern Christian who suffers from afflictions and losses, there are no answers in the Book of Job - at least, there are no direct answers as to why the righteous suffer or why the unrighteous often prosper. Of course, we all know why there is suffering in the world. Francis Shaeffer addressed it so often: it goes back to the Fall. Since the Fall nothing has been “normal”! Shaeffer said that we should never be surprised at how low fallen man will stoop - and he was right. However, there are answers to some very relevant answers in this book.

In any personal relationship between God and man, God always takes the initiative. He reveals Himself to man and seeks in every way to bless him. When there is pain, suffering, grief, or fear, God does have the answer - in fact, He is the answer. He is the source of the wisdom required to cope with the trials of life. We are invited to call on God for any and every need, but one thing we are not permitted to do is to put God on the witness stand and cross-examine Him. Remember what R. G. Lee said - “You cannot summon God to appear before the bar of human reason.”

When suffering comes, a Christian might well ask, “Is my faith being tested?” He may ask if his problems have come for a disciplinary reason, or even for an instructive purpose. Some light may be shed on this if we read John 9. Instead of asking why something has happened, or crying, “Why me, Lord?”, a Christian must learn to pray, “How may I use my experience for the glory of God?”

When I learned that my mother, Claudine Sanders, had lost her voice while teaching a Sunday School lesson, I rushed to the hospital, praying for good news. It was not good news; she had a brain tumor and tests would show that it was malignant. I was wondering what I would say, but before I said anything she looked at me and said, “It is not what happens to you but what you do with it that counts.” I have often wondered if she didn’t do more for the Lord on a bed in a nursing home than I have ever done on my feet.

A. THE FIRST YAHWEH SPEECH, 38:1-40:2.

1. A divine reprimand and challenge, 38:1-3.

“Finally God breaks His silence and speaks to Job directly, employing a series of more than 70 questions to show Job his ignorance and God's greatness” [RSB].

38:1 - “Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind...” The wonder of the speech is not so much in the information God gives, but in the fact that He speaks at all! He does not answer Job's questions or defend His silence. His purpose was not to offer philosophical answers, but to resolve the spiritual problem of Job's seeming alienation from God.

38:2 - Job has been darkening counsel by words spoken without wisdom. He was probably as close to an answer as he was going to get in the first response in 1:21. The Yahweh speeches are not given to prove Job either evil or stupid. What they prove is that God's ways are not our ways, and that His ways are superior to our ways.

38:3 - In essence, the Lord says, “I made you a man, stand up and act like one. You are not a worm, you are a man, with all the glory and dignity implied in manhood. Now, see yourself in perspective. You are a part of creation and as such, you cannot possibly comprehend the whole of it. But you are a part of creation that is of immeasurable worth to Me.”

2. The creation of the earth, 38:4-7.

When the Lord asked Job, “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding” (v. 4), He was not trying to silence Job. He was drawing a conclusive distinction between finite man and an infinite God.

3. The creation of the sea, 38:8-11.

The sea is at times used to portray evil. God did not create the sea for an evil purpose, but if the presence of evil is alluded to in any way in this passage, the Lord is telling Job that the forces of evil, always present in the world, can never be totally victorious. Just as He held back the sea from covering all the land on earth, He can hold back evil so that it will not sweep over us. He can also hold back the evil one.

4. The design and operation of the universe, 38:12-38.

- 1) Can Job control the sunrise? (12-15).
- 2) Can Job comprehend God's command of the universe? (16-38).

In this, possibly the first book of the Bible to be written, God pulls back the veil and reveals much of

the mystery of the universe. Henry Morris, founder of the Institute for Creation Research, wrote a book, **THE REMARKABLE RECORD OF JOB**, in which he reveals that many of the scientific discoveries we assume were made within the past two hundred years, were actually mentioned in this remarkable book. God's people need to understand the biblical account of creation in order to better understand the Creator. If you do not appreciate the Creator, how could you fully appreciate His salvation. If you do not have Genesis 1 you do not need John 1, and without Genesis 3 you do not need John 3.

5. Consider the animals of the world, 38:39-39:12.

- 1) The lion, 38:39-40.
- 2) The mountain goat, 39:1-4.
- 3) The wild donkey, 39:5-8.
- 4) The wild buffalo, 39:9-12.

6. Give special consideration to the ostrich, 39:13-18.

This is a good text for a Mother's Day sermon. The ostrich does not have a reputation for its intelligence. It does have a reputation for irresponsibility, leaving eggs uncovered and unattended, and treats her young cruelly (v. 16) - much the way some mothers neglect or destroy their young in their pursuit of pleasure, fame, or wealth.

However, even if it appears to man that the ostrich is unconcerned about her young, God takes care of her and protects her young so that they do not become extinct. "Leaving some of her eggs uncovered (though only by day when the heat of the sand helps incubate them) and unhatched (thereby serving as food for her young). Her seeming lack of wisdom is not apart from God's plan, just as behind the trials of the godly, which seem so unreasonable to Job, lies the wise purpose of God" [RSB].

