

Seven Bible Studies 2017

Poetry

January 5: Job 1-2 (Kevin Crittenden)



JOB STUDY

Week 1

Poetry reading for 1/5/17

Job 1 & 2

Good Morning, Everyone and welcome to this reading of the book of Job.

Family relationships were important during the time of Job – they identified you and gave you a place in society. So allow me to introduce myself. My name is Kevin Crittenden, of the tribe of Gentiles, a member of the San Jose COC at 7th and Mission. You may know my wife, Kathleen nee Munger, sister of Janice Shelton, daughter of LeRoy and Dorothy Munger. I've always lived in California; on my map, anything east of Nevada is marked "Here there be dragons."

I've come late into the Vineyard, becoming baptized on Father's Day this past year. That day is meaningful for me as I was able finally to replace the earthly father who abandoned me with the Love of the Heavenly Father who through His Mercy allows even me to share in His Inheritance.

Now to the matter at hand:

We'll start out the Poetry study with the book of Job, a book written to explore the relationship between God and human suffering. As human beings, created by God, we desperately want to believe that our world, also created by God, is a place of moral order and justice. And yet, we see a disconnect, an unsettling (dare I say?) disturbance in the force. Good people, Godly people, experience tragedies in their lives while bad people often flourish. Why?

In Psalm 1 (thanks to Steven Wright for sharing this Psalm with us) we read that whatever endeavor the righteous pursue will prosper whereas the way of the wicked leads to destruction. This often seems contrary to our everyday experiences, right?

We've all seen instances of tragedies, either in the lives of someone we know or in our own lives. When the tragedy is personal, it becomes less of an intellectual matter to think about than if the tragedy involves some stranger that we read about in the newspaper.

So I'll use a personal situation as an example. You can remember your own example. Three years ago, around Thanksgiving, my then 2-year old granddaughter, Katelyn, (photo below) was diagnosed with a life-threatening illness called Aplastic Anemia. Her bone marrow couldn't produce enough blood and platelets so she became dependent on transfusions. She spent a long time in the hospital. She's in remission now and doing well, praise the Lord!

As humans wanting to make sense of our world to preserve a sense of justice and moral order, we could ask:

---Was this sickness a punishment sent by God to chastise Katelyn's parents for something they did or neglected to do?

---Or was this illness a part of God's overall plan, seen like the ravelly bits of a tapestry that we now only glimpse from the back side and if we could but see the beautiful front of the tapestry, it would all make sense?

---If so, how could this horrible experience for an innocent 2-year old be part of any good plan? Was there no other way for an omniscient and omnipotent being to accomplish His will?

---Is God involved in all such situations or does He allow chance to play a part in His Creation?

--- Does Satan act independently of God to inflict this kind of torment?

---Where was God?

These are the type of questions that people ask when confronted by suffering. Let's keep them in mind as we read through Job.

Like all good stories, the book of Job, creates a setting, introduces us to the characters, sets up the situation, and takes us through the resolution. Chapters 1 and 2 introduce the main characters, the setting and sets up the conflict. Chapter 42 contains the denouement. The interior part of Job contains the agonistic and complicated theological and philosophical arguments that grapple with man's desire to make sense of his world.

Controversy: There is thought that Chapters 1, 2 and 42 were an earlier work and that the "interior" of Job, the Poem of Job, was a later, more complicated work. Thus there would have been multiple authors.

Who wrote Job? The author is anonymous, although Rabbinic tradition ascribes it to Moses. Some believe it was Job himself, or Elihu, or Solomon. The author was certainly an Israelite, thoroughly immersed in the Hebrew Scriptures. He was quite knowledgeable and experienced, as shown by his writings on the constellations, meteorology, mining operations, boats, and plants.

When was this book written? It is generally agreed that the book was written between the 7th and 4th centuries BCE with the 6th century BCE as the most likely date, as the author uses a lot of vocabulary with meanings known in later Hebrew.

Where does it take place?

Job 1:1-3 There was a man in the land of Uz (pronounced "ootz") whose name was Job. . . so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east.

The story of Job is set outside Israel to the east and south (Uz is related to Edom which may be the setting of the book)

Thoughts for Job 1 and 2:

Job 1:5 Job would offer sacrifices on his children's behalf in case they had sinned. Do you see a foreshadowing of Christ sacrificing Himself on our behalf?

Job 1:6 – Who are the "sons of God?"

Why does God enter into what seems like a wager with Satan and allow Job to be tested? This testing of righteous people is echoed in Gen 22:2 Then God said, "Take your son, your

only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.”

We also see the theme of testing people of integrity elsewhere, such as Joseph fleeing Potiphar’s wife (Gen 39) and Daniel refusing to eat forbidden food (Dan 1).

Note the character of Satan. This Satan seems to work for God and is subject to God’s control. Contrast this description to the description of Satan in 1 Pet 5:8, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” Satan as described by Peter is not looking for (or needing?) God’s approval.

Do you think that Satan and God still have such “conversations” and that God “allows” Satan to test us? And that the more “righteous” we are, the more we become Satan’s target?

How do we reconcile this “testing” with James 1:13 - “When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.”

When we are tempted, are we not also being tested?

What about Job’s children? Weren’t they innocent? Why were they “expendable” in this testing of Job?

Consider the contrast between Job’s reaction to actual misfortune, Job 1:21, and the reaction of the rich person when anticipating the loss of his wealth in Luke 18:22-23. What might be our reaction to such loss?

The loss of Job’s possessions didn’t do it, so Satan tries again. This time, the suffering becomes corporeal. It brings to mind Paul’s “thorn in the flesh.”

Job 2:9 – Why does Job’s wife offer this advice: “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.” She seems to think that if something like this tragedy could happen to a good man like Job, what was the point of being so pious all those years. Why doesn’t she support him? Is she being used by Satan? What possible good could come from her advice? Is death better than suffering? This question has relevance today as courts decide the legality of euthanasia. And I’m sure that this question weighs on the minds of those considering suicide.

Job 2:10 – Job ascribes his suffering as coming from God rather than Satan. Was Job aware of Satan or know that Satan was under God’s control? Do we think that Satan, today, is acting under God’s control?

Job 2:11-13 – Three of Job’s friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, come to offer condolences. The Jewish ritual of sitting Shiva where the mourners wear torn clothing and sit for seven days low to the ground is very like what Job's friends did.

The first two chapters of Job seem to describe a God who does not hesitate to inflict suffering on His most devoted follower. Do His actions in these chapters seem to violate your innate sense of right and wrong? Is it allowable to question God?

Comment:

Nancy Didion:

Thank you for your personal introduction and the thorough, thought-provoking intro to Job!

Comment:

Charles Fry:

Thanks, Kevin! Plenty of food for thought, approaching this remarkable epic. Pain, suffering, blame, guilt, presumption, justice, karma, meaning and value, God's might and mercy, all are issues brought into discussion in Job! On the question(s) regarding God and Satan in Job 1-2, I would suggest that the text does picture God as having power Satan cannot thwart but not God controlling Satan. Satan asset Scott God has a hedge of protection around Job, staying Satan's hand. God allows Satan to act against Job, within limits. This isn't God controlling Satan, who roams the earth at will, but clearly Satan is not equal to God, cannot thwart God. What Satan is doing here in Job is the backdrop of Peter's observation that he goes around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. I have an opinion... That God really did want Satan to consider Job, to think about him, and how with all his frailty he will not turn away from God when he suffers. Satan expected Job to react as he himself would react, and curse God. Peter wrote that God wants all to come to repentance. Might he not have longed for Satan himself to consider and then reconsider? Clearly even angels have unanswered questions, and that would include Satan.

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

One lesson from Job is this: All that we have is our soul. PRAISE GOD you submitted yours to Him, Kevin Crittenden. Thank you for blessing us with a weekly study in poetry. Jesus states, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Through refining the Lord made Job something better.

Comment:

Joanne Caffie:

The text states that when "the sons of God" presented themselves before God that Satan came with them... was he not considered a son of God too?

Comment:

Christina McClung:

Thank you

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

You are welcome!

Comment:

Yvonna Hartman:

Really appreciate your thoughts Kevin. I to appreciate the personal information. I see you on fb and now I can make some connections because I do know Janice Shelton. Praise God that you are a worker for the Lord and we are benefiting from it.

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

So glad you don't mind me being a "name-dropper." :-) And thank you!

Comment:

Doug Twaddell:

Don't forget that in Luke 24:31, Jesus tells Peter, "Satan has asked for you that he may sift you as wheat." This has always reminded me of Job. Peter was about to be tempted (the three denials) and Jesus tells him that Satan is behind it with God's allowance. Jesus also says He has prayed for him. Jesus was encouraging and rooting for Peter to prevail during this trial. Perhaps this is the process God refers to when He assures us He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can handle. Satan tempts us trying to get us to do wrong. God, however, tests us to see if we will do the right thing. God is like a teacher that prepares their student for a test desiring them to pass successfully, not fail. If, and when, we do fail, God does not celebrate our weakness. Instead, He is faithful to allow repentance and offer forgiveness to start preparing us for further testing.

Comment:

Steven Wright:

Job 1:6 – Who are the “sons of God?”

First, I will here re-iterate sister Joanne’s question . . .

Joanne Caffie The text states that when "the sons of God" presented themselves before God that Satan came with them... was he not considered a son of God too?

Do you think that Satan and God still have such “conversations” and that God “allows” Satan to test us? And that the more “righteous” we are, the more we become Satan’s target?

Next, I will insert here a pertinent comment from Brother Charles in yesterday’s thread . . .

The curse was on the tempter, not upon snakes. While we see an analogy in the form of the snake, snakes don't "eat dust." Satan, on the other hand, was cast down. When the Lord asked Satan in Job 1-2 where he had been, the answer was "roaming throughout the earth... going back and forth on the earth." His wings had been clipped, in a manner of speaking, limits imposed. He became "the god of this world." The seed of the woman crushing the serpent's head in Gen 3:15 is certainly a prophecy of Jesus, born of woman, defeating Satan through death (Heb. 2:14-15). I'm oversimplifying here for brevity, but hopefully it makes sense.

Then here, I insert some thoughts . . .

In reference, especially to Charles’ words “. . .his wings had been clipped . . . he became ‘the god of this world.’” above, I will add this:

1.) 2 Corinthians 4:4

In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (Satan is now identified as “The god of this world.”)

2.) (Revelation 12: 7 – 10, 12) references a “war in heaven”

Note:

1. (Isaiah 14:7 -14; Ezekiel 28:12 – 19) give us some light on this; addressing: Satan’s prideful aspirations, and indicate that the inducement of man to sin in the garden, was the pivotal point in this war, and precipitated Satan’s “demotion”

a. Key phrases in this passage to symbolically identify Satan would be: “Lucifer” or, “day Star” / “Son of Dawn” (Isaiah 14:12), “Guardian Cherub” and, “Stones of fire” (Ezekiel 28:14, 16) – and yes, this would also connect with “Sons of God” in: (Job 1:6; 2:1 etc.,)

b. I would connect, all of the above with (Revelation 12:1 -9)

c. I would also note that he is being called “the accuser of the brethren” in the revelation passage, which is what he is doing before God the father in the case of Job.

d.

Next, consider: Luke 10:18

And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

2. Jesus puts this in the past tense.

a. Speaking of this event as having already happened prior to the context of the present; which context, he was addressing with his disciples at the time in which he was speaking to them.

b. I would place then this even that occurred as pertaining to all of the above that I have just referenced; AND, including the days of Job!

i. Back to (Revelation 12) – [which is a multi-faceted/all-time continuum: look at the entirety of the history of the universe at a glance!] and notice now (vv.10 – 12).

1. A change occurs! Satan is no longer able to go "to and fro"

a. He can no longer access heaven to come before God and accuse us like he did Job.

b. What he CAN do still, is try to "Knock us down" with his "Tail" (Rev. 12:4) (by inducing us to sin and hoping we will not repent and therefore we may forfeit or inheritance in heaven)

c. "The blood of the Lamb" (v. 11) has overcome Satan.

d. But just like a snake, the head of which has been crushed, Satan is going to "Thrash about with great wrathful, last "Nerve impulses" if you will, because he knows now, that his end (spoken of in Revelation 20:11 – 14), is sealed, and therefore he must use every bit of the "Short time" (12:12) that remains.

i. The moment that our King Jesus set foot out of the tomb, this thing was done! The serpents head was crushed! (Genesis 3:15)

ii. Satan, is done!

iii. Finished!

iv. Defeated!

Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:

Thank you all for your comments! Normally I would provide you with the correct answers for all the questions that have been raised but we're watching Katelyn for awhile and I'm sure you'll understand that grandchildren take precedence. :-)

Comment:

Steven Wright:

This is from my phone just now. Just finished the Bible study that I lead at an assisted living place on the West side of town called "Legend " so, I will post the intro to my post above which somehow got left out, when I get back home. I actually used the same notes as above, for my outline today, since it fit perfectly into our current study (a couple of questions that were raised there last week.)

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

Phones are getting too smart when they can make FB posts!

Comment:

Steven Wright:

ok . . .home now, did a little trek around the yard to see if Mr. Fox has been about, but, not yet! He is probably hunkered down in his den waiting for something above 15 degrees F. Anyway, what now appears below, is what should have been the lead in to my post in response to yours Kevin Crittenden. I must give credit where credit is due as well as say "Thank You" brother! Brother Kevin, you pose several questions! Very good questions! I copied and pasted your

questions into a document, with the thought that I would address each; I now realize however, that this endeavor might take me several years lol! So, I will limit my response here to only a couple of the related points that you raise. . . .

Comment:

Marc Hermon:

Kevin, I've already been extremely blessed by the 7 Studies simply by becoming your FB friend!!! Your conviction and way with words is outstanding and I am so grateful to have gained you as a brother. Here are a few of my thoughts on Job. I'll try to space them out throughout the book :) "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." James 1:2-4 I don't want to get ahead of the story but I think there is no doubt that Job became a better servant because of what God allowed him to go through. If you agree with that, then it should be difficult to question God in what he allowed. In the scriptures God is referred to as a "consuming" fire as well as a "refining" fire. He is NOT two kinds of fire...He is only one. Whether his fire is "consuming" or "refining" depends on the type of vessel that is put into it. If you are a servant made mostly of gold, the fire will refine you, burn off the dross and leave you more pure and a better servant of God. If you are not a servant at all but made of paper or straw you will be consumed. We can't blame the fire. We have to look at ourselves. I talked with Tom Woody about this before he re-congregated with the church on the other side because although I appreciated Tom's work in the Lord before his cancer I feel he was turned into a much better servant as he went through the fire. The Lord's fire refined him rather than consumed him because of Tom's love for the Lord. I know this because Tom talked about one of his favorite verses in Job. "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him!" 13:15

Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:

Thank you, Marc! People have told me that I have a gift for writing and ought to pursue that. But those were my Physics teachers. My English teachers made much of my abilities in math and science. But that's a horse of a different feather.

I suspect you and I have been through fire - and will face more refining in the time we have remaining to us. That is to the good. It will make us better servants of the Lord. Maybe someday (if my mettle continues to be tested) I'll even be mature!

The Babylonian captivity was a refining fire which purified the remnant in the crucible of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar. As I understand it, God wanted to "mature" His people to get them ready for the New Covenant. Removing the physical Temple proved an important step in that process - the necessity of relocating the Temple from an exterior building to an interior place in one's heart where God could dwell.

As for Job becoming a better servant, unfortunately we have no record of any shortcomings before his trials began.

Comment:

Marc Hermon:

The refining brought to light for Job what his shortcomings were and the moment he repented everything was restored and even doubled. Perhaps even more impressive than Job's faith in God was God's faith in Job that the fire would refine him rather than consume him.

Comment:

Marc Hermon:

p.s. You should've listened to your Physics teachers...I hear they are pretty smart people. :)

Comment:

Charles Fry:

In the course of the dialogues in Job we catch glimpses of his strengths and weaknesses. We'll see him as not only one who had been religiously diligent, in the first two chapters, but the practice of true religion in good works, hospitality, generosity, helping the needy, those kinds of things, and acknowledging he had some wayward behavior in his youth, worked at curtailing lust, and was guilty of "common" sins. He insisted, and rightly so, that he hadn't suddenly or secretly done some terribly wrong to merit his losses, his grief, his suffering. He acknowledged that, like his friends and his community, he thought that was how God's justice worked in this world, good people got good stuff, and bad people got bad stuff. He learned, and perhaps realized he'd always known, that didn't fit real world observations. And so, at the end of the book, his awareness of God in awesomeness and transcendent wisdom and power provoked an end to common misconceptions about God, and about mankind in relation/comparison to God that he had shared with his peers. Like Isaiah (Isaiah 6), Job saw himself differently, more realistically, and God differently, more magnificent, as a result of his experiences and God's self revelation.

In context of Job's experiences, and yes, Marc, of Tom Woody, I think of

2 Cor 3:17-18

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

NKJV

and

Isa 61:3

3 To console those who mourn in Zion,
To give them beauty for ashes,
The oil of joy for mourning,
The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;
That they may be called trees of righteousness,
The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified."

NKJV

Beauty for ashes. The first two verses of Isaiah 61 is what Jesus read in the synagogue at Nazareth, Luke 4, and said he was fulfilling.

Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:

Thank you all for your comments! This is such a fine example of mutual edification at its best. Thank you so much, Marc, for setting up this vehicle for the dissemination of knowledge from many separate locations.

Comment:

Wendy Range:

Any comments on 1:16 regarding the servant's perception of "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep?" Did God actually burn up Job's sheep, or did Satan have the power to do that, and the servant just assumed it was God-sent? I tend to think the latter. In Chapter 2, Satan strikes Job with boils. The conversations between God and Satan and the verses mentioned earlier in this discussion are in agreement that God is a protector against evil

according to His wisdom, not the inflictor or temptor. It makes me think of Jonah and the gourd that provided shade; the heat was always there, but only when God withdrew the protective shade did Jonah blame God for the heat. Job was wise to worship God for giving him good "gourds", even after they were violently removed from his life.

Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:

I agree with you, Wendy, that Satan was given the power to destroy Job's possessions. God told Satan not to lay a hand on Job himself. At this time. I don't know how familiar the servant was with the concept of Satan. Even today, when disaster strikes, (Hurricane Katrina), some will say it is because God is punishing (New Orleans) for having too many (pagans, homosexuals, whatever). They don't say it is Satan acting to carry out God's Will. So . . . is God involved? Is this Satan's doing? Is this just a normal and expected occurrence that sometimes happen because of the natural laws set in place to govern our world?

Replies:

Wendy Range:

Thanks, Kevin! Yes, assuming any *certainty* for a level of God's involvement or intent regarding any earthly calamity is not our place. See Job. :) Natural laws so often are allowed to run their course. All of the good in our lives we can attribute to God's mercy and protection, just as Job did.

Comment:

Charles Fry:

A couple more comments on 1:16.

First, the language: "the fire of God". This may not be an attribution of who sent the fire, but a superlative regarding the magnitude. of the conflagration, something like "a mighty fire." For example, Psalm 80:10 mentions "the cedars of God" which several versions render "mighty cedars" or some equivalent rendering, rather than the literal phrase.

Second, Exodus 9:23 describes the Lord sending "thunder and hail and fire" on Egypt.

Interpreters suspect that the fire in both Job 1:16 and Exodus 9:23 refers to a lightning storm, a reasonable possibility, especially considering Psalm 78:48.

Third, when "the Lord sent" fire (or lightning) in Exodus 9:23, this action, along with the other plagues, is attributed to "destroying angels" (KJV "evil angels") unleashed by God in Psalm 78:49. It is at least consistent and reasonable to suppose that Satan unleashed could bring down the mighty fire or lightning seen by the messenger.

