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**JOB:**  
**The Problem of Evil and the Wisdom of the Fear of the Lord**

Let's talk about children. What happens when you are with kids and you give them different amounts of ice cream? Or what happens when you let one kid stay up later than another? What happens when kids notice that others have something or get something that they don't?

What are kids concerned about in these situations? Why is this so? Why are they so concerned with justice? Is this a good thing?

Kids are concerned with justice and fairness. Parents are concerned with things much greater than fairness. Parents care about health. They care about things greater than little situations. They care about the character of the children.

**Parents not only care about different things, but they have a different perspective on the world and so they care about what is wise!**

I. Author, Date, Historical Setting

A. Author: unknown

B. Date: unknown

C. Historical Setting: When did Job take place? Did it really happen?

1. Ezekiel 14:14, 20

2. James 5:11

3. These verses indicate that Job was a real person. So, it is doubtful that this book is just a wisdom story as some claim.

4. Job probably lived around the time of Abraham. We think this because the culture seems similar to the patriarchal period.

II. Structure

A. Prologue (1:1-2:13)

B. Dialogues (chs. 3-27)

1. Job's Initial Speech (3)

2. Three Cycles of Dialogue (4-27)

3. Cycle I:

a. Eliphaz (4-5) and Job (6-7)

b. Bildad (8) and Job (9-10)

c. Zophar (11) and Job (12-14)

4. Cycle II:

a. Eliphaz (15) and Job (16-17)

b. Bildad (18) and Job (19)

c. Zophar (20) and Job (21)

5. Cycle III:

a. Eliphaz (22) and Job (23-24)

b. Bildad (25) and Job (26-27)

- C. Wisdom Poem: Where can wisdom be found? (ch 28)
- D. Job's speeches - chs 29-31
- E. Elihu Speeches - chs 32-37
- F. God's speeches and Job's responses, 38:1-42:6
- G. Epilogue, 42:7-17

### III. Purposes:

- A. Theodicy: A vindication of God's goodness and justice in the face of the existence of evil.
- B. Wisdom: Job changes our perspective. It moves us from looking at local limited situations to having a global perspective in proper relationship to our creator.

### IV. Walking through the Text of Job

#### A. Prologue (1:1-2:13): **Narrative**

1. Job is a wealthy man.
2. He is a righteous man, that is, he stands in right relationship to God and others.
3. The accuser or adversary comes to talk with God.
  - a. Note, the word here in Job is really adversary. There is no article before the word to indicate that it is a proper noun, so it is more likely the adversary or accuser, not Satan as we know him in the NT.
  - b. So, I will talk about the adversary or accuser, but I don't care if anyone says Satan. I don't think it is really a big deal.
4. The adversary thinks Job loves God because God has protected him. (1:10)
5. So God allows the accuser to have all that is Job's, but not touch him. (1:12)
6. Four servants arrive to tell Job that his family has all been killed along with their servants, and that all his possessions have been destroyed or stolen.
7. Job mourns and worships God. (1:20-22)
8. Job does not sin or blame God.
9. Again, the accuser goes before God and God allows him to lay his hand upon Job, but he cannot take his life. (2:6)
10. His friends come to be with him, and say nothing in the dust and ashes for a week.

#### B. Dialogues (chs. 3-27): **Poetry**: All three men say some things that are true, but they do not have a full answer because each one ultimately calls Job unrighteous. All three men increasingly argue that man has no value.

1. Job's Initial Speech (3)
  - a. Note that Job cursed the day of his birth, not God as the accuser thought he would (3:1 vs. 2:5 & 1:11)
  - b. Job expressed his pain and grief by wishing he was never born.
2. Three Cycles of Dialogue (4-27)
  - a. **Eliphaz** (4-5, 15, 22): The man of experience.
    - i. Speech 1: God is just in human suffering. (4:6-8; 5:17-18)
    - ii. Speech 2: Suffering is retribution for wrongdoing. (15:20-25)
    - iii. Speech 3: Reduction of Man to a life of retribution (22:3, 6-9, 21-28)
    - iv. To Eliphaz, man has little value in light of God's greatness. Job, a righteous man, and his experience do not fit into Eliphaz's understanding of the world. So, Job must have sinned.