7. Consider the horse, 39:19-25.

8. Consider the hawk and the eagle, 39:26-30.

9. The Lord challenges Job personally, 40:1-2.

B. JOB'S FIRST RESPONSE TO GOD, 40:3-5.

Job is speechless and in awe of God - both in that He has spoken and in what He has said. He will no longer contend with God; he will not even answer Him. But Job's silence is not what God desires. He does not want him to stop talking, He wants him to respond to His questions. He desires not Job's silence, but Job.

C. YAHWEH'S SECOND SPEECH, 40:6-41:34.

1. God offers another challenge to Job, 40:6-14.

40:7 - “Now gird up your loins like a man; I will ask you, and you instruct Me.” Wow! God tells Job to stand up like a man; and “I will ask you” questions, and you will answer Me.

40:8 - Job has repeatedly declared his own righteousness. Here God asks him if he will continue to accuse the Lord of injustice in order to justify himself.

40:9-14 - God invites Job, in his imagination, to sit upon the divine throne and execute justice on the earth.

Job’s questions are still not answered, and it is becoming clear that the answers he seeks lie beyond human wisdom. Job is rediscovering that man is not God. Man is not put in the world just to be comfortable. Christians have seen that the greatest victories have often been won in the “valley of the shadow of death.” The focal point of Christianity is a cross. “This cross, which seems to man the ultimate denial of divine sovereignty, is the power of God unto salvation” [Blackwood]. Man needs God and God will use the man who submits himself to Him. Man’s trials and adversities can be occasions for glorifying the Lord.

2. Consider the Behemoth, 40:15-24.

3. Consider the Leviathan, 41:1-34.

When I prepared my first study of the Book of Job, I followed the thoughts of many Bible scholars in identifying the Behemoth as a hippopotamus and the leviathan as a crocodile. Commentaries gave explanations that seemed logical. Then I began reading books and other materials from Dr. Henry Morris, Dr. Dwayne Gish, and others from the Institute for Creation Research, and in time I would meet and talk with Ken Ham and read material produced by Answers in Genesis. I spent a lot of time talking with The late Dr. Jan Mercer (another creation scientist) when she and her husband Andy visited with us or when we visited with them. Dr. Mercer and I were both on the faculty of Cambridge Graduate School. These creation scientists have convinced me that the Lord is talking about dinosaurs! That’s right. Read the description. Picture this: “He bends his tail like a cedar” tree (40:17) - have you ever seen a hippopotamus’ tail?! Can you imagine catching a dinosaur with a fishhook?

God seems to be saying to Job, if you dare not face these creatures, how do you think you can contend with Me? He is not answering Job’s questions - and Job is no longer asking them.

41:11 - “Who has given to Me that I should repay him?” God is not obligated to any man, and needs no man. Man needs God. God is IMMUTABLE; He is OMNIPOTENT; He is OMNISCIENT; He is OMNIPRESENT; He is Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. HE IS!

D. JOB'S SECOND RESPONSE TO YAHWEH, 42:1-6.

1. Job confesses, 1-4.

He is not speechless this time (as in 40:3-5). "I know that Thou canst do all things, And that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted." He confesses his sin and his inadequacy. However, he does not confess the sins Eliphaz and others accused him of committing. Of these he is innocent. His sin lay in speaking of things he did not understand and in pride.

2. Job confesses that he has heard of the Lord, but now he has seen Him, 42: 5.

3. Job jumbles himself before the Lord, 42:6.

"Therefore I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes." The KJV has, "I abhor myself," which is a good translation. The word abhor means to "melt into nothingness." Any Christian who does not feel a sense of shame and awe before the Lord should go back and read this passage.

Job has no intellectual explanation for his suffering but he now knows he can trust God. A deep personal faith is made possible now that the barriers have been removed. Job is not saying, "Thy will be done" (Matt 26:42b). He has come back to the simple childlike faith he expressed in 1:21: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD."

Sadly, there have been some students of the Word who have written and taught that Job was lost at the beginning of the book and through all his trials and suffering he came to a personal faith in the Lord. I reject that for many reasons, not the least of which is God's appraisal of his faith at the beginning. Job is not coming to God for a first time here; he is turning again to the God he has known and trusted. Job no longer contends with God, even though he is still suffering. He no longer darkens counsel with words without wisdom. He places himself in God's hands and trusts Him to take care of him.

The Book of Job in its final analysis must be interpreted positively. A negatively approach may lead one to give up, or to lose the will to live. Another danger in the negative approach is that Christians will become guilty of the charges the Communists used to make against us; the charged that we use religion to control the poor and needy. They charged that religion is an opiate to dull both our senses and theirs to their needs.

Another danger is that we may be tempted to accuse God of injustice. I once met a man whose four old child ran out in front of a car and was hit and killed. He refused to go back to church because God could have saved him if He wanted to do so. God, he felt, took his child and he was defiantly accusing God of being unfair. How would you witness to this man?