Fourth, a couple of comments in the dialogues of Job would suggest that Job and his friends were at least aware of the concept of fallen angels, as in Job 4:18, 5:15, 25:5 for example. With all that we have in scripture, we still have a hard time sorting out the mechanisms of suffering and mischief, and whether there is intended meaning in the events, as did the folks of Jesus' generation, Luke 13:1-5.

Replies:

Wendy Range:

Thanks, I hadn't thought of most of that. I had wondered about the fire of God being a figure of speech, and I appreciate the other possible references.

Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:

I love my new church family!

January 12: Job 3-4 (Kevin Crittenden)

Poetry reading for 1/12/17 Job 3 & 4

Having set the stage and gathered the characters, the story of Job now jettisons prose for sophisticated poetry, jumps off the high-dive and plunges directly into the pool of Theology.

It starts peaceably enough.

The three friends who have come to comfort Job are politely silent.

Finally, Job, in the midst of his incredible physical and emotional suffering, begins his lament and begins by cursing the day he was born. This seems a far different attitude from Job's earlier statement when he humbly answered his wife "Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?"

Job isn't necessarily talking TO his friends but perhaps is just giving voice to his torment.

Note the similarity of the beginning of his speech in Job 3 to Jeremiah 20:14-18 when Jeremiah had been beaten and put in the stocks by Pashhur the priest. Being a prophet could be (was) a difficult ordeal.:

14 Cursed be the day I was born!
 May the day my mother bore me not be blessed!
15 Cursed be the man who brought my father the news,
 who made him very glad, saying,
 "A child is born to you—a son!"
16 May that man be like the towns
 the Lord overthrew without pity.
 May he hear wailing in the morning,
 a battle cry at noon.
17 For he did not kill me in the womb,
 with my mother as my grave,
 her womb enlarged forever.
18 Why did I ever come out of the womb
 to see trouble and sorrow
 and to end my days in shame?

Perhaps the writer of Job was familiar with the book of Jeremiah.

Job pictures death as freedom from the toils of life, a place of rest for all, the great as well as the small, princes as well as paupers. Death awaits us all after a life of struggle and toil, why not sooner than later?

Job at this point is not asking God any questions; he is just venting his profound grief and sorrow. He wishes he were dead, that the accumulation of all his wealth, only to have it whisked away leaving him in torment, was not worth all this misery.
Ecc 1:3 "What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?"

At this juncture, all four of the characters present are struggling to maintain the belief expressed in Psalm 1, that the righteous prosper while the wicked perish. There are three assertions that this group is struggling to maintain:

- 1 – God is Omnipotent – all-powerful
- 2 – God is Omnibenevolent - completely good
- 3 – Job is a righteous man

Since they didn't consider it possible for a completely good God (assertion 2) to let an innocent man like Job suffer if He could prevent it (assertion 1), then something has to give. The obvious assertion to challenge is number 3 – that Job is a righteous man.

I'm sure you are all familiar with The Serenity Prayer (I've included it below). I want to draw your attention to the lines:

“Trusting that He will make all things right
If I surrender to His Will;
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life”

Even in this prayer, the idea is that IF you do His Will, you will be reasonably happy in THIS life as well as the next. The implication is that if you are unhappy, then you've strayed from doing His Will. Do we have this same expectation for our lives?

One thing that Job does not do is say, like Cain in Gen 4:13, “My punishment is more than I can bear.” Does Job think he is being punished by God? What else could it be? And if he is being punished, Why?

Job 3:14 might refer to the pyramids of Egypt.

Job 4 – Eliphaz begins to lay out his argument against assertion 3. He starts by praising Job for the good things he has done, how he has counseled others in their grief and then (Job 4:5-9) says, Turn it around and pretend you are the one who needs counseling. What would you say to yourself?

Eliphaz goes on to relate a dream that he had where an angel (Job 4:15) tells him that even angels make errors (Job 4:18) so how much more will mortal man err? (Job 4:19) And when they do, they will be punished.

Note how the statement “... and his angels he charges with error” anticipates 2 Peter 4 “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;”

Eliphaz asks “Can mortal man (Job, you, me) be in the right before God?” (Job 4:17)

Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can;
And wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as He did, this sinful world
As it is, not as I would have it;
Trusting that He will make all things right
If I surrender to His Will;

So that I may be reasonably happy in this life
And supremely happy with Him
Forever and ever in the next.

Amen.

(prayer attributed to Reinhold Neibuhr, 1892-1971)

Comment:

Steven Wright:

Saved the reading for this morning so I will reply now. Thank you very much, brother Kevin Crittenden! For your thoughts on Job 3 and 4! You bring out a very important part of what should be part of our take on Job; the "venting not asking" thing that Job was doing. People miss this too easily. I wonder if Job's friends gasped and shuddered as they heard? Oh, the assumptions we make eh? Oh, the arrogance! Job's expression of his sorrow and grief is Like we find David doing also at times when he expresses grief or other emotions. "Imprecatory" is the word brother Charles Fry used yesterday I believe! Let us not be so willing to limit God that we are unwilling to be honest with him, knowing that he is THE one that we should go to. He can take it. He can see it for what it is. People cannot, Job's friends proved that. If we are the human ears listening, let us seek God's interpretation and response.

Comment:

Charles Fry:

As has been noted, we don't know when Job was written, or who wrote Job. The setting of the events seems to be in the days of the patriarchs, from references to places, names, the manner of attributing wealth, Job's lifespan, and a few other clues, but that's inference, not assertion. We can be sure that Job was famously remembered in the days of Ezekiel (Jeremiah's contemporary) since he is mentioned as a notable man of faith (along with Noah and Danel or Daniel) in Ezekiel 14:14, 20. Whenever he lived, Job's predicament of losing family, wealth, and health sure did bring up serious questions about a common world view, still around, that people get what they deserve in this life. The impact of tragedy and sickness was cumulative, harder to take the longer it lasted, and all the more exasperating since it didn't fit the common idea that Job must have brought it on himself. The likeness to Jeremiah's plaint is very apropos. The circumstances that brought about their suffering were quite different, but the loneliness and frustration were much the same.

Comment:

Marc Hermon:

The friends were doing such a good job and then 4:2 happened.... "but who can withhold himself from speaking?"

The answer... Isa 53:7

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth"

Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:

OK, I have to wonder if Job's wife was bringing out coffee and plates of sandwiches all this time.

Comment:

Charles Fry:

Maybe she had decided it was a good time to go and visit her mother. Job was having some halitosis and body odor problems, along with everything else.

Job 19:17 My breath is offensive to my wife,
And I am loathsome to my own brothers.

NASU

Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:

So in addition to all his other problems, Job's wife was going to bring back his mother-in-law. Oy vey!

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:

Job's wife wasn't very supportive to her husband. (Job 2:9 His wife said to him, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!") I wonder if this was part of Satan's plan?

Replies:

Steven Wright:

She was overcome by the human perspective on suffering.

Butch O'Neal:

Thanks, Steve. Certainly she loved her husband. His plight may have been more than she could bear!?

January 19: Job 5-6 (Kevin Crittenden)

JOB STUDY

Week 3

Poetry reading for 1/19/17

Job 5 & 6

Job has voiced his extreme grief and torment while his three friends listen. When Job is finished, the Poet Laureate of Teman, Eliphaz, begins trying to comfort Job.

Teman is a region of Edom (Jer 49:7). The name Eliphaz means "my God is strength." Esau's firstborn son is named Eliphaz (Gen 36:15)

In Job 5:1 "Who will answer you?" refers to man, "holy ones" are those in heaven, the "sons of God" in Job 1 and 2. Eliphaz emphasizes that there is no entity anywhere, on Heaven or earth, for Job to appeal to except God (Job 5:8)

Job 5:2, 3 "Resentment kills a fool, and envy slays the simple" is a proverb – Eliphaz, bless his heart, is intimating that Job is a fool.

Job 5:6 "For hardship does not spring from the soil . . ." Eliphaz makes the point that our troubles don't just randomly happen. Human beings like causes for things. For some people, this takes the form of superstition. If I suddenly get sick, it's because a black cat crossed my path. If I wear my lucky sweater, then the 49ers will win a game. (maybe)

Job 5:7 "Yet man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward" Another proverb that Eliphaz uses to make the point that, as mortals, we are bound to err.

Butch pointed this out in Gen 6:5 “The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.”

What is Eliphaz saying? He likens Job’s case to a man held in high esteem; someone who has done good things but has done something unethical. This man is held accountable for his actions, disappointment is expressed but his good deeds are remembered. Think of many political leaders – many wonderful accomplishments during their term of office but unable (unwilling) to remain faithful to their wives.

Continuing Eliphaz’ example, God is holding this upright man responsible for his transgression (whatever it was) but, remembering his good deeds, will bless him in the end with the blessings of many children, abundant wealth and a full vigor in his ripe old age. Job 5:24-26.

Eliphaz concludes by emphasizing that Job should apply his example of this good but wayward man to himself. Job 5:27

Accept the correction of God, Job, and consider yourself blessed. Job 5:17

Eliphaz is saying “Look, Job, we all make mistakes and we all pay the price for those mistakes. You are a good guy, better than most of us, so God will favor you again once you have paid your debt.”

Now imagine Job, stricken and prostrate amid the ruins of his life, hearing from his friend how God will bless him with a rich replacement life in the end. So buck up, Job, and take it like a man.

Does Eliphaz really think that having new children will erase Job’s memory of his original children? That he could ever forget his 7 sons and three daughters?

In Job 6, Job finally is able to vouchsafe a reply. But instead of saying, “Thanks, guys, what you say makes sense. I really needed to hear that” he says, to their surprise, “You guys disappoint me! You’re like a wadi, filled with water during the rainy season but dry as a bone in the summer when water is most needed. True friends would support me in my time of need. Jerks!”

Job 6:6-7 Job is referring to Eliphaz’ argument. “I refuse to touch it; such food makes me ill.”

Job 6:8-10 Job, shell-shocked in misery, wishes for God to take his life. If that happened, Job would be able to take consolation in that he did not DENY the words of the Holy One. It should be mentioned that Job 6:10 has an alternate translation: “I did not SUPPRESS my words against the Holy One.” Job is angry with God and speaks forthrightly. Job makes the point that God prefers angry but honest words to flattery.

Is it acceptable for a religious person to question God or be angry at Him? If you do, can you still say that you are religious? Does God prefer the expression of valid emotions to unfelt piety? Can you truly love God if you feel compelled to censor your feelings?

Job 6:24 – Job challenges Eliphaz to point out his mistake. If he can, Job promises to keep quiet.

Job 6:28 “But now be so kind as to look at me.” Eliphaz was speaking to Job without looking at him, a mark of respect in ancient Near Eastern culture.

Comment:

Steven Wright:

Brother Kevin Crittenden, you certainly put it down well! Thank you so very much! I especially appreciate your questions! That's the real bruh! God does not want vain religion. Too many people worship their religion instead of their God! Yes, The omnipotent God, who knows our heart already, wants to HEAR our heart! God gave us our emotions, God wants us to give our emotions to him, in order that he may purify them! The religious culture we have inherited, compels us to the censorship approach to our feelings. It was the unrighteous King Ahaz, who said, "Oh, I could never ask the Lord for a sign (even though the Lord said, 'ask') - that would be impertinent!" (ok I'm paraphrasing, but that was the gist of it!) How did the Lord respond? "Oh really now! You, who offer your babies to Molech, would PRETEND not to offend me! Well, guess what! I'm gonna give you a sign any way! " Show me a married couple that says, "Oh, we never argue!" And, I will show you a married couple that is either blind, and/or lying, or worse yet, they don't really love each other!

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

Thank you! I never had a real "bruh" before. What is it?

Steven Wright:

You be the real bruh, givin us the real bruh! :)

Kevin Crittenden:

Um, thanks. I think. :-)

Comment:

Charles Fry:

Serious stuff, but I did laugh more than once, at the dandy summaries. "Bless his heart." 😊

Thank you, KKevin Crittenden

Replies:

"Jerks!" :-D

Kevin Crittenden:

Hopefully a little humor once in awhile won't offend anyone's sensibilities that I'm not treating the subject with enough reverence.

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Thanks, Kevin. I've enjoyed getting to know you these past 3 weeks and count it a great blessing to study the Word with you and Kathleen states away! :-) Lesson for me in this reading: mere presence can be a greater comfort than words of advice sometimes prove to be. Eliphaz sat wordless with Job through a whole week to show his sympathy and friendship. Yet when Eliphaz felt compelled to speak he wounds Job deeper and angers the Lord.

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

In studying for this week's lesson in Job 7 & 8, I realized I had overlooked the one clear quotation from Job in the NT. It was found in Job 5:13 & quoted in I Corinthians 3:19

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

Paul's ability to recall in detail the writings of the Law, Prophets and Wisdom literature to lend support to his epistles without the luxury of computers, Google and Bible software is astonishing! What a memory and what an ability to recall just the right verse. We see through this that the Holy Spirit was indeed busy ensuring Paul's edification, the edification of his audience and the edification of those throughout the ages since.

January 26: Job 7-8 (Kevin Crittenden)

JOB STUDY

Week 4

Poetry reading for 1/26/17

Job 7 & 8

In Job 7, Job has finished speaking to Eliphaz and resumes his soliloquy, with God listening from the wings.

Job 7:6 "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle . . ."

Job 7:9 ". . . so one who goes down to the grave does not return."

Part of Job's lament is: Life is too short and the grave is permanent.

You will notice that no mention is made of a life beyond death; any hope beyond the grave.

Sheol is the place where the dead go but it is neither Heaven nor Hell. People do not return to this life from Sheol. Dead is dead.

Job 7:17-21 "What is mankind that you make so much of them, . . .
reads much like

Psalms 8:4 " what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?"

Psalms 8 explores the wonder and worth of man in light of God's marvelous Creation and expresses joy that God takes care of him whereas Job's complaint is that God is putting a lot of attention into insignificant mankind and testing them always to see whom He can punish. Job feels like God is stalking him.

Job 7:20 "If I have sinned, what have I done to you, you who see everything we do?" Job is feeling the injustice of his punishment, an injustice that could be removed if only God were to explain Himself. Job wants his day in court and to hear what he is being accused of. He questions God. Do we dare to question God? Do we have the right?

Job winds it up with a few more questions of God and then simply states that pretty soon he'll be dead and will no longer be a target for God's (unmerited) punishment.

Meanwhile, Job's friends are listening to all this and growing restive. All of them feel the need to defend God. After all, they have in mind Butch's early morning reminder of Deuteronomy 32:4 that says quite plainly: "He is the Rock; his deeds are perfect. Everything he does is just and fair. He is a faithful God who does no wrong; how just and upright he is!"

Job 8 – Now Bildad, no less a poet than Eliphaz, comes striding out of the dugout, spits his ‘baccy scornfully on the ground, steps confidently up to the plate and begins to hold forth. He has a different slant on the argument that Eliphaz used.

The meaning of the name, Bildad, is uncertain. He is a Shuhite and thus connected to Shuah, the son of Abraham and Keturah. (Gen 25:2) Bildad seems more impatient than Eliphaz and this leads some to conclude that Bildad is younger. However, from Job 15:10 “The gray-haired and the aged are on our side, men even older than your father” we get the idea that some of Job’s friends are older than he is and therefore wiser.

Job has called into question the belief that a good and loving God rewards good people and punishes evildoers. Job’s attitude is anathema to the three friends.

Eliphaz’ argument was “Job, you had your hand in the till, even if you don’t remember, and God is calling you out for it.”

Bildad is more direct with Job, taking him to task for questioning God and accusing him of perverting God’s justice. He begins to defend God who is still able to pay attention while busily engaged in running the Universe.

Job 8:4 “When your children sinned against him . . .”

Well, Ouch! Rather than place the blame squarely on Job as Eliphaz did, Bildad takes another tack, saying essentially that this isn’t all about Job and what he did or didn’t do; his children must have sinned and so THEY were punished. After all, Job had this possibility in mind when he offered sacrifices on their behalf. And as far as the other terrible misfortunes, the Sabeans attacked because that’s the kind of animals they are. They attack others. The Chaldeans as well. Nasty folks whose nature is to hurt innocent people.

Job 8:8-10 “Ask the former generation and find out what their ancestors learned . . .”

Bildad is essentially saying, “Look here, Job. You think you’re the brightest star in MENSA? Look at all the sages that came before you! And those wisest of men believed in a righteous God. So should you! Get with the program!”

Job 8:20 “Surely God does not reject one who is blameless. . .” Here Bildad echoes the argument advanced by Eliphaz.

Bildad, evidently reading from the Prosperity Gospel, concludes by saying “Job, if, and this is a big if, you are pure and upright (Job 8:6) then God will restore you to your former good life with a happy, fairy-tale ending. (Job 8:21)”

Comment:

Lori Watt:

I really like how you put the conversation into modern-speak. It helps me to have a view of this story that makes more sense to me. Thank you.

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

You are welcome! Although I could simplify it as I mentioned before:

Job: Woe is me! My life is miserable and so are you.

Friends: Shut up!

Job: You shut up!

God: (sigh)

Comment:

Charles Fry:

Commenting on tomorrow's reading tonight feels like cheating, but I may not have time for it tomorrow anyway.

That shot that Bildad took at Job's dead children was a really low blow.

I appreciate the glimpses Job gives of his physical misery along the way, as in 7:4-5.

Job's view of death and afterlife (Sheol) are much like that of King Solomon (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10) and King Hezekiah (Isaiah 38:9, 18). Quite different from Paul's declaration that it is better to die and be with the Lord (Philippians 1:21-24), but Paul knew Jesus had overcome death and given life to those who believe in him. I'm glad to live on this side of the cross for several reasons, including this expectation!

Nevertheless, I don't read Job's never to return sentiment as a hopeless expectation of eternity in Sheol. Like Solomon or Hezekiah he did not look forward to waiting unproductive as a disembodied soul in Sheol, and he definitely did not expect to return to life in this world after he died, but we will be seeing Job make some pretty strong expressions of hope and even confidence in eventually standing before God for judgment and seeing the Redeemer with his own eyes.

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

It may be that Job did not develop that confidence until later. He is still spiraling downward in his misery. There is also the story in 1 Sam 28 when Saul visits the Witch of Endor to consult Samuel, who was in Sheol. Did the witch really see Samuel or was she making it up like modern day "fortunetellers" are thought to do, by me anyway.

Saul: What do you see?

Witch: I see a ghostly figure coming up out of the Earth

Saul: What does he look like? (Assumes it's a man)

Witch: An old man wearing a robe.

Saul makes the leap that this is Samuel.

Of course, Dead Samuel makes a lengthy pronouncement that the witch probably could not have fabricated.

This story makes me think that individuality is not lost in Sheol and that possibly it is just a holding area.

Steven Wright:

I believe the LORD made an exception in this case, that is why the woman was so terrified! She knew this could not normally happen. She had a "familiar Spirit" that is, she was in contact with one of Satan's minions, who fed her information which enabled her to deceive people. This was altogether different than that, and she was frightened! But this does not negate the "holding area" concept.

Charles Fry:

It does seem, Kevin Crittenden, that Job sort of builds up a head of steam as he goes along, gets more assertive. Perhaps when he expresses some of those hopes and expectations he is describing things that were more his private belief than a public consensus, as he is emboldened by some fatalism about his circumstances and his audience.

Comment:

Steven Wright:

Two things from (7:9), as Charles Fry said, it gives us perspective on Job's perspective of the subject. Also, as you intimated in your comments Kevin Crittenden, people who die and are buried, do not come back here from there, not in some semi-decayed bodlily form (Zombie), nor in any visage, spirit, "ghost" or other form. And about that "short guy" definately not a chum, But a chump! His words strike me as very proprietary and yet, just plain mean!