- b. **Bildad** (8, 18, 25): The theologians who cares about defending the truth! He is harsh and at times heartless because he is so focused on defending God.
  - i. Speech 1: God is just and brings divine retribution. (8:2, 13, 20)
  - ii. Speech 2: The universe is predictable because it is ordered. Everything has its place, which means that retribution comes when someone sins. (18:4-5)
  - iii. Speech 3: God is king, humans are like worms. (25:2-6)
  - iv. In the end, Bildad reduces humans to worms, ignoring the fact that we are made in God's image. He has no place for a suffering righteous man in his world.
- c. **Zophar** (11, 20, drops out of cycle 3): Emotional intuitive person who knows he is right because his gut tells him. He is indignant
  - i. Speech 1: Job is a hypocrite. (11:2, 5, 13)
  - ii. Speech 2: Immediate Retribution (20:2, 4-5, 23)
  - iii. Zophar is indignant with Job. He hates that Job claims to be innocent because in his world retribution only comes when there is a wrong done. But, notice that Zophar drops out of the third cycle. He is silenced by Job's responses.
- d. **Job**: Job never abandons the faith. He remains righteous.
  - i. In the prologue, Job is righteous, patient, and submissive to God.
  - ii. In the dialogues, Job is bold, brutally honest, righteously angry, and speaks as one who has been victimized.
  - iii. Job is lonely, because his friends begin to accuse him and he feels abandoned by God. (6:4, 19:21)
  - iv. Job wants a defender.
    - He wants an arbiter. He feels he can't be honest because he feels pushed against a wall. (9:33-35)
    - He wants to make a defense before God. No one is speaking on his behalf. (13:3, 15)
    - He wants someone to witness to his righteousness. (16:19-21)
  - v. Job also makes charges against God.
    - Immoral (9:22-24)
    - Unjust (21:7-15)
    - Powerful yet arbitrary (23:13)
    - Terrorizing, using power illegitimately (13:21)
    - Overpowering (14:18)
    - I imagine that some of you have felt this way before God before.
  - vi. Job is like a child who questions his parents. There is a point where a child questioning the parent is ok. Asking questions can show trust, but that only goes up to a point. Job makes statements to God that seem sinful. But, he is being honest and saying what he feels God is like. Yet, he does this without sinning. His questioning of God never becomes transgression or unfaithfulness. His questions show trust, and once the answer is given, he listens.
  - vii. Finally, Job wants a vindicator. He wants someone to clear his name because he is innocent. He wants someone to restore him to justice.
    - 19:23-29 – Is this about Jesus as Handel's Messiah takes it? Job is looking for vindication in his lifetime. He is looking for someone to restore him to

his previous state. However, he does believe that if he is not vindicated in this life, it will certainly come in another.

viii. Up until this point, Job is like a child who wants justice. He is focused on his one issue. He is thinking about his local situation. All that matters to him is how everything has a bearing on his suffering. But, chapter 28 is a turning point.

C. Wisdom Poem: Where can wisdom be found? (ch 28)

1. Verse 1-11 pictures humans searching the depths of the earth for wisdom, as one would seek for silver or gold.
2. Verse 12 asks where wisdom can be found.
3. The rest of the chapter tells us that wisdom cannot be found on earth, not with the living or the dead, but only with God.
4. What is wisdom? The fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to turn from evil is understanding.
5. Job has turned from evil. That has been his claim in this book. He has done what is right. But, Job has not submitted himself to God. He has not feared God as the wise God.

D. Job's speeches - chs 29-31

1. Chapter 29: Job asserts his wisdom, verse 21-25.
2. Chapter 30: Job laments the accusations of his friends.
3. Chapter 31: Job asserts his integrity and uprightness.

E. Elihu Speeches - chs 32-37: Elihu is a young, brash, and must be heard. He likes being heard. He rejects traditional wisdom, and calls them all to listen to the youth.

1. Elihu is angry that Job has justified himself before God. (32:2-3)
2. We are told several times that Elihu is angry which tells us something about his speeches.
3. Some of what he says is true, but his angry tone makes it inappropriate.
4. Elihu essentially argues that God sends suffering for discipline and correction (33:14-30; 37:13).
5. This is not a new argument, but he doesn't understand that Job is a righteous man, something that the prologue tells us.

F. God's speeches and Job's responses, 38:1-42:6: God speaks to Job from the whirlwind. He will ask Job and Job will instruct Him!

1. Speech 1: God is sovereign over all creation!
  - a. God's power over the creation.
  - b. God's understanding of all the animals: See the ostrich – (29:13-18)
    - This is a strange bird. Who understands the purpose of the ostrich? Job doesn't, but God does.
    - The universe is ordered anarchy. There is chaos in God's universe, but he is sovereign over it.
  - c. Job cannot answer.
2. Speech 2: God is majestic, glorious, but Job is powerless.
  - a. The Lord cares for creation with creativity and self-restraint.
  - b. **"The theological point of Yahweh's challenge to Job to take the reins of sovereignty is that God does not rule with an iron fist, grinding the wicked into the dust and coercing obedience from earthly subjects. Rather, Yahweh governs**

with an open hand, sustaining creation in all of its variegated forms, leaving both good and bad characters to weave their existence into the complex network of life." (100). – Brown

- c. Job realizes his place. He realizes the inappropriateness of his questions. (42:1-6)
  - d. Job does not repent as though he had sinned. He is giving up his life in view of his own limitations under God's sovereignty. He is submitting himself to the wisdom of God. He rejects what he has been doing, standing up for himself.
- G. Epilogue, 42:7-17
- 1. Job is vindicated. His friends are spoken to by God.
  - 2. Job prospered as the righteous wise man. Ps. 1
- V. What do we learn from Job? What is Job's unique message in the canon?
- A. We learn to shift from concerning ourselves with justice to concerning ourselves with wisdom. Wisdom is the fear of the Lord, and to turn from evil is understanding.
    - 1. Tie in personal story about my own journey towards wisdom.
  - B. We learn that God is capable of hearing our questions, doubts, our anger, and our pain. We can share these things. But, faith eventually plays out into submission.
  - C. We learn that we should mourn with those who mourn. God eventually chastised Job's friends for their poor theology and how they treated Job.
  - D. We learn that God is sovereign over even the chaos in the world.
  - E. We learn that we probably will not ever know of the answer to the problem of evil in this life, or possibly even in the life to come.
  - F. I wonder if there are other things that God has taught anyone here through the book of Job?

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