III. THE EPILOGUE. 42:7-17

A. JOB'S INTERCESSION FOR HIS FRIENDS, 42:7-9.

1. Yahweh harshly rebuked the three friends for not speaking the truth, v. 7.
2. He instructs them to take a large offering and have Job offer a sacrifice for them.

Job must intercede for them before the Lord will hear them. They wanted God to speak, and now that He has spoken they are the ones who need to repent. They have caused Job a lot of unnecessary pain through their unsympathetic attacks. and their counsel has been faulty.

B. JOB'S RESTORATION, 42:10-17.

After praying for his three friends Job is restored. This passage may or may not be specifically teaching the rewards of intercessory prayer. Here it may be incidental that the restoration followed the intercession, but what Christian doubts the value of intercessory prayer, both for the one doing the praying and for the one for whom he is praying.

Job's was a double restoration. This is not recorded to teach that everyone who trusts the Lord will be rewarded material. At first glance this seems to confirm the teachings of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Some have suggested that he epilogue distracts from the story, but Smith points out three things it does: (1) It brings the story to a simple and satisfactory conclusion. (2) It demonstrates that Job was right in maintaining his innocence and showing that it is possible for a man to suffer for some reason other than punishment for his sins. (3) It also shows the possibility and even the probability of restoration.

Think what a dark world this would be if there were no hope for tomorrow. Job reveals that there is hope: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and on the earth again shall stand." The Book of Job leaves a lot of questions unanswered. Why to the righteous suffer? Why do evil people often prosper for years on this earth?

The book also answers some very pertinent questions. It reveals the source of the wisdom we need to meet the trials of life: "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." This Scripture should help each Christian relate the Word of God to his own trials.

This book does not answer all our questions. It does not tell us why the righteous suffer (as the Bible points out, however, there is none who is righteous). It does not reveal why the ungodly often prosper in this world. But it does give us a much better set of questions. A Christian shows spiritual maturity when he ceases asking, "why" and begins asking, "Where do I go from here, and how may I take advantage of my situation to glorify the Name which is above every Name?"

BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD ...JOB 1:21

APPENDIX

A Letter From Robert G. Lee

Addressed to Johnny L. Sanders

Dated March 1, 1962

While in seminary, a friend and I had written to a number of SBC pastors to ask them to share their position on the subject of Satan. One of my professors has just explained why there can be no personal devil. As I remember, W. A. Criswell responded that it was sufficient to say that he believed what the Bible had to say on the subject. I was particularly pleased to receive the following letter from R. G. Lee, whom I heard every Sunday for several years. We got home from our services in time to see Dr. Lee drop down on his knee (in his white Palm Beach suit) by the right side of the pulpit and pray before preaching. I also heard him preach “Payday Someday” in person at FBC, Senatobia, MS. I used to him at conventions and evangelism conferences and in revivals. When you read his letter you will understand why so many preachers and lay persons loved this man.

Dear Johnny,

I believe the Bible is the divinely inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God – without any taint of error, personal in application, regenerative in power, inspired in totality – the miracle Book of diversity in unity. of harmony in infinite complexity.

Therefore, I believe what it teaches about the devil, Satan, in Job 2.

I believe he was, and is, a Person – just as much as you are a person. I believe he has his wiles, his wisdom, his desires, his power, his angels, his ministers – as the Bible teaches.

I believe he is presumptuous (Job 1:6) and (Matt. 4:5-6) and proud (I Timothy 3:6) and powerful (Ephesians 2:2 and Ephesians 6:12) and wicked (I John 2:13). And malignant (Job 1:9 and Job 2:4), and subtle (Genesis 3:1 with 2 Cor. 3:11), and deceitful (II Cor. 11:4 and Ephesians 6:11), and fierce and cruel (Luke 8:29 and Luke 9:39-42 and I Peter 5:8).

I think the Devil is the one who started and keeps going the Modernist teaching and preaching and writing of our day – where some preachers and some teachers summon the Bible to appear at the bar of human reason and reduce the supernatural to

ignorance and look upon the Bible miracles as legends and myths. Read ii Thess. 2:9 and II Timothy 4:1)

I believe just what the Bible says in Jude – that the devil, Satan, will be condemned at the judgment along with the fallen angels. I believe that the doom of Satan is set forth just as Revelation 20:10 states.

I believe the temptations of Jesus were just as the Bible says – Jesus being assaulted by this fearful being who fell through pride (Isa. 14:12-14) – as even now the devil makes earth and air the scene of his tireless activity (Ephesians 2:2 and I Peter 5:8).

Just as Jesus was really the Son of God so Satan was really Satan – the Devil.

You can say this about the three temptations of Jesus:

1. The first temptation meant “SERVE yourself.”
2. The second temptation meant “Let GOD serve you.”
3. The third temptation means, “Let Me serve you.”

How glad we are that temptation never loosened a moral fiber in the being of Jesus.

I hope this will be of help to you.

Yours earnestly,

Robert G. Lee