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

Yeah, watching him stride must have been interesting.

Joanne Caffie:

But whar about Abraham & Elijah?

Charles Fry:

Joanne Caffie, do you mean Abraham as in "God is not the God of the dead but of the living" in Matthew 22:32 when Jesus answered the Sadducees? Showing that 400 years after Abraham's time, God was/is still his God? That therefore Abraham still existed? Abraham is even pictured as the host at a welcoming feast in the abode of the dead (Sheol or Hades) among the righteous in the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31).

Or the remarkable appearance of Elijah and Moses on the mountain when Jesus was transfigured in Matthew 17:1-13? That was certainly an exceptional event. Both of those men had departed this world in unusual circumstances, Moses by death, but his body buried by God, Elijah by being taken up bodily in a whirlwind, and nobody could find him or his body afterward. Their appearance talking to Jesus was contrary to the normal experience of the dead, who have no further involvement in this world, but this was a testimonial to Jesus and to his select disciples, an encouragement as he turned his steps toward Jerusalem for the battle of the ages.

Isa 8:19 19 When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?

NIV

Joanne Caffie:

I was speaking of yhe latter.

You hear people from the Bayou in LA saying all the time that these spirits are real.

Thanks for the clarification.

Steven Wright:

Ah!

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Thank you, Kevin! Job does not believe he is sinless, yet he does not feel the sins he has committed deserves the suffering he's enduring. In his misery he complains. Yet he does not abandon God or curse him as Satan said he would (1:1, 2:5) Job may not have a lot of patience right now but he does persevere. (James 5:11)

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

Job does not want to question God's essential goodness nor His sense of judgement. He desperately wants to know HOW he has sinned and must ask the One who knows. We, as human beings, feel comfortable and secure in a world that has cause and effect as opposed to random chaos. Job is feeling the effects; now he wants to understand the cause. How often have you heard, when something terrible has happened, people crying out "Why? Why has this happened? Why now? Why me?"

February 2: Job 9-10 (Kevin Crittenden)

JOB STUDY

Week 5

Poetry reading for 2/02/17

Job 9 & 10

I'm hoping that all my Gentle Readers (both of you) will remember that earlier in our study (page 6), we had our three assertions:

- 1 – God is Omnipotent – all-powerful
- 2 – God is Omnibenevolent - completely good
- 3 – Job is a righteous man

Last week, in Chapter 8, Bildad accused Job of questioning assertion number 2. Job seems to think that God is, well, picking on him without giving a reason. We might call it bullying.

Job says "Look God, I stand innocent before You and yet You torment me?"

Bildad said "Our God is a righteous God and takes care of His own. He called His wrath down upon your children because THEY were the one's who stepped out of line. So stop blaspheming God with your sick perversions of His justice. Job 8:20 "Surely God doesn't reject one who is blameless or strengthen the hands of evildoers."

Job picks up the thread now and begins by acknowledging the truth that Bildad has spoken. God is indeed just.

Job 9:1 "Indeed, I know that this is true."

But Job isn't judging the way that God runs His world. Why? Because he knows it's futile. Job brings in the fact that God is Omnipotent; He has absolute power. What chance does a mere mortal man have to prove his innocence against a Prosecutor wielding absolute power?

Job expounds on the awesome power of God, echoing the sentiments of Eliphaz (Job 5:9, Job 9:10)

Job 9:12 "If he snatches away, who can stop him? Who can say to him, 'What are you doing?'" Job acknowledges that there are no limitations on God's justice. He can do what He wants. If there WERE a system of checks and balances on God, then God would not be God. Job 9:19 – ". . . And if it is a matter of justice, who can challenge him?"

So Job asks (Job 9:14) "How then can I dispute with him?" God is Judge, Prosecutor, Jury and Executioner.

Job, sitting desolate in his physical and mental anguish, enduring the condemnation of his friends, continues to spiral down into despair. He despises his own life and then cries out (Job 9:22) "It is all the same; that is why I say, He destroys both the blameless and the wicked."

The underlying thought here is "Why bother to be righteous? Why bother to do good? Why try to live according to His will? He will destroy you anyway, just like He does the wicked."

This is reminiscent of the quote by the Earl of Gloucester in Shakespeare's King Lear: "As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods; they kill us for their sport."

In our society today, this is an ongoing issue: "Why do good people suffer and wicked people prosper?"

In 1985, the movie "Shadowlands" came out, which told of events in the life of C.S. Lewis. In the beginning of the movie, Lewis is shown lecturing an audience on the question of Why God lets good people suffer. He tells the audience that pain is the chisel that God uses to shape His people into their full capacity, helping them become deeper, wiser and stronger.

C. S. Lewis was a life-long bachelor but soon after the lecture he meets and falls in love with an American woman, Joy Davidman. They marry and he writes "Surprised by Joy."

After only a few happy years, she develops bone cancer and dies a slow, agonizing, lingering death as her husband watches helplessly. This real-life experience changes Lewis' perspective of pain being God's chisel to the idea that suffering of the righteous is a mystery beyond our understanding.

Our real-life experiences outweigh classroom theology and this is what Job is struggling with.

Anyway, Job here is perilously close to free-falling into the despair of nihilism.

Definition: Nihilism - the rejection of all religious and moral principles, often in the belief that life is meaningless.

If good people and wicked people are equally punished, then what difference is there between good and evil?

On the flip side, if we, by our righteous behavior, could influence God to treat us well, then would He still be Omnipotent? Would not this ability to influence God turn Him into some kind of cosmic vending machine? You pray the right prayers, offer the right sacrifices, insert the right number of good deeds, pull the knob and get a blessing?

Job 10:2 "I say to God: Do not declare me guilty, but tell me what charges you have against me." Job is offended by Bildad's accusation that Job is judging God. Rather, says Job, "God, put ME on trial. Then show me the evidence. Tell me what crime I have committed. Show me the error of my ways."

The rhetorical questions that Job asks in Job 10:4-7 are meant to convey the idea that God does not understand what it is like to live as a human. If He did, He would not persecute Job so, knowing of Job's innocence.

Starting with Job 10:8, Job says "God, you formed me so lovingly, you nurtured me, fed me, clothed me, gave me life. Why did you do that if you are just going to throw me away like something you are ashamed of?"

Job 10:14-17 expresses Job's thought that God is watching him like a hawk, ready to punish at the slightest infraction.

Job 10:20 Job is sure that he will die soon and asks God to leave him alone so he can get some respite from his punishment, "a moment's joy", before going to the grave.

This particular section of Job may resonate with anyone who has endured stretches of time in their life when the days were gray and lifeless, the joy sucked out of them, when nothing but trouble and fear loomed on the horizon, the future was dreaded and they spent their waking moments worrying about surviving the near future and their sleeping moments steeped in the nightmare of the soul. At such times, death seems like a welcome option.

As you probably know, President Abraham Lincoln suffered greatly from melancholy (depression). Here is an excerpt from an article in the Atlantic Monthly entitled "Lincoln's Great Depression":

"Elizabeth Keckley, Mary Lincoln's dressmaker, once told of watching the president drag himself into the room where she was fitting the First Lady. "His step was slow and heavy, and his face sad," Keckley recalled. "Like a tired child he threw himself upon a sofa, and shaded his eyes with his hands. He was a complete picture of dejection." He had just returned from the War Department, he said, where the news was "dark, dark everywhere." Lincoln then took a small Bible from a stand near the sofa and began to read. "A quarter of an hour passed," Keckley remembered, "and on glancing at the sofa the face of the president seemed more cheerful. The dejected look was gone; in fact, the countenance was lighted up with new resolution and hope." Wanting to see what he was reading, Keckley pretended she had dropped something and went behind where Lincoln was sitting so that she could look over his shoulder. It was the Book of Job."

Comment:

Lori Watt:

I am so blessed to know you and have the benefit of reading your thoughts and interpretation of this book. It is a great encouragement to me. Thank you for all the work you are putting in on this!

Comment:

Ryan Ingle:

What great insight you brought to this lesson! Thanks for your hard effort! I did not know all that about C.S. Lewis.

Comment:

Charles Fry:

Good stuff! I don't delight in Job's suffering, but I am delighted that God does understand discouragement, melancholy, our struggle with pain, and doesn't write us off when we are mentally and spiritually wrestling and confused. Thank you, Kevin Crittenden.

Comment:

Beverly Schoonover Wattenbarger:

I also appreciate your efforts. You are giving me a much better understanding of Job. Interesting about C S Lewis and Lincoln. God bless you. Keep up the good work.

Comment:

Joanne Caffie:

I concur with ALL of the previous comments. A "Job" very well done. #Punintended

Comment:

Steven Wright:

Thank you brother Kevin! Very useful and helpful! And, God is no chisler, but he is indeed a comfortor!

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

Yup, God gives freely of His bounty. No chiseler, indeed!

Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:

Thank you, all! As you may have surmised, I have been in an unhappy place where there seemed no hope on any horizon, wallowing in anxiety, fear and doubt. Death seemed quite the comforter at that time. The stigma of reaching out for help, the shame of being in that dark place kept me in isolation for far too long. I am so hopeful that anyone reading Job will find encouragement to KNOW that God is there alongside them as they walk in the darkness of the Valley of the shadow of death. I am also so hopeful that if you sense that someone in your circle of friends is in need of comfort, that you reach out to them. BE the means by which Jesus expresses His love for us. Judgement has no place in these situations but unconditional love does.

Replies:

Joanne Caffie:

I know of someone who is currently in that state but won't seek any help. I don't know what I should do

Kevin Crittenden:

Joanne Caffie - I sent you a friend request - let's talk.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:

Thank you, Kevin! Your experiences and knowledge is a blessing for many!

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

As yours is!!

Comment:

Marc Hermon:

Job 9:33 "If only there were someone to arbitrate between us,"

Heb. 9:24 "For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf."

Replies:

Butch O'Neal:
Amen, Marc!

Comment:

Anita Bown:
Excellent!

Comment:

Linda Whitworth Davis:
Thank you all for the comments. It helps with understanding Job and God.

February 9: Job 11-12 (Kevin Crittenden)

Week 6
Poetry reading for 2/09/17
Job 11 & 12

So far Zophar has remained respectfully silent. But now, having listened attentively to all of the preceding duologues, he bestirs himself. Bildad has tagged out and so Zophar tags in. He steps up to the podium.

By the way, although we only have mention of Job and his three friends up to this point, it may very well be that there were more in attendance. In fact, we will find out later that Friend Elihu was in attendance but patiently keeping his counsel.

The name "Zophar" means "young bird." The name is found nowhere else in the Bible. As a Naamathite, he is indirectly connected to the sister of Tubal-Cain (Gen 4:22)

In his speech, Zophar merely rehashes arguments that have gone before. He patiently explains to Job: "God is smarter than you, His creation is beyond man's understanding so ADMIT your faults, THROW yourself on His mercy, and ACT like a righteous man. Only THEN will you be restored to His good graces. After that, You and He will go in the fields together and walk and talk as good friends should and do."

At hearing this, Job's voice is not exactly ringing with laughter. His three friends don't get it; rather than being supportive, they are witnesses for the prosecution.

Job begins his rejoinder by addressing his friends in a sarcastic manner: (Job 12:1-2)
"Doubtless you are the only people who matter, and wisdom will die with you." Essentially:
"Yeah, you fools think you are the smartest people in the world but here's a news flash – I'm just as smart as you. Not only that, but even the animals know what you know."

Job feels the cruel derision of his friends and attributes it to the fact that THEY haven't been afflicted as HE has. We see this thought echoed elsewhere in the Bible when widows, orphans, the poor and the marginalized are derided by the 1%ers – the Pharisees, Teachers of the Law, Priests, etc.

Has much changed since those days? In our society, the marginalized, the poor, the sojourners and the homeless are looked down upon. They stand in our streets, some with children, and we (including this author) avoid eye contact. The attitude is "Well, they must be

lazy”, “They continue to make poor choices”, “They’re just living from bottle to bottle.” We have not been as afflicted by life as they have.

In our culture of individualism, how you fare in this world is dependent upon your own choices rather than social forces. Pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps and singlehandedly overcoming adversity is a great virtue in America. Think Horatio Alger; the epitome of the rags-to-riches ideal. A linchpin of the American Dream.

An Iranian folk proverb reads: “If you see a blind man, kick him; why should you be kinder than God?” The tacit understanding is that the blindness was brought on by God. Why? Because the man did something to deserve his suffering and so God wants him to suffer. Job’s suffering (our suffering) was(is) deserved. We remember that the suffering in New Orleans caused by Hurricane Katrina was identified (by some) as a punishment from God because of the sinful nature of that city.

Job’s friends have pointed out the beauty and majesty of the natural world with the concomitant idea that the God who created our perfect natural world imposed that same perfection on the moral world.

Perhaps they had Psalm 19 in mind:

1 The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

...

7 The law of the Lord is perfect,
refreshing the soul.
The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.

8
The precepts of the Lord are right,
giving joy to the heart.
The commands of the Lord are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.

9
The fear of the Lord is pure,
enduring forever.
The decrees of the Lord are firm,
and all of them are righteous.

However, Job has suffered some terrible real-life experiences and so he counters the idea of the dual perfection of the Natural World and the Moral World with a proverb (Job 12:11) “Does not the ear test words, as the tongue tastes food?” Job is not swayed by his friends’ arguments; his ears detect shoddy reasoning.

Why is it shoddy? Well, nature can easily turn from orderly to destructive causing great damage just as rulers can be too ambitious or egotistical, causing great suffering. Anyone who has had their house destroyed by flood, or tornado, or earthquake is not admiring the grandeur and perfection of the natural world. If random destruction is part and parcel of the perfection of the natural world, then the random suffering of the righteous is part of the perfection of the moral world.

Therefore, Job rejects this view of dual perfection. He desperately wants to believe in a God of Justice and Compassion.

Rabbis long ago taught that a world of strict justice, with no allowances for human weakness, would be an unlivable world. Victor Hugo's "Les Misérables" comes to mind. God has no limitations on his power. He need not be limited by thoughts of Justice and yet in a conflict between Power and Justice, Job hopes, Justice will prevail.

The question can be asked: "Does God pray?"

One answer is "God does indeed pray, and His prayer is 'May it be My will that My attribute of compassion overrule My attribute of justice.'"

Job continues to hold on to the hope that God's Divine Justice will prevail over the arbitrary use of God's Divine Power.

Comment:

Lori Watt:

Another great entry! I especially like your perspective given in: "Anyone who has had their house destroyed by flood, or tornado, or earthquake is not admiring the grandeur and perfection of the natural world. If random destruction is part and parcel of the perfection of the natural world, then the random suffering of the righteous is part of the perfection of the moral world." I've never thought of it like that before.

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

I'm thinking that studying Job can be discomfoting for some people - the idea of questioning God may not sit well for them. We see Job as TRUSTING in God's Justice SO MUCH, that he knows he can count on God's support in his quest for truth. God gave us a mind; I expect He is glad when we use our intelligence and Job is doing just that. We are also expected to study the Word for ourselves, not just blindly accept what we have heard from childhood:

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure.—Php 2:12-13.

Charles Fry:

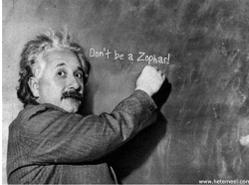
You are quite right that some really "don't get" Job's attitude, maybe suspect his friends are wrong in the particulars but right in the principles. I find Job very reassuring. Not because of a rosy outlook but because the man and theme do speak to the difficulty of keeping faith in a fallen world, and the impossibility of really seeing purpose and value in every experience, of knowing "why" for everything that comes along. And yet, God is not offended or angered by the questions, the confusion, the grief, the outspoken distress. This is a beautiful insight into the character of God and his determination to love us.

Marc Hermon:

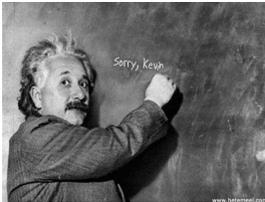
Not to be a Zophar and shower on but Job's problem as we find out later is the same problem we all have in our spiritual walk: putting a focus on ourselves rather than putting the focus on God. Both Job and Christ were allowed to suffer to shine a light and condemn the devil. Job wasn't perfect so it takes him "42 chapters" to "repent in dust and ashes" and to realize that his suffering was glorifying God to the devil's shame. Christ, on the other hand being of God, always put the focus on his Father, and unlike Job "opened not his mouth" and willingly accepted the suffering. Jesus

demonstrated the attitude that almost always eludes mankind (and especially me). "Not my will but Thine be done."

Kevin Crittenden:



Marc Hermon:



Charles Fry:

Job's reaction to his encounter with God at the end of the book is much like Isaiah's reaction to his vision of God, or Peter's reaction to Jesus. So it is fair enough to say Job had the same problem mortal men have, even people of faith. However, God explicitly says Job had said what was right or true about God, unlike his friends. God says he was not angry with Job for what he said. God at the end characterizes the words of the friends as folly, but does not say the same about Job's words.

Jesus, when he suffered, had some assets Job didn't have, in the sense that he had prophetic scriptures, knowledge of why he was suffering, knew what was going to happen, what the benefit and outcome would be (see Hebrews 12:1-4). Even knowing what he knew, in the course of his horrific suffering, he asked, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" There was no fault in that outcry, he did not reject God or curse his tormentors. Even the sinless Savior could express his distress, his feeling of loneliness, and request some bit of relief ("I thirst.")

Job was certainly not sinless, didn't consider himself to be, but he was a righteous man and did not yield to the almost incomprehensible pressure brought to bear against his whole being. Job didn't know why he was having these horrid experiences, those questions were still unanswered after the encounter with God in 38-41, but his questions and his reasoning did not anger God, and were not a misrepresentation of God as were the "karma" like assumptions of his friends, assumptions Job himself had to discard in the process of his struggle.

Isaiah 6:5 (NIV)

5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."

Luke 5:8-11 (NIV)

8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" 9 For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, 10 and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." 11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Job 42:7-9 (NIV) 7 After the Lord had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has. 8 So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has." 9 So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite did what the Lord told them; and the Lord accepted Job's prayer.

Kevin Crittenden:

Thank you, Charles! I hope we can take away from the Book of Job the point you are making - that asking the hard questions in the quest for difficult answers is not blasphemy.

Comment:

Steven Wright:

Superb! Thanks for that brother!

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

Fo' shizzle!

Comment:

Beverly Schoonover Wattenbarger:

You certainly have a way with words. Thanks for helping me better understand Job.

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

Thank you for your encouragement! I certainly am learning a lot about Job. And speaking of language - as I explain to my ESL learners - a picture painted with only 10 colors will lack the vibrancy and beauty of one painted with 100. So it is with the English language which has so many wonderful and apt words with which to express our thoughts and feelings. Well, they tell me I can get a job as an English teacher in China or Japan or Korea or Taiwan . . . even though my degree is in Physics. ^-^ Anyway, you have a blessed day and thanks again!

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

I always look forward to your thoughts, Kevin Crittenden! You help me consider passages in a new light. I appreciate your life applications as well. Thank you! :-) Zophar's assessment of Job's condition was not accurate and he unfortunately thought God should speak against Job (11:5). We know God eventually spoke against Zophar Himself. Zophar repented after being rebuked by the Lord. In chapter 11 Zophar does speak truth and knowledge toward repentance: a devoted heart begins a change of life (11:13), forgiveness must be sought from

God by yielding/stretching out our hand to Him (11:13) & there is joy and peace in forgiveness (11:15-19).

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

Thank you, Ginger! Indeed, we can find much joy and peace in forgiveness of the people in our lives, whether from long ago hurts, to today's injustices. Indeed, we unfortunately allow even the possible future actions of people to hurt us. (I just know my husband is going to forget my birthday again!) We must look to the Lord for His example of forgiveness and try to emulate His perfect ways in our own lives. It really is for our own good. But not always so easy.

February 16: Job 13-14 (Kevin Crittenden)

Week 7

Poetry reading for 2/16/17

Job 13 & 14

Job 13 and 14 finish up Job's lengthy soliloquy. Job hides nothing in what he says; his soul is laid bare before his friends and before God. He is at his most vulnerable.

I think this is the proper attitude to adopt when coming before God. Don't bother to try to hide anything. Job is also opening himself up before his friends. But as we see, our friends, like Job's, may not have the ability to support us. Trust, a cornerstone of Faith, must be established before vulnerability, and empathy, can be truly expressed. We are exhorted to love one another and to confess our sins to one another. But, naturally, we ought not just choose ANY old "another" with whom to air out our scarlet side.

So what can you do if you have no empathetic friend, no one with whom you've developed an emotional trust level? For men in particular, shame is locked away within. We don't talk much about our feelings. We're raised to be doers and solvers; if there's a problem, we're expected to take action. Well, this is a huge topic by itself. Back to Job.

Job reiterates that his knowledge is not inferior to his friend's. But he's tired of arguing with them and having THEM argue the case for God, as if God needed their help. Job asks them to please butt out; he want to argue his own case with God.

Essentially he says to his friends: "I know what you are saying and, believe it or not, I understand it just as much as you do. But I really want to bring my case before God Himself. You three continue to slander me and are worse than useless. So I wish you would just shut up, especially as you spread lies about me in God's name. Are you willing to risk Him calling you out for that? Could you bear His scrutiny? I just want to talk with God and, afterwards, let the chips fall where they may."

Job 13:15 "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him . . ." Job has reached a turning point. He is regaining a nascent sense of confidence in God's goodness. He has reached the depths of his psychological and spiritual katabasis and is remembering to trust in God, a necessary prerequisite to his subsequent anabasis.

Note that a few pages back, Job was sure he was going to die very soon and then God wouldn't be able to use him for target practice anymore. Now, he has changed his mind and

believes he will indeed live unless God slays him. But Job is willing to trust in God's goodness in his search for answers and meaning within the context of his situation.

Job 13:16 " . . . no godless person would dare come before him!" Job has not abandoned God at all!

Job 13:18-19 " . . . I know I will be vindicated. Can anyone bring charges against me?" Compare to Isaiah 50:8 "He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other!" It has been suggested that this is the opening formula of a plaintiff in a court of law.

Job now prays directly to God and asks Him to grant two wishes:

- 1) Cease tormenting him
- 2) Let him present his case and have God reply

Job is saying "God, if I am so almighty important that you keep track of every one of my misdeeds so you can punish me, then aren't I worth a moment of your valuable time so that you can explain why I'm being punished? And if I'm too insignificant a worm for you to waste your time talking with, then why am I important enough to You to mete out my punishment?"

Job 13:24 "Why do you hide your face?" This is an idiom with the meaning Why are you hostile to me?

In Job 14, Job returns to idea that life is transient and troubled.

He is essentially saying, "We humans are only on earth for a very short time during which our lives are filled with problems and woes. So why, God, do you bother us with even more problems? Go do something more worthy of your ineffable Self and let us do our own thing until we die."

Job now muses on the possibility of a continued relationship with God after death and uses nature as an example. This "second chance" could be construed as compensation for the troubles experienced in the "first life."

He says "Even trees get second chances – you can cut them down at the base, like a Christmas tree, and they will sprout back up when watered. Yet man gets only one shot at life, so whereas the tree has hope of renewal, man does not. " Job 14:12 "so he lies down and does not rise."

He continues "If only you could hide me in the grave for awhile until you stop being angry with me. Then, you will remember me and restore me after which our relationship will be much better. You will have a lot of compassion for the creature (me) that you have formed with your hands and watch over me without holding my sins against me."

However, given the absence of that renewal, Job continues in a despondent vein: "slowly, remorselessly, immutably, you, God, chip away at a person's hope until it is destroyed and they die, never knowing the fate of their children."

Job makes a reference to the heart-wrenching loss of his own children here. He will know nothing more about them. But Job is also speaking as any parent might – none of us will see our children grow into old age.

"Sometimes we look to the end of the tale
where there should be marriage feasts,

and find only, as it were,
black marigolds and a silence.”
- Azeddin el Mocadecci

This concludes the first cycle of speeches.

The friends' position is the traditional one, namely:
God is Great
God know us more thoroughly than we do
God uses his rod only when He has a reason to

So, since nobody (including Job) is perfect, he should stop insisting that he is innocent, repent, and throw himself on the mercy of God. If he did that, then most likely a merciful God would forgive him and restore his fortunes.

In contrast, Job offers up his own experiences in opposition to the friend's abstract beliefs. To Job, his own experiences outweigh (and are more persuasive) than his friend's theoretical discourses.

Comment:

Lori Watt:
Thank you, again, for such a well-thought-out post. You are helping me to understand this book so much better!

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Kevin! Your words are so understandable.

Comment:

Ryan Ingle:
I know with almost complete certainty that I couldn't handle what Job went through and not been a lot worse than Job. Yes he did question a lot but in contrast, i don't think many of us would do as well as he did! Thanks Kevin for yet another great analysis of the story!

Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:
Thank you! It's true that Job is undergoing horrific experiences that few of us can fathom. And yet, this is not to detract from our own personal struggles. "Everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle." Our own battlefields are horrific to us, and there really is no way to make comparisons with someone else's. My pain is real to me as your pain is to you. It took me a LONG time to understand that most people I meet are struggling with something. Job, therefore, is a comforting book, giving us permission, as it were, to voice our grief. 1 Thess 5:11 "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."

February 23: Job 15-16 (Kevin Crittenden)

Week 8
Poetry reading for 2/23/17
Job 15 & 16

Cycle Two of the speeches begins with Eliphaz once more picking up the argument from where it had fallen behind the couch.

In the first cycle, the friends were trying to tailor their arguments to come up with something that would convince Job to repent and throw himself on the mercy of God. It's all very respectfully done. They were making allowances for Job's devastating losses.

In this second cycle, the friends are losing patience and beginning to wonder What is wrong with Job? What unacknowledged sin must he have, that he cannot "get it?" It must be that his stubbornness and arrogance are proof of his impiety. The situation is becoming less respectful. Job's intolerable suffering is laid by the wayside and no longer taken into account.

You may wonder why the friends don't just say "OK Job. I guess we'll have to agree to disagree" as we often do today for the sake of maintaining relationships. But the author of Job is intellectually rigorous (unlike many of us today - - and by "many of us", I mean me) and really wants to explore this topic thoroughly. I suspect he was going through all of this as a way of finding meaning in his own life. Again, due to worldly distractions, something that we only touch lightly on in our own journeys.

So, here's a question for you: Why do YOU think that the Book of Job was included in the Bible? It's not about the Law. It's not about the Prophets. It's not about History. It's not about Heritage. It's not Advice on how to live a Godly life. It's not a Book of Paeans to God nor does it Delineate God's Will for us. And does it say that Job is even a Hebrew? (The author most likely was.) Job lived in Uz, believed to have been located in the south of Edom.

In his speech, Eliphaz essentially says, "Job, my boy, your immaturity makes you arrogant; you think yourself wiser than your elders, which attitude, as you doubtless are aware, flies in the face of our culture. You are too young and immature to teach us who are senior to you. I'M not the one condemning you, your own words do! Just listen to yourself! You're speaking as if you were privy to God's Council."

[Note: God DID have a council (Job 1:6) but, of course, neither Job nor Eliphaz knows this. Poetic irony.]

Eliphaz continues "If God doesn't even trust the angels because of their rebellion, then what makes you think that we mortal men could possibly be pure? We are, by nature, evil and wallow like pigs in corruption. Listen, Job, to the wisdom that has been handed down by the sages. The man who rebels against God, the one who questions God, calls down punishment on himself. He lives his days in fear, never knowing when that punishment will be meted out. Anxiety, woe and dread are his lot, following him all the remaining days of his life. Job, you speculated about a second chance when you talked about the tree renewing itself but you can forget about that, the wicked man will not escape the darkness and God will wither his shoots with fire."

In Job 16, Job thoughtfully sips his coffee, feeling both sadness and anger building up, and then lashes out, mainly at Eliphaz. Job had been hoping that his trio of "comforters" would be silent, but Eliphaz' verbal intrusion had thrown that idea out the window.

In Job 16:2-5, Job directs his comments to all of his friends at first and then to Eliphaz in particular. He says:

"Yada, yada, yada, how you DO go on! All of you are miserable comforters! Eliphaz, will you never stop talking? What is WRONG with you? If our positions were swapped, I could also chide you with fancy talk, but, as your friend, I would encourage and support you. At least I would TRY to give you some relief."

Job now dismisses his friends and begins lamenting his lot again.

He says “My pain remains whether I speak or not. God is angry with me and has sicced my friends on me. They are become wicked and ungodly and are united against me. I was doing ok in life but God chose to make me his target and, without mercy, continually attacks me. And yet, throughout all this, my prayer is pure, I maintain my innocence. “

Job 16:18: “Earth, do not cover my blood . . .”

This is an echo of Abel’s blood crying out from the ground in Genesis 4:10 “The LORD said, ‘What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground!’” God’s mad and Cain’s about to get it.

We also remember in Deuteronomy 21 the measures that were needed for atonement for an unsolved murder.

“6 Then all the elders of the town nearest the body shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley, 7 and they shall declare: “Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it done. 8 Accept this atonement for your people Israel, whom you have redeemed, Lord, and do not hold your people guilty of the blood of an innocent person.” Then the bloodshed will be atoned for, 9 and you will have purged from yourselves the guilt of shedding innocent blood, since you have done what is right in the eyes of the Lord.”

Murder is an affront to God, the Author of Life, and it is abominable to try to cover up the offence by burying it out of sight. This would include suicide as well – Job, as miserable as he is - would never contemplate such a heinous action.

So why does Job say “Earth, do not cover my blood . . .”?

Because he knows he is innocent and his death (innocent blood) would violate God’s own standards. He challenges God to live up to His own commandments. Have we ever (as parents) said “Do as I say, not as I do!”? God doesn’t play that game.

Job 16:19-21 “Even now, my witness is in heaven . . .he pleads with God . . .”

So, Who is this witness? Job believes he has a friend who can advocate for him with God; an intercessor. Was he talking about Jesus, who advocates for those whose names are written in the Book of Life? Well, no. Job was unaware of Jesus. It’s more likely that since God is acting as Judge, Prosecutor, Jury and Executioner, then He is also the Chief Witness for the defense of Job. Job is counting on God to act as his witness in Heaven.

Comment:

Steven Wright:

Saddest and best line in the Book of Job (16:2) and here are some thoughts related to (16:21) The Indwelling Spirit

The promise of the Holy Spirit is in fact the culmination of all that Jesus said to comfort those eleven troubled men. In that hour of turmoil, they feared being left alone. However Jesus assured them that they would not be left to fend for themselves; they would have a supernatural Helper. The Greek word translated "Helper" (parakletos) literally means "one who is called alongside." The King James Version translates it "Comforter," which is one of its meanings.

- When you look for scriptural designations for the Holy Spirit.
- o Specifically designations with the word “Spirit.”

You find such as:

- "Holy" (Acts 1:5)
- "My" (Gen. 6:3)
- "God" (Gen. 1:2; 24:2)
- "Lord" (Jn. 3:10)
- "Truth" (Jn. 16:13,14)
- "Spirit" (1st Jn. 3:24)

- These all can be considered as descriptive names.
- With simply: "Holy Spirit" being given as his personal name.
- Another designation we mentioned was...

"Jehovah/Lord" (Isa. 61:1)

- Also consider: (Isa. 11:2)
- o "Sevenfold Spirit of God"

1. "Spirit of the Lord"

2. "Wisdom"

3. "Understanding"

4. "Counsel"

5. "Might"

6. "Knowledge"

7. "Fear of the Lord"

- A list of descriptive attributes of the Holy Spirit – given in Jewish symmetrical literary style.

- But when we have the phrase: "The Comforter," we have a term which designates a work i.e.

- o "The Doctor"
- o "The Lawyer"
- o "The policeman"
- o "The Mayor"
- o "The Carpenter"
- o "The salesmen"
- o "The Elder"
- o "The Deacon"
- o "The Evangelist"
- o Etc...

- So the work of the Holy Spirit for each and every one of us personally, is to be our comforter

o That is his role with us after he comes to live in us.

o That is, His job description

o The Greek word translated "another" may provide a helpful clue in understanding Jesus' meaning in John 14.

There are two Greek words frequently translated "another": heteros and allos.

☐ Sometimes the biblical authors used those words interchangeably, but sometimes they used heteros to speak of another of a different kind and allos to speak of another of the same kind (e.g. the "different" [heteros] gospel vs. "another" [allos] gospel in Galatians 1:6-7).

☐ Allos is the word Jesus used to describe the Holy Spirit: "another [allos] Helper."

- That could be His way of saying, "I am sending you one of exactly the same essence as Me."

- He wasn't sending just any helper, but one exactly like Himself with the same compassion, the same attributes of deity, and the same love for them. Jesus had been the disciples' helper for three years. He had helped them, comforted them, and walked alongside them. Now they would have another Helper--One exactly like Jesus--to minister to them as He had.

Now by contrast, consider this...

Daysman "Neither is there any daysman betwixt us that might lay his hands on us both". (Job 9:33 KJV)

- Arbiter ESV
- Umpire ASV and RSV
- Mediator NKJV
- Someone to mediate NIV
- Arbitrator NASB

- o The Hebrew here for, daysman is: "Yakach" "to be or make right. Plead. Argue [for the defense] Justify [a'justifier'].

- o Consider this in the context of the book of Job. See: (1:6-12; 2:1-6).

- o With regard to Job, what was Satan doing before God?

- ☐ Satan was accusing Job! And even for that matter, God Himself!

- ☐ What is Satan called in (Revelation 12:10)? Ans., "...The Accuser..."

- "Diabolos" (c.f. 1st Tim. 3:11) "Slanderers."

- ☐ Because of his rebellion in heaven, Satan was cast down and the earth became his domain.

- ☐ On earth, Satan could realize some of his aspirations, but only by "Dethroning/Corrupting" man.

- ☐ The strategic battle in this war between Satan and God, took place in the garden.

- ☐ Because Adam and Eve let that battle go to Satan, he became "The prince of this world" (Ezekiel 28:13-17; Isaiah 14:12-15; Genesis 1:26, 27; 3:1-7; John 14:30).

- ☐ In this capacity then, he also claimed the auspicious title of "The accuser of our brethren" (ibid.)

- ☐ Moreover, though he was stripped of the former rank which he enjoyed in heaven, he still, for a time, enjoyed access.

- ☐ This is why we find him doing what he does in the story of Job.

- ☐ But the cross took care of that! (John 12:31, 32; Revelation 12:1-12)

Bearing this entire context in mind, and taking this together with the context of Job's statement in (9:33), consider: (Job 9:32-35). Compare and Contrast: "For he is not a man, as I am..." (Job 9:32) with; (John 1:14; Heb. 4:15). Look again at the word: "Daysman" (Job 9:33a.) in light of the N.T. Advocate: In the Greek: "Parakletos" "An intercessor, consoler, advocate, comforter." This is our LORD and Savior, "...Jesus Christ the righteous..."

(1 John 2:1) My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

But because of Jesus, we have not just one, but TWO COMFORTERS! For in: (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7), we see this same word: "Parakletos" used by Jesus in reference to the Holy Spirit.

Now reflect again on this phrase: "...that he might lay his hands upon us both..." (Job9:33b.) In Eastern lands, it was customary for a judge to place his hands upon the heads of the two parties in a dispute as a demonstration of his authority and desire to render an unbiased verdict. Job's statement implies that no human being is capable of acting as this sort of intercessor between God and man, see also: (Job 16:2), where Job speaks of his friends saying, "...miserable comforters are ye all..." But we have Jesus as our Judge, see: (2 Timothy 4:8; Acts 10:42; 17:31)

Jesus, is our Mediator: (Galatians 3:19-20; I Tim.2:4; Hebrews 8:6; 9:15; 12:24). And again, likewise, we have the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:12-17, 26, 27; Jn. 7:37-39; Acts 2:38; 5:32; Ro. 5:5; 15:13; 2 Co 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14; 3:16; 4:30)

What Job sought, we have! And more than Job could ever have imagined! We have these blessings because of Jesus! We have these blessings with Jesus! We have these blessings IN Jesus! And Jesus has sent us the Holy Spirit!

Comment:

Steven Wright:

and, (just a bit more) [?] The Holy Spirit is not a mystical power; He is a person just as Jesus is a person.

(No more "IT")

[?] He is not a floating fog or some kind of ghostlike emanation.

[?] It is unfortunate that the translators of the King James Version used the term Ghost instead of Spirit.

[?] The Holy Spirit is a person, a real being who by spiritual means lives inside us!

[?] And so all believers have two paracletes: the Spirit of God within us and the Son of God in heaven.

o For again: 1st John 2:1 says,

[?] "If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The Greek word translated "Advocate" is parakletos.

[?] The disciples must have been greatly encouraged and comforted to hear Jesus say that He would send another Helper to minister to them when He left.

[?] But Jesus' promise extended beyond that. His next words beautifully culminate the message of comfort:

• "That He may be with you forever" (John 14:16). Not only would the Holy Spirit come to dwell with them, but also He would never leave.

[?] The apostle Paul said that Christ in us is the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27),

“To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

☐ And Christ promised His Spirit would reside in us (John 14:17).

“Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor, knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”

He was going to be “In them,” and then he would reside there permanently

☐ And He will reside in us permanently

- o Jesus didn't tell the disciples He would come back and leave again.
- o Nor did He say He would leave and be back in two thousand years.
- o He said He would leave, then come back and be in us and with us as long as we live, and throughout eternity.

o In Matthew 28:20 Christ says, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

o He will never leave or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5).

Consider: there's no such thing as a true Christian who doesn't possess the indwelling Christ (Romans 8:9).

“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.”

Some people think they have to search for the Holy Spirit, but He dwells in every believer. Paul said to the Corinthians, "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Maybe it is time to turn on the switch!

Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:

Thanks, Steven! I was able to sense and finally recognize the working of the paraclete in my own life before I "turned on the switch." I know from personal experience that the Holy Spirit is active in the lives of all, whether baptized or not. He is there as a guide and a comforter IF we allow Him to be.

What gave comfort to Job when his wife and friends turned on him was his rock-solid belief in God's Goodness and Justice. Hopefully we can remember this when in our own lives, we seem stuck and friendless in a pit of despair. Turning our thoughts to Him is what Dr. Paraclete recommends.

Replies:

Just catching up after a funeral in Wellsville, KS. This morning and, the Bible Study I lead on the West Side of Topeka at a retirement home on Thursday afternoons. My Thursday evening study in Lawrence is a cancel, so I am sitting here in My car at a Topeka Dillons ,while my Father-in-Law does a bit of shopping. You are welcome my brother Kevin! Glad you engaged the switch! They can become inoperable if we wait too long! Yes, Dr. Paraclete is the best doctor there is! His recommendations are always THE BEST!

Comment:

Charles Fry:

Some may wonder about the work of the Holy Spirit in the unregenerate, which Jesus described in John 16:7-11 as what the "Helper" would do in "the world."

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. 8 And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 of sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; 11 of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged." NKJV

We see this reflected in the two heart reactions of Acts 2 and Acts 7:

Acts 2:37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Acts 7:54 When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. (NKJV)

Both groups were convicted by the Spirit of God through the preaching of the word, one responded with repentance, the other with rage. (See also Acts 16:14, 1 Corinthians 14:24-25, Hebrews 4:12-13)

Comment:

Charles Fry:

"Why do YOU think that the Book of Job was included in the Bible?"

One reason, it is about the struggle. "The Problem of Pain." The apparent lack of justice all around. The nonsense of a "prosperity gospel." The difficulty of suffering and the reality of uncertainty, even for the godly and the faithful. Maybe especially for the godly. It is about Moses saying, "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me?" (Num 11:11-12) Or Gideon asking, "if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when they said, 'Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the Lord has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian." (Judg 6:13) It is about Jeremiah writing, "Why is my pain unending and my wound grievous and incurable? Will you be to me like a deceptive brook, like a spring that fails?" (Jer 15:18) Or Paul remembering that, "We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life." (2 Cor 1:8-9)

Job says, "there will be struggle," and you may not know why, and it may not seem fair, and it may seem to go on intolerably. Not because God doesn't see or doesn't care, not even for any discernible purpose or value we might imagine or embrace or find consolation in, and yet, for all that, Paul's conviction is true, we can survive "the test," with, as Job says our "integrity" intact. (1 Corinthians 10:13, Job 2:3, 9, 6:29, 27:5)

Replies:

Michael Rogers:

Good thoughts Charles

Comment:

Lori Watt:

I love this comment, Charles-- thank you.

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

As always, thanks, Kevin Crittenden! For me the book of Job serves as a constant reminder that in the end all we have is our soul. Matthew 10:28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. John

16:33 "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." No matter what physical circumstance we find ourselves in we have eternal hope thanks be to Christ.

March 2: Job 17-18 (Kevin Crittenden)

The date setting on my watch tells me it's only Feb 29 but I think I still should post my thoughts for the Mar 2 reading. It's been a busy day today - I hosted a baby shower for two of my students, one due in April, the other on June 1. Great fun! So here you go.

Week 9

Poetry reading for 3/02/17

Job 17 & 18

Having replied to Eliphaz' second speech, Job continues his lament.

In the first part of this section, Job reiterates that his life is fleeting and there is only death on the horizon. And during these final moments, he must endure the hostility, judgment and mockery of his friends.

He turns to God.

Job 17:3 "Give me, O God, the pledge you demand. Who else will put up security for me?" Job thinks that if God is concerned about him, then God Himself could become a pledge for Job as there is no one else.

This is similar to Jesus becoming a "pledge" for us as shown in Heb 7:21-22:

"21 but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him:

"The Lord has sworn

and will not change his mind:

'You are a priest forever.'"

22 Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant."

Job then prays to God that the arguments of his friends will not prevail. (Job 17:4)

He then goes on to say (Job 17:6) "God has made me a byword to everyone, a man in whose face people spit."

It is thought that this verse should instead be translated as:

"God has made me a byword to everyone, I have become like Tophet of old."

This reference to Tophet links Job to Jer 7:30-31 - "30 For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the Lord: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it.

31 And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart."

Jeremiah was condemning Israel for turning to pagan worship. The valley of Hinnom was adjacent to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and was used for the burning of corpses, (perhaps those infected with disease rendering them unfit for burial in the family crypt) and also for the sacrifice of children to appease a pagan god. Moloch comes to mind.

When Job says “I have become like Tophet of old,” he is making an extremely serious charge against God. God has killed his children and destroyed his home and in so doing, has acted no better than a pagan god.

Job 17:9 “Nevertheless, the righteous will hold to their ways, and those with clean hands will grow stronger.”

Is this Job speaking? Well, yes, in his misery, perhaps he is mocking the words of Bildad in Job 8:20 “Surely God does not reject one who is blameless or strengthen the hands of evildoers.”

After this, Job taunts his friends, challenging them to give it another go, and then despairs at the hopelessness and brevity of his life.

In Job 18, Bildad picks up the club and starts beating Job with it.

Bildad takes exception to being called “stupid” by Job. He goes on, saying “What makes YOU so different and more important than everybody else on Earth? Now here’s a long list of bad things that can happen to a peccant man, i.e. you!”

Bildad expounds on the well-deserved suffering of the wicked but does not address Job’s complaint about the undeserved misery of the innocent at God’s hand.

Gone is the appeal to Job to reconcile with God for the restoration of his fortunes.

In Job 18:4, Bildad complains “ . . . must the rocks be moved from their place?” What is he saying? Essentially, “Listen, Job. We have a comfortable understanding of God and His world. We take comfort in the belief that God punishes the wicked and nourishes the righteous. So quit rocking the boat! We don’t want to have this bedrock belief system disturbed. It gives us comfort in our lives, that God’s justice always prevails as we think it should. Our religion gives us comfort – we’re not looking to challenge our understanding of God and if you keep talking like this, we’re not going to listen to you.”

Perhaps Bildad speaks for us as well. Over time, we develop a deep comfort level in How Things Are Done in the church. Any perturbations to that can cause a Disturbance in the Force. I am reminded of an incident I heard about when a church member needed to be late for services and asked that the Communion be delayed so he could partake. This relatively minor rearrangement of the schedule for that one time caused some dissention in the group. “We’ve always done it this way so let’s not change a thing.”

Job’s position, of course, is “I’m not going to lie to God nor am I going to lie about God. My personal experiences drive my search for answers.”

I will now relate one of the famous Nasruddin stories. Stop me if you’ve heard it.

(Definition: A Mullah is a Muslim learned in Islamic theology and sacred law.)

One night, Mullah Nasruddin had lost his ring, so he set out to search for it under the street light.

Two policemen came by as it was 3 in the morning and they thought he might be a drunk.

“What are you doing there?”, they asked Nasruddin.

“Sirs, I’ve lost my ring and I am looking for it.”

The policemen began to help him look for the ring.

Finally, after futilely searching for the ring, they asked him:
“Are you sure this is where you lost it?”

Nasruddin replied:
“No, I lost it there,” and pointed to his house.

The policemen asked incredulously:
“Then why are you looking for it here?”

Nasruddin replied:
“Because it is dark in my house, and it is light over here!”

Sometimes the rigorous search for truth needs to take us into the dark recesses where the spiders and goblins lurk and where nightmares are born. As it has Job. Truth doesn’t always reside in the comfortable, well-lit places. Another topic for another time.

In Job 18:19 “He has no offspring or descendants among his people, no survivor where once his lived”, Bildad voices the ultimate punishment – not having anyone to carry on one’s name. This is death on steroids, not only one’s personal death but the cancellation of one’s future. Job already is in extremis at the loss of his own children; these words of Bildad are unusually cruel.

We’ve been seeing how Job’s friends are unsupportive; can it tell us something about ourselves? Let’s say that you have a good friend who calls you because she is in crisis. (I’m assuming the friend is a woman because men don’t usually know how to pick up a phone when they are in trouble.) So you go over to your friend’s house and she tells you that her husband just announced that he is leaving her. What will you say? What would be comforting?

1. “Oh, that’s terrible! What did you do?”
 2. “ Typical! Men! I wouldn’t wipe my feet on the best part of one.”
 3. “There, there, cheer up. There’s plenty of fish in the sea. You’ll meet someone else.”
 4. “That’s terrible. But let me tell you what happened to me.”
 5. “Everything is in God’s hands. This is part of His plan. Someday you’ll understand.”
 6. “Maybe if you fixed yourself up, you know, lost a few pounds, get some stylish clothes, . . .”
- So, How do WE respond to those in need? Do we comfort them? Or do we tell ourselves “I don’t know what to say”, and then avoid them. What can we do to be a blessing to those who need and trust us most?

Romans 12:15 “Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.”

One reason to bring this situation up is that this happened to me. Years ago, before I was married, one of my co-workers needed an outlet; she was distraught because her husband wanted out of the marriage. They had a young son at the time (about 2). And I had no good reply. I wasn’t able, nor knew how, to talk about such things. I failed her that night when she needed a friend the most; it is a regret that I continue to carry with me.

Comment:

Michael Babb:

Being asked for help or advice when you have nothing to give is extremely hard. Not long ago I had someone, who I did not know well, come to me to express difficulties in her life. At the time I told her I would pray for her, and advised she seek guidance from her church, but I have always been bothered that I could offer something better.

And even with good friends there have been times when all I could offer was prayer and an ear to listen. We can't always relate, and we can't always offer a solution. It's terribly frustrating.

Replies:

Kathleen Munger Crittenden:

And often what is needed most is someone to BE with us. Not fix, not offer advice, not analyze, just BE.

Michael Babb:

That is true, but not something I am all that good at, nor all that good at recognizing. A good point though.

Kevin Crittenden:

Yup. Job's friends were doing fine until they started talking. Perhaps the aging process, which enhances wisdom (so I hear), also enhances compassion and empathy. "Had I known then what I know now . . ." is a frequent visitor to my thought patterns. I know your frustration, Michael, in feeling that I should know the correct thing to say or do to rectify the misery in people's lives when they come to us. But as Kathleen says, sometimes we just need to be there.

Kevin Crittenden:

OK, sounds like we need a men's workshop.

Kevin Crittenden:

You bring the games.

Kathleen Munger Crittenden:

It's to some degree a gender difference. SHE expresses frustration, HE wants to find/fix the problem, SHE gets frustrated because she JUST WANTED HIM TO LISTEN!!!

Kevin Crittenden:

Say what?

Kimra Grantham Robinson:

What will you be making at the workshop? I'd like a new corner shelf please.

Kevin Crittenden:

Kimra - Is that for the corner that Dave has to stand in?

Kimra Grantham Robinson:

Nobody puts Davey in the corner.... 😊

Comment:

Michael Babb:

Thank you for the post by the way, it was good food for thought.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:

Thank you, Kevin! Good thoughts!

Comment:

Charles Fry:

Back to the detail on 17:6, there is that place called Tophet in Jeremiah, but I'm doubtful about Job referencing that for a pile of reasons, including place and time. Every major translation goes with the spit in the face idea, and the NET Bible notes say this:

6 c tn The word תֹּפֶת (tofet) is a hapax legomenon. The expression is "and a spitting in/to the face I have become," i.e., "I have become one in whose face people spit." Various suggestions have been made, including a link to Tophet, but they are weak. The verse as it exists in the MT is fine, and fits the context well.

As noted, being spit on fits the context. Job has gone from respected to despised, because of the prevalent idea that good people get good things from God, and people suffer because they deserve it (karma). This degradation of being spit on will come up again in 30:10. God isn't doing the spitting, but God didn't stop it.

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

Thanks, Charles! The Book of Job invites the reader to become involved in the discussion so that we feel we are there with Job and the friends. I have no idea what a hapax legomenon might be, maybe I left it in my Sunday pants, but I'll look it up. It sounds like a creature from one of Mike Babb's games.

Kevin Crittenden:

Hapax Legomenon - a term of which only one instance of use is recorded.

From Wiki -

There are about 1,500 Hapax legomena in the Hebrew Bible; however, due to Hebrew roots, suffixes and prefixes, only 400 are "true" hapax legomena. A full list can be seen at the Jewish Encyclopedia entry for "Hapax Legomena." [19]

Some examples include:

Akut (אָקוט – fought), only appears once in the Hebrew Bible, in Psalms 95:10.

Atzei Gopher (אֶצֵי-גֹפֶר – Gopher wood) is mentioned once in the Bible, in Genesis 6:14, in the instruction to make Noah's ark "of gopher wood". Because of its single appearance, its literal meaning is lost. Gopher is simply a transliteration, although scholars tentatively suggest that the intended wood is cypress. [20]

Gvina (גְּבִינָה – cheese) is a hapax legomenon of Biblical Hebrew, found only in Job 10:10. The word has become extremely common in modern Hebrew.

Zechuchith (זְכוּחִית) is a hapax legomenon of Biblical Hebrew, found only in Job 28:17. The word derives from the root זָכַח z-ch-h, meaning clear/transparent and refers to glass or crystal. In Modern Hebrew, it is used for "glass."

Lilith (לִילִית) occurs once in the Hebrew Bible, in Isaiah 34:14, which describes the desolation of Edom. It is translated several ways.

Michael Babb:

If you encounter a Hapax Legomenon in the wild, you better hope you have an enchanted ax.

Kevin Crittenden:

Michael I think I'll need some enchanted legos as well.

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Thanks, Kevin Crittenden! I imagine Job would have been greatly comforted with this verse: "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." Romans 8:18. I believe this is a great place to start with those suffering terrible things in their life. Sometimes there's no escape or room for physical comfort so we must look to the eternal hope and gift of salvation; thanks be to Christ!

March 9: Job 19-20 (Kevin Crittenden)

Week 10

Poetry reading for 3/09/17

Job 19 & 20

The Book of Job was penned a long time ago by an unnamed genius, long dead, who wrestled with certain ethical and theological issues, probably hotly debated and then addressed in his magnum opus. He lived in the pre-exilic era (Before 597 BCE). So at least 2,600 years ago.

The Book lives in the Old Testament and lies buried just before Psalms. Many of us go to Psalms frequently for comfort and assurance, right? But what about Job? You may reply, Well, that is an old tale, it's hard to read, the characters talk funny, it speaks about places I'm not familiar with and, really, what has it to do with me in my modern life? I may as well read a book on Phrenology. (Caution: I am NOT suggesting this.)

I suggest you think again about the value of Job to your life.

Job 19 is a cry of deepest despair and in it, Job echoes the misery of every man in every age who is mired in the nadir of his life. In our modern times, we might call it "Hitting rock bottom." Who among us has not sunk into the depths of anguish at some time or other?

Job is written for you.

Remember that Job, the man, has lost all his children, his possessions and his servants. Only his wife remains and even SHE urges Job to curse God and die. His friends journeyed from afar to comfort him but came with an agenda in mind and systematically began attacking one of the most important things Job had – his integrity.

Note the following:

19:13 "He has alienated my family from me . . ."

19:15 – "My guests and my female servants count me a foreigner. . ."

19:17 – ". . . I am loathsome to my own family"

Job is speaking for every Unfortunate Wretch who once led a pleasant life, only to have it ripped away and replaced with misery and woe. The homeless, eking out a marginal existence

along our highways and byways, have fallen out the bottom of our society. Surely, their lives were pleasanter once.

19:21-22 “Have pity on me, my friends, have pity, for the hand of God has struck me. Why do you pursue me as God does? Will you never get enough of my flesh?”

Here, Job is reproaching his friends for siding with God against him, rather than standing with him in his hour of need and railing against God’s perceived injustice.

19:25 “I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth”

Who is this redeemer? Job had no hope or belief in, or understanding of, the Christian afterlife so this redeemer, in Job’s mind, does not refer to Jesus as the Redeemer who saves sinful people from Hell. But Job did know about God.

In those times and, indeed, in these times, a redeemer was the guy that fixed things. If something was wrong or unfair, he felt obligated to do something about it. How many times have you acted as a redeemer, paying off a friend’s debt, comforting a child in tears, buying groceries for a sick friend? (In our times, women act as redeemers as well, of course.)

In those days, a redeemer could:
Ransom those sold into slavery (Lev 25:47-55)
Redeem property (Lev 25:23-24)
Avenge the blood of a kinsman (Num 35:19)
Preserve the line of a deceased relative (Deut 25:5-10)

God is called a redeemer in Exod 6:6, 15:13; Ps 103:4

Job here is confident that God will act as his redeemer and will appear (stand) as a witness for Job.

And so we come to Job 20 when Zophar makes his second appearance. He is personally upset at the slurs that Job has made about him, although Job is an equal-opportunity downtrodden wretch – his slurs were for all of them.

Zophar says essentially, “You dissed me, son, so I’m gonna say this: You are guilty of gross sins and we identify you as a wicked man. You should know, then, that the joy of the wicked is short-lived; no matter how good he has it, it’s only for a brief while. Everything he does comes to nothing, all the good food he eats turns to vomit, all the treasures he has stolen he cannot enjoy as he is enveloped in terror brought on by God’s wrath. His children will be forced to make amends for him. So don’t envy the wicked!”

Zophar doesn’t mince words or beat around the bush.

Of course, no one has said a thing about envying the wicked but Zophar was miffed and was on a roll.

Next week, we’ll see what Job makes of THIS.

Comment:

Lori Watt:
Another excellent posting! Thanks!!!

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

Maybe they'll let me keep this job a little longer.

Lori Watt:

I'm pretty sure your job is safe. Not sure about you getting any vacation time, though.

Kevin Crittenden:

Yeah, this retirement is getting to me - I need a break.

Marc Hermon:

We're giving him 6 days off and he only has to work on Thursdays...but I will take this time again to express my sincere gratitude to our volunteer teachers in the 7 Bible Studies. Spending even a little time each day in the Word of God in my opinion is a real life changer. I feel so blessed and encouraged each day to read the daily reading, these posts and comments....and we're not even 1/4 of the way done!

Kevin Crittenden:

Thank you Marc! By spending more time in the Word, I'm seeing cross-connections that I otherwise would have missed. My thanks to everybody involved, you, the other volunteers and the commentators for providing a great life-enhancing environment.

Comment:

Charles Fry:

19 is a favorite of mine, both for the soul wrenching expression of Job's awful plight, and the defiant assertion of faith that somehow God will indeed redeem him, the real Job. Of course, his expression of faith does foreshadow what God did do, coming to earth, and will do, in resurrection and judgment.

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

A good go-to chapter!

Comment:

Steven Wright:

Amen! And, thank you brother Kevin!

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:

Your reference of Job "hitting rock bottom" reminds me of a post that I read today. This person allowed that when he 'hit rock bottom' in his addiction, he discovered that for him, 'rock bottom' has a 'basement'. I can imagine Job possibly feeling just that way.

Comment:

Michael Babb:

A thought about Job. There are instances where people suffer due to reaping what they sow, and there are instances, like Job, where they suffer in spite of the fact that they are doing right in God's eyes. When people suffer, especially those who we see as being sinful, there is sometimes a small part of us that might think that they are reaping what they sow, and that feels like justice, or righteousness. And because of the horrible and severe things that

happened to Job, his friends may have assumed that he had in fact done something to deserve it. Just as we might tend to believe of those around us. With that in mind, can we ever be sure of which is which when people suffer calamity? Should we look at someone who is living a certain lifestyle, who might encounter consequences that seem like a likely result of their actions, and say "Well, that's what they get for living that way?" Is that something we should spend any time at all on? I'm not sure if I am phrasing this right, so forgive me if I am unclear.

Replies:

Steven Wright:

Vengeance belongs to the LORD, but he does not enjoy it! Our time is better spent praying for their repentance and our own! Best to understand that "time and chance happens to us all" and, "The rain falls on the just and the unjust!"

Kevin Crittenden:

You are right, though, that we do have a knee-jerk reaction of "they deserve it" when we read about a gang member being shot by another gang, or somebody injured in an accident because they were going way too fast. It feeds our feeling of moral superiority which connects to sinful pride. So, as Steven so rightly points out and is so difficult to inculcate as a habit, let us cultivate compassion and leave judgement to the LORD. He doesn't need our help in that area.

Kevin Crittenden:

I should have said "As Steven so Wrightly put it . . ." Can't believe I missed that.

Steven Wright:

<"Eh?" emoji>

Comment:

Steven Dallas Thompson:

This is hard sometimes brother.

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Kevin Crittenden: Are you sure your expertise was only physics? I think you are a contender for literary craftsmanship! :-) Thank you, once again! Tonight's reading made me think about the Prosperity Gospel. Zophar is proud that he is a healthy and prosperous man, for in his view, that's proof of his goodness and righteousness. This is the same message of the "health & wealth" prosperity gospel – that God wants us to have perfect health, total happiness, and financial gain in this life. All we need to do is ask specifically, live the right way and God will come through. This belief is contrary to the Bible. Jesus says we will have tribulation. Peter says we shouldn't be surprised by suffering. James says to expect it, and to count it all joy. And Paul says it brings endurance and glory. I Thess 5:18, "give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

"I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. After my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh, I will see God. I myself will see Him with my own eyes - how my heart yearns within me!"

Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:

Yes, Ginger, indeed the image of God in the Prosperity Gospel, as I understand it, is much like a vending machine - you put in the right prayers, the right thoughts, the right actions, pull the lever and He grants you perfect health, total happiness and financial gain. So if you have those things already, you are obviously morally superior and more favored by God than those other folks. Thank you for observing this! And isn't it beyond wonderful to wake up every morning with the thought that you have been redeemed through His blood!

Replies:

Joanne Caffie:
BEYOND Wonderful!

March 16: Job 21-22 (Kevin Crittenden)

Week 11

Poetry reading for 3/16/17
Job 21 & 22

Last week, Zophar advised Job not to envy the wicked. Not that Job WAS but Zophar decided to go down that particular rabbit hole.

Job starts out saying “Guys! Guys! Listen to me! Hello! I’m talkin’ here. When I’m done, then you can continue your mockery of me.”

He continues: “You’re trying to sell me on the idea that the wicked do not prosper, that their time of pleasure is but a mere evanescence, soon gone and leaving no trace, like morning dew in the summer heat. But answer me this, if you can. Why do so many wicked people prosper, growing old comfortably, surrounded by grandchildren and with increasing influence and social standing? You know as well as I do that this happens! Their children prosper as well, their homes are safe and there is no fear. God doesn’t punish them. In fact, they’re doing so well that they even dare to disown God since they are already loaded. ”

Actually, Job’s description of evil people, living into a comfortable and secure old age, with their offspring carrying on their name, is the complete opposite of Job’s actual situation. His prosperity is gone, his easy life is gone, his lineage is gone, his integrity is under attack and his social standing is plummeting. Which facts support the syllogism that Job’s friends are using:

The wicked are punished.
Job is being punished.
Therefore, Job is wicked.

In 21:15, Job speaks for the prosperous wicked, imagining them saying: “Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him? What would we gain by praying to him? We already have everything we want.”

We see an echo of this sentiment in Matt 19:24 “Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”

The sentiment “What would we gain by praying to him?” shows an attitude of self-centeredness and a complete lack of gratitude. Worldly riches, easily acquired, can flatter our egos into adopting this attitude but . . . the happiness they bring just doesn’t last that long.

“Many wealthy people are little more than the janitors of their possessions.” – Frank Lloyd Wright.

“My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!” – Percy Bysshe Shelley

On a side note, if you are interested in the science of happiness presented in an approachable form, then I recommend the book “The How of Happiness” by Sonja Lyubomirsky, PhD. One scientific conclusion she mentions is: “Spiritual people are relatively happier than nonspiritual people, have more satisfying marriages, use drugs and alcohol less often, are physically healthier, and live longer lives. People who perceive the divine being as loving and responsive are happier than those who don’t.” – Pollner, M. (1989). Divine relations, social relations, and well-being. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 30:92-104

21:19 “It is said, 'God stores up the punishment of the wicked for their children.' Let him repay the wicked, so that they themselves will experience it!”

Job brings up the idea that the consequences of the wicked are visited upon the next generation; Job challenges God to punish the doers of the evil, not their innocent children.

Exodus also expresses the principle of visiting punishment on the children:

Exod 20:5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me,

However, Deut 24:16 reverses that idea: “Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. Each one shall be put to death for his own sin.

So what do you think? Was God reversing his thought about punishing the children?

Job continues on with his theme that the wicked do indeed prosper.

21:29-30 “Have you never questioned those who travel?

Have you paid no regard to their accounts—
that the wicked are spared from the day of calamity,
that they are delivered from the day of wrath?

He winds it up by telling his friends that they cannot console him with their nonsense and that they have nothing left to tell him except falsehoods.

He is done listening to them.

He is done with this conversation.

He is SO done with their company.

NOW would be a real good time for them to leave.

But, sadly, they don’t take the hint and so we come to Job 22.

In 22, the gloves come off as Eliphaz begins Cycle 3 by continuing to beleaguer Job. No more Mr. Nice Guy, Eliphaz paints Job as the worst sinner ever, detailing all of his many transgressions, none of which were evident in Cycle 1.

“Job!” he says “Of what benefit is a schmuck like you to God? Why should He care if you are righteous? Do you really think that God is rebuking you for your piety when, in fact, your sins go on and on and on? You’ve exacted pledges from your relatives, and taken the clothing from the poor to ensure loan repayment! Not only that, but you’ve ignored the hungry and thirsty

when they came to your door! Widows and orphans came to you in desperation and you gave them the boot, even though you were a rich man and honored among your neighbors. Do you think that God doesn't see us down here? Do you think that He doesn't know? The wicked are destroyed and the righteous rejoice. So all you have to do is submit to God, confess your sins and Bob's your uncle!"

So . . . how do the righteous live, the ones that rejoice?

Psalms 15 notes the characteristics of righteous living:

Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent?

Who may live on your holy mountain?

2 The one whose walk is blameless,
who does what is righteous,
who speaks the truth from their heart;

3 whose tongue utters no slander,
who does no wrong to a neighbor,
and casts no slur on others;

4 who despises a vile person
but honors those who fear the Lord;
who keeps an oath even when it hurts,
and does not change their mind;

5 who lends money to the poor without interest;
who does not accept a bribe against the innocent.

Whoever does these things
will never be shaken.

Back in Job 22, Eliphaz has just recited a lengthy laundry list of supposed sins that Job has committed but it is done in sarcasm; since, obviously, Job's sin is unknown to all except God. Eliphaz' point is "Do you really think that God is going to present you with a list of your actual sins?"

In 22:21 Eliphaz says "Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you." (Again with the Prosperity Gospel! Had I joined one of those churches, I'd be rolling in clover. Oh, I guess I AM rolling in spiritual clover.)

And in 22:23 he tells Job to return to the Almighty so he can be restored. Job will respond to this in his rebuttal next week.

Eliphaz makes another reference to clean hands:

22:30 "He will deliver even one who is not innocent, who will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands. "

Compare to Job's speech in 17:

17:9 "Nevertheless, the righteous will hold to their ways, and those with clean hands will grow stronger."

"Clean hands" is an indicator of someone who has made a full confession; there are no more skeletons in the closet. We say nowadays, "Make a clean breast of it" or "Come clean."

James 5:16 instructs us: "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."

If we follow this admonition and confess our sins within the church, which is the only place that sin can effectively be dealt with, then we may take with clean hands and clear conscience the Communion set up by Christ as a remembrance of His sacrifice for us.

Comment:

Steven Wright:
Superb work as usual my brother Kevin!

Replies:

Thank you! Hopefully, they'll let me keep this job.

Comment:

Marc Hermon:
"Bear with me while I speak, and after I have spoken..MOCK ON!" vs. 3 NIV

Comment:

Marc Harmon:
Just the other day my dad was complaining how come the bulls of the wicked never fail to breed! vs. 10

Replies:

Lowell Hermon:
NOT!!!

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:
Thank you, Kevin Crittenden! Lots of thoughts stirred thanks to your commentary. RE: Punishment of children. My 9 year old son & I are doing a 6 month Bible study of the NT. This evening in John 9 we read about the man who was blind since birth. Jesus' disciples asked Him, "Who sinned? - the man or his parents?" Jesus' response was "Neither this man or his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life." This is an example that breaks down the principle that terrible punishments come on certain people because of sin of their parents. In this case, and in the case of Job, suffering is used to glorify our Lord.

Comment:

Charles Fry:
Borrowing a paragraph from the HCSB Study Bible on Exo 20:5 --- "Punishing the children for the fathers' sin involved penalties for successive generations who continued to commit the sins they learned from their fathers. This did not mean that in a court case a son would have to suffer the penalty for his father's crime (Dt 24:16), nor that individual standing or fellowship with God was determined by the behavior of one's parents (Jr 31:29-30; Ezk 18:1-32). It meant the excuse, "They don't know any better; it's how they were raised," doesn't work with God. But the Lord's faithful love would far exceed His judgment (to a thousand generations; Lv 26:39-45; Is 65:6-7; Jr 11:9-12; 32:17-19; Dn 9:8-16)."

March 23: Job 23-24 (Kevin Crittenden)

Week 12

Poetry reading for 3/23/17

Job 23 & 24

Have you ever wondered, in the midst of an existential crisis, just where God is? Do you have questions for Him, in the midst of your anger and grief, as you helplessly stand on the shore and watch your un-lived life wash out to sea? Must He justify Himself to you and explain Why all this upheaval and suffering is necessary to His plan?

Job feels this way. He is exhausted – physically degraded and emotionally drained - and still reeling from the shock of recent events.

Eliphaz had sarcastically asked Job if he really thought that God would present him with a list of his sins. And Job replies “That is precisely what I want! Bring it on!”

Job laments: “God’s hand is heavy on me despite my pleas so I’m hurting a lot at the moment. Anyway, you told me to return to the Almighty so I can be restored but I don’t know where to find Him. I’d go to Him if I only knew where. Then I could present my case before Him and hear what he has to say.

“Would He oppose me? I don’t think so; rather I’d have a chance to establish my innocence and be acquitted.

“But, alas, no matter what direction I go in, I can’t find Him. But He knows me and knows that I have remained true to His Commandments. He is testing me to see the purity of my character, which is as pure gold. I should therefore feel confident and comfortable because of this and yet I’m really terrified because He, being Omnipotent, can do whatever He wants.”

We know the feeling of being tested, right? We might be good-to-go, filled with Christ one month but sinking into a pit of despair the next. Sin seeps into our lives through some kind of unspiritual osmosis, so testing enables us, through trust in Him, to nip that bad boy in the bud.

Fortunately, we have the wisdom of God, expressed here in James, to give us hope in hard times.

James 1:2-4 “ Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

Job, however, was working without the safety net of the New Testament. He is doing the best that he can.

Proverbs 24:10 says “If you falter in a time of trouble, how small is your strength!” I wonder if Job had access to this.

Job now continues:

24:1 “Why does the Almighty not set times for judgement?”
Of course, the reader knows from 1:6 and 2:1 that He does. Job is unaware of all that.

He continues: “There are plenty of wrongdoers who change the boundary markers, steal livestock, take away the widow’s livelihood, rob from orphans and use their influence to take advantage of the poor. The poor are made to work for the wicked and are left hungry and without garments, shivering in the cold. The groans of the dying for mercy and the prayers for help of the afflicted rise up from the city and go unanswered. And yet, God does not charge these wrongdoers! These people violate the Ten Commandments, skulk about in the darkness and rebel against the light. And yet, as you say, they are evanescent, soon to disappear. For a little while they are exalted, and then they are gone.”

“So which of you worthies can prove me wrong?”

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Thank you, Kevin Crittenden! I look forward each week to your post. There are several thought-provoking comments above. Thanks for all your efforts!

Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:

Thank you, Ginger! I see that you are such an encourager for all of us and I am edified by your extensive knowledge of the Bible. Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us.

Replies:

Ginger Hermon:

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Joshua 1:8. Just as Job stated in chpt 23 we must treasure God's words more than anything. Praise God for our Holy Bibles. I also cherish brothers and sisters-in-Christ who receive the Word daily with readiness of mind. We are blessed beyond measure from these studies.
<3

March 30: Job 25-26 (Kevin Crittenden)

Week 13

Poetry reading for 3/30/17

Job 25 & 26

In our last episode, Job issues the challenge: “So which of you worthies can prove me wrong?”

Bildad, perhaps running late for an appointment, thinks he can prove Job wrong and, glancing at his watch, states his case quickly in only five verses.

He waxes eloquently, but briefly, about the grandeur of God and then throws out essentially the same question that Eliphaz brought up earlier: How, then, can a man, who is but a worm, be righteous before God?

Eliphaz had previously asked: “Can mortal man be in the right before God?” (4:17)

Also: 15:14 “What are mortals, that they could be pure, or those born of woman, that they could be righteous?”

So, Bildad offers nothing new in these short verses. God is God and we're not worthy.

Note: There is much controversy about these chapters (24-27). It is not always clear who is talking; some of what is attributed to Job in 26-27 sounds more like sentiments coming from his friends. Bildad's speech is short and Zophar doesn't get credit for saying anything in this third cycle.

Some scholars see 26:5-14 as more likely to be a part of Bildad's speech than uttered by Job.

One suggestion is that the incoherent language of chapters 24-27 reflect the brokenness of Job's soul; the consequence of a traumatic experience. Job, and his friends, are exhausted by attempting to explain the inexplicable. Trauma impedes speech.

Remember the story in Leviticus 10 where Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu offered unauthorized fire before the Lord and were struck dead? This was, of course, traumatic for Aaron and it says "Aaron remained silent." Was his silence humble acceptance of God's Will? Was he too traumatized to react? Or was he tempted to speak angry words against God and managed to restrain himself?

The psychologist, Theodor Adorno, observes that "after Auschwitz, there can be no poetry."

One suggestion is that the incoherence of chapters 24-27, where it really isn't clear who is saying what, reflects the breakdown of the dialogue as it comes to an end, with everybody talking at once, interrupting each other and shouting over one another's remarks. We've experienced this, right? Everything has already been said and nobody is listening to anybody else anymore. We've seen political speeches being interrupted by protestors who are screaming slogans – nobody is listening respectfully.

Job's reply to Bildad in 26:1-4 drips with sarcasm. He acerbically says: "How wonderful you are! You've given such strength to me when I'm down, and shared your wisdom and insights with me when I couldn't even think straight. Was it God helping you form your words?"

The rest of Job 26 talks about God's mighty power, as Bildad did, and finally, in verse 14, the point is made that all the mighty works that we behold and which speak to the power of the Creator, are but a faint whisper of God's actual power – we have not experienced the full thunder of His might.

We rather live in the middle of the spectrum of God's Creation, don't you think? Our modern technology allows us MUCH more knowledge of the scope of Creation than the author of Job had access to.

On the largest scale, the Hubble Space Telescope, and at the end of 2018, its replacement, the James Webb Space Telescope, allow us to see far into space and back in time. Hubble's observations have increased the number of observable galaxies by a factor of 10 – to about 2 TRILLION galaxies. And when you consider that our galaxy, the Milky Way, contains about 100 billion stars, you begin to get a sense of how insignificant we are in the scheme of things.

What Job also was unaware of, is on the other end of the spectrum – the world of the infinitesimal. You may remember the discovery of the Higgs Boson in 2012 using CERN's Large Hadron Collider. Using other imaging technologies, we are able to observe many arcane microprocesses at work within our own bodies.

Aside from measurable (large and small) objects, there are other aspects of this Creation in which we are nurtured that, frankly, we don't understand. Wave/particle duality. Quantum correlation and entanglement. Dark matter and energy.

Like the writer of the Book of Job, like the authors of Psalms, we now can also speak in awe about the many wonders of God's Creation but using a much-enhanced vocabulary. This is a shameless and thinly-veiled plug for the value of Science for those of you who distrust it. Science expands our knowledge of the depth, the complexity, the unthinkable vastness, the recondite intricacies of the workings of God's Creation. God is proud of His work, and our feeble understanding of it serves to glorify Him.

The point I'm poorly trying to make is that even with all our modern advantages, we still have yet to experience the full thunder of His might. The more we know, the more there is to know. If anything, instead of the hubris that all our accumulated data tends to foster within us, we might do better to feel humbled by the sheer magnitude of what we learn.

And now, as you sit there in utter awe of it all, remember that you, yes you, are precious in His sight; that He SO loved this world that He sent His only begotten Son to pay in full the debt of our sin, a debt that we ourselves could never pay. Jesus took on that burden for us, became the surety for our debt, paid it with every drop of His precious blood and, not only that, took that ledger where sins are written down, tore it up and nailed it to the Cross.

Comment:

Lori Watt:
Beautiful!

Comment:

Gaylene Green:
Amazing!

Comment:

Yvonna Hartman:
Thank you, Kevin.

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:
That was a tear-jerker, Kevin Crittenden! Thank you.

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:
Were you chopping onions while reading? :-)

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:
Great verse for evidence of the Bible in Science... "He suspends the earth over nothing."

April 6: Job 27-28 (Kevin Crittenden)

Week 14

Poetry reading for 4/06/17

Job 27 & 28

Well, color me embarrassed, folks, for I just realized that in true schnorrer fashion, I have been sadly remiss in not mentioning that I am using as a vade mecum for this study "The Book of Job" by Harold S. Kushner.

Moving on, this week we proceed to Chapter 27 with a continuation of Job's speech to his friends although, as mentioned last week, it isn't always clear who is talking.

In vv. 2-6, Job makes an impassioned and beautiful speech, professing his continued belief in God, his unshakeable integrity and challenging God to live up to His own standards of justice.

vv. 7-23 may be Zophar's missing speech or the rest of Bildad's short speech which continues with the theme of bad things eventually happening to wicked people who live for the moment with no thought of the morrow.

In vv. 7-8 we see that the wicked are synonymous with the godless. There is a choice to be made: you can be numbered with the wicked OR be among those who love and obey God. In Proverbs 8:10, Lady Wisdom says: "Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold. . ."

Behind the words of Lady Wisdom lies the voice of Jesus Christ, who, even now, is knocking at your door, asking: "Will you be a sheep or a goat? How say you?"

In a certain land lived a man who owned flocks of sheep and flocks of goats. At night, the wolves came but the sheep, who knew the sound of their Master's voice, stayed together under His care and were safe. But the goats, knowing not their Master, fled in terror in all directions and were soon scattered. These were marked for destruction by the wolves and banished to the outer darkness where there is much bleating and chewing of cud.

And so we come to Chapter 28 which is a short, beautiful piece of writing on the question of Where wisdom can be found. The most valuable earthly things, precious metals and jewels, are hidden deep in the ground where men work hard, tunnelling through flinty rock to get at them. Men know where to find these precious metals.

But how much more valuable is wisdom? And where can it be found? Certainly not in the same place as precious metals or out in the middle of the vast ocean. And it's not some mere commodity that can be purchased with all your fine gold and silver or precious minerals as Simon tried to do.

Acts 8:18 "When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money"

Well, we know how well THAT worked out.

Having raised the question of Where wisdom can be found, the poet now proceeds to answer it. He says no living thing knows where to find wisdom and you won't find it in the netherworld

either. Only God knows where to find wisdom for He is the Creator of All. And He has defined wisdom for us:

Job 28:28 “And he said to the human race, ‘The fear of the Lord – that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.’”

But look also at what Lady Wisdom says in Proverbs 8:22-23:

“The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old; 23 I was formed long ages ago, at the very beginning, when the world came to be.”

She and Jesus go way back to the beginning.

John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Thus we see that the fear of the Lord – the beginning of Wisdom – always is.

In our culture, we tend to view wisdom as a byproduct of aging. The older we get, the more life experiences we have and the more understanding we gain. Hopefully. I’m still waiting. It may indeed be that the longer we live, the closer we can grow to the Lord and that is where wisdom can be found.

Pr 9:10-12 “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,
and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

11 For through wisdom your days will be many,
and years will be added to your life.

12 If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you;
if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer.

If anyone wants to know where folly may be found, well that’s easy. If wisdom is a byproduct of aging, then it must follow that folly is more pronounced in youth. (He said, speaking from personal experience) This obviously does not apply to everyone. I’m sure that none of you fine folks plowing through this were ever follyful. But we have expressions about the folly of youth. A young man sowing wild oats. Boys will be boys. The sins of my youth. Again, a whole new topic to talk about.

And when a young man’s folly brings consequences, anger is often the result. (I’m just talking about men here; women are a fascinating and beautiful Mystery unto themselves.)

In Shakespeare’s “Anthony and Cleopatra,” Cleopatra says:
“My salad days, when I was green in judgement”

Pr 19:3 “When a man’s folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the LORD.”

So . . . why is Chapter 28 here? It’s lovely and all but how is it connected to the problems of Job? It certainly doesn’t sound like Job talking – Job is wrestling with grief, unhelpful friends and wanting his day in court and this language is much too serene.

Chapter 28, then, is an interlude, written by the poet, just like an intermission at the movies. You can get up and use the restroom or buy more popcorn before re-immersing yourself in the unfolding drama of Job. In 28, the poet, speaking of wisdom, anticipates the ending of Job, giving a taste of the eventual denouement of the story.

Comment:

Lori Watt:

I like how you bring bits of other literature to illustrate points. Thank you. (signed) A fascinating and beautiful Mystery unto myself aka Lori

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

Thank you! I could use an illustrator to clarify whatever it is I'm trying to say. Any man who says he understands women is probably unfamiliar with them.

Comment:

Steven Wright:

Kushner writes some very helpful books! Thank you for your perspective on the perspective!

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

Thank you! Actually, I'm learning a lot; don't know about anybody else.

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Thanks, Kevin Crittenden! We definitely see from today's reading why Job falls in the category of poetry. Can't believe it's week 14!

April 13: Job 29-30 (Kevin Crittenden)

Week 15

Poetry reading for 4/13/17

Job 29 & 30

The intermission is now over and we return to Job as he continues his lengthy monologue.

Job 29 and 30 form the bookends of a kind of riches-to-rags story, if you will, in which Job wistfully remembers a time of plenitude and honor (29), followed by the catastrophic plunge of his fortunes into penury and disgrace. (30)

In 29, Job reminisces about the Good Old Days, when he and the Lord were in a good relationship and he was one of the most respected members of the community. He remembers very well how blessed he was before it all fell apart. His reverie once more asserts his piety and his innocence. In keeping with the law and the Hebrew faith, Job cared for the weak and helpless, rescuing the poor, assisting the orphans, and supporting the widows.

Job is a good man who performs many good works; today he is the pious churchgoer who helps the elderly, contributes generously to the poor box, cooks for the basket dinners, sings in the choir, distributes the hymnals, shares his light with his neighbors, is renowned for his acts of charity, sends letters of support to the brethren, prays often and fervently and is a model human being who walks humbly in faith with the Lord.

Does he have a right to expect preferential treatment from God because of his good deeds? Do I? Do you?

Paul tells us in Eph 2:8-10 “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

Job 29:14 “I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and my turban.” This was a way of expressing Job’s close relationship with God. Note the similarity to Eph 6:11 “Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes”

Here is a translation done by the poet Stephen Mitchell which beautifully captures this passage:

“If only I could return to the days when God was my
guardian;
when his fire blazed above me and guided me in the
dark ---
to the days when I was in blossom and God was a
hedge around me
when he hadn’t yet deserted me
and my children sat at my side.

As I walked to the square of the city and took my seat
of honor,
Young men held their breath; old men rose to their
Feet;
Rich men stopped speaking and put their fingers to
Their lips.

But all that changes as we descend into Chapter 30.

Here, Job laments his current condition, where he has lost everything – his children, his servants, his livestock, his friends but also, - very high up on the list of Things That Are Really Important - his reputation. His integrity is in question. The Man Of The People is become the Lord of the Flies in the minds of his accusers.

30:1 “But now they mock me, men younger than I, whose fathers I would have disdained to put with my sheep dogs.”

Job is depressed – the lowest members of society now laugh at him. But why should he care? Truly, our egos are fragile and we are easily hurt by the remarks and taunts of others. Remember being in Junior High School and having others make fun of your perceived physical shortcomings? We still feel the pain, right? (Note: if you were that bully to others in school, then shame on you! Actually, - better advice – pray that you can now be a comforter for those who suffer at the hands of bullies today.)

When Job was prosperous, he took pride in his accomplishments, sure, but he took more pride in the respect that those accomplishments engendered. And now, people that he formerly hardly noticed, let alone took seriously, were openly mocking him. His former good deeds and glory are unremembered or discounted or questioned.

We remember that the Pharisees were mockers of Jesus’ good deeds and cheerfully strode down the wide road that leads to destruction. They loved to discount the miracles performed by Jesus.

Matt. 12:24 "But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons."

Job lived in an age where a person's self-worth was largely defined by the amount of respect or scorn that they saw in the eyes of others. If you saw admiration in the eyes of somebody you were talking to, you felt better about yourself. But Job isn't experiencing that anymore.

Job says "Now, shiftless young men, no better than their fathers, roam around like a pack of wild animals. Banished from human society and living wild, they are making fun of me. Even they detest me, now that God has made me His target.

"I am suffering the woes and agonies reserved for the wicked. My God, I cry out to You but You do not answer. Here I stand, O God, will You not answer me? My punishment is more than I can bear. Will You not help me as I cry out in distress? Have I not helped others who were in need? Have I not done good in Your sight? And yet, when I hoped for good, You sent evil. When I needed light, You caused me to grope in the darkness. I have become an outcast, shunned like a leper. No joy is left within me and all I have has turned to torment and wailing."

A sad note to end the week on, but there it is.

Kevin Crittenden lives in an age where a person's self-worth is largely defined by:

By what? What defines OUR self-worth?

Do we feel better about ourselves when we see admiration in the faces of others?

Are we anxious about how many "likes" we get on our Facebook posts?

If somebody is angry with us, or disagrees with us, do we shake internally like a reed in the wind?

Do we compare our (few) accomplishments to what we "should have" accomplished by this age?

Do we worry that other people are smarter, better looking, more talented, better liked than we are?

I've been prone to all the above. Correction. I still am susceptible to all the above. And it carries me to an unhappy place.

So I think that right now would be an appropriate time for prayer:

Dear Jesus, my Precious Lord and Savior, who presented Yourself as the only acceptable sacrifice to pay the ongoing debts of my sin, I pray for a closer walk with You so that I may better understand the depths of your Love for me. I want to take comfort in Your enfolding embrace, Your unconditional acceptance of such a one as I. Help me become less prone to self-abnegation, less concerned about worldly judgement and grow to be more trusting in You.

—

In your precious name I pray, Amen

Comment:

Denise Waits:

Thank you.

Comment:

Bryan Bown:
Amen

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

So true, Kevin Crittenden. I often think of these verses: "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight." I'm reminded from study earlier in the week, like the Corinthians, when we strive to please self or man, we seek talents which are temporary. God has a more excellent way; one that never fades! Heb 12:1-3, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Question: In chapter 29 Job mentions, "How I long for the months gone by." Last week I was wondering how much time had passed. I think this gives us reference of months. Could someone enlighten me further regarding the time frame of Job? Thanks!

Replies:

Charles Fry:

Job's references to time and duration indicate a prolonged horrific illness with loss of status before his "friends" come on the scene. He didn't come to desperation overnight. Interestingly, the word for "months" in Job is an archaic word not typically used in the Hebrew Bible. But yes, he'd been suffering for months.

Job 7(NIV-WS) 2 Like a slave longing for the evening shadows,
or a hired laborer waiting to be paid,

3 so I have been allotted months of futility,
and nights of misery have been assigned to me.

4 When I lie down I think, 'How long before I get up?'

The night drags on, and I toss and turn until dawn.

5 My body is clothed with worms and scabs,
my skin is broken and festering.

6 "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle,
and they come to an end without hope.

Ginger Hermon:

Charles Fry: thank you!

April 20: Job 31-32 (Kevin Crittenden)

Week 16

Poetry reading for 4/20/17

Job 31 & 32

In Job 31, Job finishes his monologue with a series of oaths attesting to his innocence. He is wrapping up his case and presenting it to God with the challenge that God present His indictment against Job.

Why has God been silent all this time? Remember that Job's integrity is being tested; he must not receive any support from God or Satan will claim victory. This is good to remember in our own lives – that our integrity should stand firm in the face of adversity, even when we think that NOW would be a really good time for God to intervene on our behalf. God is indeed present and aware.

I've read somewhere that the definition of integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is looking. I think of those Pharisees in Matthew 23, standing on the street corners with their showy tassels and Scripture verses on their foreheads and arms, acting all godly so they could be seen by men. It makes me wonder: Did they pray when they were alone or only when they had an audience?

Job, however, had no such Pharisaical bents (they hadn't been invented yet); he was indeed a man of integrity and uses chapter 31 to make a series of oaths based upon his integrity. These oaths serve as the capstone to Job's monologue. Job knows what he has and hasn't done. And he knows that God knows.

He starts off with a difficult one:

31:1 "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman."

Boy, do I want to skip over commenting on this verse. This is a difficult but obvious topic for a men's group. Naturally, we connect this to Matthew 5:28 "But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

I remember that when I first started college, blissfully unencumbered by any such covenants that Job made, I walked across campus and fell in lust three times. And the last time I walked across a college campus . . . well, never mind.

Truly, for most men, a young woman's body is the most beautiful and wondrous thing he will ever see in this life. Advertisers use this to great advantage to bend our wills, both men AND women, to their profit.

The point here is that for Job, this covenant he makes with his eyes, before God, is indeed a difficult one for a man. We (men) are strongly visually attracted to women. Which is why dads don't let their daughters out of the house dressed like THAT!

There is much more to be said on this topic – how to live as a man in this sexually permissive culture in a manner pleasing to the Lord and our wives.

31:2-4 "For what is our lot from God above, our heritage from the Almighty on high? Is it not ruin for the wicked, disaster for those who do wrong? Does he not see my ways and count my every step?"

Job affirms that God punishes the wicked and is aware of Job's actions. THEREFORE, Job has lived according to a strict moral code and has not sinned against God. He is innocent and undeserving of this punishment.

Job continues with a series of oaths to the effect that he has walked in the truth; that he has never committed adultery; that he has always treated his servants fairly; that he has cared for widows, orphans and the poor; that he has never indulged in idol worship; that he has not

rejoiced at his enemy's misfortune; that he has always been hospitable to strangers; that he has not been hypocritical; and that he has not abused the land nor the workers who cultivate it.

This lengthy insistence, not only of his innocence but also of his exemplary piety, has been termed "the code of the Jewish gentleman." Job sets the standard for living righteously.

You can think of Job as answering the charges made against him by the friends:

22:6 (Eliphaz) "For you have exacted pledges of your brothers for nothing and stripped the naked of their clothing."

31:19-20 (Job) if I have seen anyone perishing for lack of clothing, or the needy without garments, and their hearts did not bless me for warming them with the fleece from my sheep

22:7-9 (Eliphaz) You gave no water to the weary and you withheld food from the hungry, though you were a powerful man, owning land—an honored man, living on it. And you sent widows away empty-handed and broke the strength of the fatherless.

31:16-17 (Job) "If I have denied the desires of the poor or let the eyes of the widow grow weary, if I have kept my bread to myself, not sharing it with the fatherless—"

So Chapter 31 can be read as a point-by-point rebuttal to Eliphaz and the others. "You say I did THIS and THAT but I didn't do any of those things. Sheesh! "

However, --

Chapter 31 can be spun differently. Let's look at Exodus 22:10-11 –

10 "If anyone gives a donkey, an ox, a sheep or any other animal to their neighbor for safekeeping and it dies or is injured or is taken away while no one is looking,
11 the issue between them will be settled by the taking of an oath before the Lord that the neighbor did not lay hands on the other person's property. The owner is to accept this, and no restitution is required."

Suppose I am Charles' neighbor and he wants to take his family skiing in Missouri. So he's asked me to watch his chickens and ducks while the family is gone. Despite my best efforts (heroic, I might add), a nefarious band of dacoits jacks his waterfowl. When the family returns, an aggrieved Charles might accuse me of stealing them. Standing aghast and feeling indignant at this base accusation, I would immediately offer a demurrer, of course, but, even without proof, he might regard me frostily from then on. If, however, I swore an oath before God that I was innocent, then Charles would need to accept it because it is a fact that God does not tolerate the taking of His name in vain. (The third commandment, Exodus 20:7).

Well, Job wasn't being accused of stealing ducks and chickens BUT he was being accused. Job AND his friends were rock-solid in their belief that God would bring Justice, even if the courts let a guilty defendant go for lack of evidence. The term in rabbinical jurisprudence is, "not guilty in the eyes of the court but culpable in the sight of Heaven."

Job can therefore be thought of as invoking the law delineated in Exodus 22. He is swearing an oath before the Lord attesting to his innocence.

This is Job's last tactic. He invokes God's own law against Him. Because of Job's oath and without presenting proper evidence, God is required to drop all charges against Job.

In 31:35, Job signs his defense and rests his case. The ball is in God's court.

“The words of Job are ended.”

At this point, at the beginning of 32, everyone has fallen silent. So we now hear from a brash young man by name of Elihu, who has been listening patiently throughout. He hasn't said anything yet in deference to his elders.

Elihu is introduced as the son of Barakel the Buzite, of the family of Ram. His name, Elihu, means “he is my God.”

One can almost imagine Elihu, sitting on the sidelines, listening attentively to all of these arguments, and impatiently fidgeting, wishing he didn't have to be polite and defer to the wisdom of his elders, wisdom that he is beginning to question because obviously, the three friends are unable to do a better job and have left God looking guilty. Elihu is angry with the friends because of their abject failure and he is also angry with Job for trying to justify himself against God.

Well, everybody has stopped talking so Elihu seizes his opportunity and pops up like a jack-in-the-box. He is not so impatient, however, so as to forget to apologize to his elders for disagreeing with them, as common courtesy and politeness dictate.

All of 32 is devoted to Elihu's rather protracted preamble in which he justifies his necessity to speak.

He says “I am young and you are old (Thanks, Elihu) so I was fearful to say anything. I thought that since you three were older than me, you would speak from more wisdom than I have. However, wisdom is brought by the spirit of God, which gives understanding. So a young person, like yours truly, can also be wise.

“So therefore, listen to me just as I listened to you as you refuted Job's arguments. Oh, snap! I almost forgot. None of you were able to prove Job wrong. You gave up and agreed that God should refute Job, not man. So I'm not going to use your arguments; they didn't work anyway. So much for your wisdom!

“Am I supposed to just sit here and accept that conclusion? No, I'm now going to tell you what I know and rectify this situation. And I'm not going to pull any punches either; I'm going to tell it like it is. I don't do flattery and I don't do partiality.

Elihu has been talking to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar in this preamble.

What Job heard: “Blah, blah, blah.” Job is waiting for God's response.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Kevin!

Comment:

Charles Fry:
Very good, Brother Kevin. Thank you.

Comment:

Kathleen Munger Crittenden:
Thank you!

Comment:

Marc Hermon:

Thanks Kevin for not ignoring the subject. It seems because virtually all men have this as a struggle, that both women and men just chalk it up as "that's the way men are". It starts to become the definition of men and then many men don't try as hard to actually deprive themselves by turning away. 31:1 has been my go to verse for many years on this subject. I love it because it separates your eyes from yourself. It's kind of like saying, "OK, eyes I know you know you shouldn't look over there but you just can't help yourself. I will make a promise to you that if you try with all of your might to resist, I, the head will give you some help by turning you away from it." Keep fighting and resisting men! If it helps, use the other really bad quality that you probably have. Being too competitive and hating to lose! Take each battle one at a time and count your wins every time you find the courage to run away from Potiphar's wife.

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

Thank you, Marc. This is an area of shame for many and most people don't like being made to examine the things they desperately want to keep private. I wasn't sure how this topic would be received. I truly believe that the less men pay attention to women, the more provocatively women will dress. This is not solely an issue for men. I also think that women are confused about what they want.

Comment:

Lori Watt:

I didn't know Charles wanted to take his family skiing in MO! Shall I send some brochures?

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden;

He'll probably take his chickens and ducks with him.

Charles Fry:

Is MO between CA and the Philippines? 'Cause that's the only trip I'm planning right now.

Lori Watt:

It could be, with just a tiny detour.

April 27: Job 33-34 (Kevin Crittenden)

Week 17

Poetry reading for 4/27/17

Job 33 & 34

4/26 Good morning everyone! God's abundant blessings be with you as you study today. Today's reading is (Psalms . . . oh sorry! I cribbed this from Steven.

In Chapter 33, Elihu, having paid his obligatory respects and made his apologies to the three friends, all older and thus supposedly wiser than him, now conveniently forgets all that and speaks as a coeval, directing his comments to Job who seems unattentive. He makes the faux

pas of calling Job by name, unlike the three friends. This may be a mark of undue familiarity bordering on disrespect. Elihu is impatient, wanting all this to be over so he can go back to playing Oregon Trail or watching Wagon Train.

Emulating the future Pericles, he takes center stage and, after pausing for dramatic effect, says: “Job, pay attention! Any minute now I’m about to open my mouth and when I do, know that my words come from an upright heart; I speak sincerely because God has made me. So, answer me this, if you can. Argue your case before me. You and I are both mere mortals so you don’t have to fear me.

“You have said in my hearing ‘ I’m as pure as Ivory Soap and, in fact, clean and free from sin. And yet God has found fault with me.’ In this, Job, you are wrong for God is greater than any of us mortals. And why do you persist in saying that God doesn’t respond? He DOES explain himself, both before and after He punishes us. One of His avenues of communication is through dreams. Those who are contemplating a wicked action will have nightmares so as to hopefully prevent that action.

“Or you might already be suffering and near death BUT may have a Guardian Angel at your side to intercede and tell you how to be upright. The Angel may be gracious and ask God to spare you from going down into the pit; not only that, but you may even be restored to health and vigor again. Then you will go and confess your sin to others and proclaim God’s great mercy.”

You may be wondering about Elihu’s reference to “an angel at their side, a messenger, one out of a thousand, sent to tell them how to be upright”, who can intercede with God for our protection. Where did the concept of a tutelary angel come from?

The Bible itself presents angels as being ministers to carry out God’s Will and interface with men. For instance, Gabriel had to contend with “ the prince of the kingdom of Persia” for 3 weeks before appearing to Daniel. And an angel came to tell Abraham and Sarah that they were going to have a child.

Psalms 91:11 “For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.”

Ex 32:34” Now go, lead the people to the place I spoke of, and my angel will go before you. However, when the time comes for me to punish, I will punish them for their sin.”

Dan 6:21-22 “Daniel answered, “May the king live forever! 22 My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty.”

So we see that angels are agents of the Lord. Under His direction, they guard and protect us as well as their other duties.

Elihu ends with Job 33:33 - “ . . . be silent, and I will teach you wisdom.” Elihu earlier had said that wisdom comes from the Almighty, (32:8), but now, Elihu will himself dispense wisdom. Not that he’s egotistical or anything.

Job, engrossed in the swimsuit issue of “Modern Pseudepigrapha”, hears: “Blah, blah, blah.” Job is waiting for God’s response.

In Chapter 34, Elihu begins his second speech in the same didactic manner. You will notice that Job makes no response to Elihu. Actually, nobody responds to Elihu.

He says: "Ok you three wise (snarky adjective) guys. Now listen to me because, as Job said back in 12:11, the ear tests words as the tongue tastes food. Let's explore this topic together so that we can ALL learn what is good. Job stubbornly maintains his innocence, essentially calling God a liar and furthermore accuses God of denying him justice. Only an arrogant man would speak of God that way which proves his impiety. Can you believe this guy? He associates with evildoers and the wicked (present company excepted, of course) and refuses to honor God because there's no profit in doing so.

"So listen up, guys, far be it from God to do evil. God deals in retributive Justice – He repays everyone for what they have done. Does God pervert justice, as friend Bildad asked in 8:3?

The audience is overcome with a feeling of déjà entendu; they've heard or said all this before.

"Ok, Job, now that I'm in verse 16, I'm going to address myself to you. Are you awake? Please remove your earbuds and listen to what I'm telling you. God governs our world, therefore He must be just and you cannot accuse Him of injustice. Will you condemn God who passes judgement on kings and nobles? He sees everything we do; there is no place to hide your wicked deeds so He has no need to examine people further, there's no need to come before Him in court to present your case. God gets around to everyone sooner or later and it's not up to us to judge Him. He will judge us. So if God decides to remain silent, who can blame Him.

"Now suppose someone, oh . . . you perhaps . . . says to God 'I'm guilty but promise to be good from now on', he might be rewarded. But why should God do that if you won't confess your sin? It's really up to you to decide."

Job, taking an intense interest in his fingernails, hears: "Blah, blah, blah." Job is waiting for God's response.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Kevin!

Comment:

Charles Fry:

It's often hard to pick one FB emoticon for these, when I want 🤔👍👍🤔🤔🤔🤔 or some such.

The first time I remember studying Job in a group, in my teens, I remember the idea being put forth by another teen that it took the young guy to get it right. But of course, once you get past the window dressing and disclaimers, the younger man brings no new insights to the discussion, and like the other three insists all of this is Job's own fault, if he will only admit it.



Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

An attitude amongst the modern flash that seems to be thriving today! " If only the entrenched old guys who run things would understand how things should work . . ."

Comment:

Lori Watt:

I somehow feel a strange connections to Elihu.....

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

You and he both were influenced by Horace Greeley - "Go west, young people! Get outta here! Oregon isn't far enough but it'll do."

Comment:

LuAnn Woody:

That was an enjoyable read-content, wit, vocabulary. I had to look up four words!

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

Thank you! From now on, I'll just include the definitions of words that you are unfamiliar with. ^-^

LuAnn Woody:

I really enjoy making the acquaintance of new-to-me words.

Kevin Crittenden:

As I explain to my ESL class, an increased vocabulary is similar to painting a picture with 100 colors of paint instead of 10. There are delicious nuances depending on the words used. However, in these lucubrations (you're welcome), I run the risk of being thought pedantic.

LuAnn Woody:

Thanks! I don't think you are pedantic- not even semipedantic. That is a good analogy about colors/words.

Kevin Crittenden:

I like to use colorful language. :-)

Charles Fry:

I was doing fine reading along until you lucubrated in broad daylight.

Kevin Crittenden:

Some people have no shame.

Steven Wright:

Didacticus!

Kevin Crittenden:

Gesundheit!

Comment:

Steven Wright:

Thanks for that brud! I too relate with Elihu. Crib on bro!

May 4: Job 35-36 (Kevin Crittenden)

Week 18

Poetry reading for 5/04/17

Job 35 & 36

Good morning, evening, afternoon All! As Elihu's speeches continue in chapters 35 and 36, ponder a bit about his relationship and interaction so far with Job and the three friends. And now, in answer to a steadily diminishing number of requests, back to our story:

Pausing to take a drink of water from the glass on the lectern, Elihu now hurtles onward like a runaway freight train into his third speech where he makes the point that 1) God does not profit from our righteousness nor 2) does he suffer from our wrongdoing, a point that Job had posed in 7:20. So why does God either reward or punish us? Because of His dedication to goodness.

Elihu turns his gaze on Job, who is seated in the corner, thoughtfully stroking Bildad's beard, and says "Job, do you think it's right to ask God: 'Why should I not sin? What profit do I gain from that?'"

"Well, I want to reply to you, in fact to all of you. How does your sinning affect God? And how does your righteousness profit Him? Your actions, good or bad, only affect other people.

"People who are suffering cry out to God for relief but no one asks Where is God. God does not answer; he pays no attention to the empty cries and prayers of people who have no consciousness of their sin. How much less, then, Job, will He listen to you when you say your case is before Him with the confidence that His anger never punishes and that He takes no notice of your wickedness.

"So Job rambles on and on, endlessly, without knowing what he is talking about."

Job, inditing a letter to his lawyer in re his wife (who had advised him to curse God and die), hears: "Blah, blah, blah." Job is waiting for God's response.

I think we've all had a few people in our lives who haven't mastered the fine art of shutting up and listening. They natter on and on, mostly about themselves, while we are desperately trying to find a polite way to escape from their clutches. If anyone out there knows a good Biblical response to this situation, short of faking a seizure, I would love to hear it.

So what do you think? God is All-powerful. Do you agree with Elihu that He is unaffected by our sin? And that our righteousness does nothing for Him? Do our actions affect God? Or just other people?

Job 36

Here, Elihu presses on into his fourth speech, driven forward by the momentum of impetuous and idealistic youth, absolutely certain of his convictions. The world is much more black-and-white when you are young and it is very frustrating when others (i.e. older people) can't immediately "get it." (I'll type this slowly so you'll understand: Old = mentally feeble.)

Elihu knows that he is running overtime but asks his audience to bear with him a bit longer. As if they had a choice.

He says in 36:2 “Bear with me a little longer and I will show you that there is more to be said in God’s behalf.”

In this, he may conjure up images of your pedantic high school History teacher, droning on and on and on in a dry monotone about people and places that you never heard of nor cared about nor long remembered. Did you watch the clock in that class and silently will the second hand to move at faster than a glacial pace? A teacher at my high school had a sign around his classroom clock that read “Time will pass. Will you?”

Elihu says comfortingly (36:4) - “one who has perfect knowledge is with you.” His cocksure manner and self-conceit fill the arena, now that he’s undergone a personal apotheosis. He speaks for God, you know.

Elihu says, essentially, that God punishes evildoers and protects the righteous. In 36:15 he says “But those who suffer he delivers in their suffering; he speaks to them in their affliction.” Sometimes God inflicts suffering on the innocent to cause them to grow by asking “What have I done to deserve this?” as Job is doing. We see this reflected in Psalm 119.

Psalm 119:71 “It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.”

Also, we remember Paul’s famous thorn in the flesh:

2 Cor 12:6-10 Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say, 7 or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

As was mentioned back in the notes for Chapter 9, C.S. Lewis explained that pain is the chisel that God uses to shape His people into their full capacity, helping them become deeper, wiser and stronger. And indeed, through personal suffering, many unexpected blessings may come, such as the ability to feel compassion and empathy.

I am reminded of Kathleen’s father, LeRoy Munger, who underwent heart surgery. Afterwards, he volunteered with the Mended Hearts Association and visited patients in hospitals who were about to undergo similar surgeries. Who better to give comfort than someone who has been through the experience? I learned many good things about being a man, a father, a husband and a Christian from him.

Verse 16 says: “He is wooing you from the jaws of distress to a spacious place free from restriction, to the comfort of your table laden with choice food.” Elihu makes the point that God is asking Job to submit to His discipline which will lead to restored prosperity, a significant trope in the Book of Job.

Elihu concludes Job 36 by using examples from Nature to show God’s greatness; the rainfall cycle, lightning and storms. Very often, examples from Nature are used to showcase God’s mighty power. Whirlwinds, storms, fire, clouds, earthquakes, stars, . . . Can you think of examples (other than from Nature) which showcase God’s mighty power?

Job, leafing through a glossy brochure about a gated retirement community in Harran, hears: "Blah, blah, blah." Job is waiting for God's response.

Comment:

Lori Watt:

Does our righteousness affect God? Zeph. 3:17: "The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing."

Comment:

Lori Watt:

Something that keeps crossing my mind: if we had a friend-- a strong Christian who (from all we know) follows God's word and does all the "right things"-- tell us he had done no wrong and had not sinned against God... what would we think?

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

Good point! Ask him to walk on water? Could we believe him or would we secretly think that he was deluded about his own actions. Certainly, a statement like that would point to pride. Or would he merely be stating a simple fact? Would we feel necessary to test him to indulge our own judgemental attitude? Probably best to accept him at his word and let God sort it out. And THAT would be most difficult for us.

Charles Fry:

One who does all the "right things". This puts me in mind of a man who spoke to Jesus about inheriting eternal life. Jesus told him "You know the commandments..." to which the young man replied, "Teacher, all these I have kept since I was a boy." Now, Jesus could have contradicted him, could have argued with him, could have shown him his failures in REALLY keeping the commandments, but what Mark says happened is "Jesus looked at him and loved him." And he told him he needed to sell his stuff, give it to the poor, and follow Jesus. But it's really important, that comment, "Jesus looked at him and loved him." (Mark 10:21)

Apart from Elihu saying that Job said he hadn't sinned, did Job really say that? He said, "How many wrongs and sins have I committed? Show me my offense and my sin... you write down bitter things against me and make me reap the sins of my youth..." (Job 13:23, 26). Or, "Why do you not pardon my offenses and forgive my sins?" (Job 7:21) Several times Job acknowledged his own imperfections, but he worked at doing the right thing, and the idea that he was suddenly being chastised by God for some great sin didn't equate. He hadn't done anything egregiously wrong, hadn't changed his behavior, hadn't been guilty of some new heinous crime, as they all, including Elihu, insisted must have been true. Job knew of no new departure from righteousness on his own part to merit the enormous shift in his life.

Many times in my own experience I've answered someone who asked, "what did I do to deserve this?" with intended consolation that they had not likely done anything to "deserve" what they were going through. Sometimes people's suffering is self induced, but often there is no "cause and effect" equation, no easily rationalized "karma," to clarify a just and deserved reason for suffering. Broadly, it's all about sin and a fallen world, but personally, it is often difficult to discern specific reasons.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Kevin!

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:
You're welcome, Butch!

Comment:

Charles Fry:

As Lori noted, our behavior does affect God in the sense that he genuinely cares about us, and he genuinely has feelings. He is not affected in the sense of needing anything from us, or being made stronger by human worship or weaker by human disobedience. Humans cannot make God bigger or smaller, stronger or weaker, smarter or more foolish, but can please him or displease him, bring joy or sadness.

May 11: Job 37-38 (Kevin Crittenden)

Week 19

Poetry reading for 5/11/17

Job 37 & 38

Hello again! I'm posting this a bit early - things to do and all that.

In our reading of the book of Job, we have come now to the place where the three friends are silent, the words of Job are ended, and, in 37, Elihu makes his concluding remarks.

A question for you: In reading through Job, do you think that the author's sympathies lie with the friend's arguments (defending God) or with Job's arguments (questioning God)?

Elihu finishes up his closing arguments to the jury by again showcasing God's Omnipotence through examples from Nature. In 37:5, he says "God's voice thunders in marvelous ways; he does great things beyond our understanding."

God's ways and thoughts are indeed beyond our understanding. We see this in Isaiah 55:8-9

8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,"
declares the Lord.

9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

We see it as well in the Doxology found in Romans 11:33-36:

33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable his judgments,
and his paths beyond tracing out!

34 "Who has known the mind of the Lord?

Or who has been his counselor?

35 "Who has ever given to God,
that God should repay them?"

36 For from him and through him and for him are all things.

To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Personally, I find it both frustrating and oddly comforting to realize that even good understanding, let alone great or perfect understanding, is not in my wheelhouse. Should we even try to increase our understanding, knowing its ultimate futility? (We will return to this in Ecclesiastes).

Back to Elihu. Who is this guy? He magically appears after Job rests his case at the end of chapter 31 and fills chapters 32 through 37 with rhetoric. Nobody responds to Elihu, neither Job nor Eliphaz nor Bildad nor Zophar. More tellingly, in Job 42:7 God says to Eliphaz "I am angry with you and your TWO friends" meaning Bildad and Zophar. Even God does not mention Elihu. Why?

One could view the Elihu chapters as being extensions of the friend's arguments. If the author of Job saw fit to end the defense of God with these chapters, he must have thought them to be the most persuasive of all the arguments. So Elihu must be defending God with arguments not presented by the other three friends.

There is another view. Perhaps you have heard of the phenomenon known as *l'esprit d'escalier*, the clever remark that occurs to one as one is leaving a gathering. You know, the thought that makes you say to yourself, "I wish I had thought of that! It would have been perfect!" So one idea is that the author of Job, later in life, thought of more arguments, so went back and reworked the character of Elihu into his masterpiece.

And thirdly, modern critics feel that Elihu is an interloper, those chapters having been added later by someone who might have thought, "Had I been there, I could have made a more persuasive case for God than did the three friends." There are great disparities of style and diction and they are deemed inferior to the rest of the Poem of Job.

Robert Gordis calls him "Elihu the intruder" and continues on to say "the effort required to understand the Elihu speeches is all out of proportion to the profundity of thought."

Robert Alter says "the plausible consensus is that it is an interpolation, the work of another poet . . . The poetry he speaks is by and large not up to the level of the poetry of the debate . . . and there is a whole series of Hebrew terms that appear only in the Elihu speeches."

And right here I need to stop and address a concern. I am concerned that bringing up this possibility may raise hackles in some of you because of the verse in 2 Tim:

2Tim 3:16-17 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

This would mean that Elihu is in the book of Job because God wants him there. Period. But then what shall we say about Mark 16:9-20?

Anyway, I am sorry if exploring topics like these causes any distress.

For those wishing to delve far more deeply into Elihu, see <https://www.dbts.edu/journals/1997/eliu.pdf>

Job 38 - The Storm

David, in Psalm 26, says:

- 1 Vindicate me, Lord,
for I have led a blameless life;
I have trusted in the Lord
and have not faltered.
- 2 Test me, Lord, and try me,
examine my heart and my mind;
- 3 for I have always been mindful of your unfailing love
and have lived in reliance on your faithfulness.

Of course, Job did not ASK to be tested but he certainly wants God to vindicate him or at least tell him what sin he has committed.

And now that everyone's done talking, *mirabile dictu*, God manifests. This is the theophany that Job had been hoping for.

Job 38:1 "Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm."

The storm provides a sensory emphasis on God's mighty power and helpfully provides something for Job and his friends to see. Perhaps you remember this as being ". . . out of the whirlwind."

In other interactions between people and God or His representatives, often the initial reaction is fear. But no mention is made of that in Job's case. Or Moses, for that matter.

Ex 20:19 "And they said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen. But don't let God speak directly to us, or we will die!"

It may be that people who "fear God" aren't as afraid of God as people who don't fear God. Does that make sense?

Job's question to God is essentially Why do the innocent suffer and, more specifically, why am I made to suffer?

God's response is brilliant, as expected. He never disappoints.

God immediately takes control of the situation and turns the tables on Job; God will pose questions to him. Verse 3:

"Brace yourself like a man;
I will question you,
and you shall answer me."

In fact, God leads off with a question to Job: "Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?" Job does not understand God's divine plan for the universe.

38:4 "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!" God is emphasizing Job's humanity and showcasing his limitations; only God could know and do the things mentioned.

Chpt 38 marks the first use of God's personal name, YHWH, in the Poem of Job. This is the name shared with Moses at the burning bush, which presaged the liberation of Israel from slavery and bringing them into a new relationship with a Redeemer God. The use of this name here in 38 may presage a new and deeper relationship between God and Job.

When Job and the friends were talking ABOUT God, they used the more abstract terms – El, Elohim, Shaddai. But when Job is talking WITH God, the relationship is a more personal one.

Martin Buber distinguishes between theology, the intellectual contemplation of the nature of God, and religion, the life-altering experience of actually being in the presence of God. It's like the difference between reading a menu and having dinner. Theology can inform and enlighten, but only religion can nourish us.

The Book of Job has turned from theology to religion.

God has not come to explain Himself or answer Job's questions. Pope says "God does not need the help or advice of impatient and ignorant mortals to control the world any more than He needed them to create it."

We remember Isaiah 45:11-12

11 "This is what the Lord says—
the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker:
Concerning things to come,
do you question me about my children,
or give me orders about the work of my hands?
12 It is I who made the earth
and created mankind on it.
My own hands stretched out the heavens;
I marshaled their starry hosts.

God is the only One who can perform such majestic works.

Job 38:8-11
8 "Who shut up the sea behind doors
when it burst forth from the womb,
9 when I made the clouds its garment
and wrapped it in thick darkness,
10 when I fixed limits for it
and set its doors and bars in place,
11 when I said, 'This far you may come and no farther;
here is where your proud waves halt'?

God represents safety and security; He keeps the destructive and chaotic powers of the sea in check so that it may not inundate the land with its catastrophic power. The fear of destruction by water may be ingrained in racial memory due to the Flood, the most calamitous event in human history.

Jeremiah speaks to the power of God over the sea in Jer 5:22
Do you not fear me? declares the LORD. Do you not tremble before me? I placed the sand as the boundary for the sea, a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass; though the waves toss, they cannot prevail; though they roar, they cannot pass over it.

Note that human beings, the Crown of Creation, are not mentioned, possibly to illustrate the point that the Universe is much, much vaster than we are. (Add many more "muches" to that sentence.)

38:41 "Who provides food for the raven, when its young cry out to God and wander about for lack of food." This verse supports the idea that even the animals are aware of God's providence and know to trust in it. This idea came up in 12:7-10.

7 "But ask the animals, and they will teach you,
or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you;
8 or speak to the earth, and it will teach you,
or let the fish in the sea inform you.
9 Which of all these does not know
that the hand of the Lord has done this?
10 In his hand is the life of every creature
and the breath of all mankind.

This week, let us take comfort in the knowledge that we, too, are cared for and reap the benefits of God's providence.

Matt 6:26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

Have a great week!

<https://www.dbts.edu/journals/1997/elihu.pdf>

Comment:

Kimra Grantham Robinson:
Love 37:5. Humbling AND empowering!

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, brother Kevin!

Comment:

Charles Fry:
Who was God speaking of when he asked, "Who is this..." in Job 38:2? Not Job, in my opinion, since v3 directly addresses Job as "you." Who had just stopped speaking when God started speaking? Elihu. Did Job apply the question to himself? Yes, in 40:4-5 and 42:1-6. However, that displays Job character and convictions, the sort of godly man he was as described in chapters 1 and 2. Nevertheless, God indicates Job survived the testing Satan put him through with his integrity intact in 42:7-9. I do not think God was rebuking Job with the question, or particularly trying to humble him, though Job readily admitted his profound ignorance in the presence of God. I do think God intended to stir a renewed sense of wonder in Job, to remind him of grace and beauty, which had been dulled in his perceptions during his recent months of suffering and loss. It seems to me that God is not so much saying to Job, "behold my power and be afraid," as saying, "consider all the beauty and grandeur of what I made and care for. I delight in it, you should too. You don't have to understand it all to see the grace and beauty."

Comment:

Charles Fry:
A comment about the writing of Job:

The book of Job gives specifics as to general location and the identities of Job and friends, but the reference points are somewhat obscure to us now. The references were surely meaningful to the original audience, but we can only surmise connections with other Biblical and historical names. The impression is that the events occurred in the days of the patriarchs, the timeframe of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but we can't determine exactly when. The general impression is that the people involved were not Hebrews, but like Melchizedek and Salem in Abraham's day, monotheism still prevailed in their worldview, and they had not forgotten the account of creation or the flood. There is no way of knowing how the story of Job was preserved for later generations, but a time did come when the events were arranged as we have them, including prologue, epilogue, the cycles of speeches, and that includes Elihu.

There is no textual evidence for an account of Job without Elihu, only subjective literary speculation. One of the most brilliant and insightful scholars of Hebrew and the Old Testament I've ever met, Professor David Noel Freedman, editor of the Anchor Bible series, concluded and wrote that the author of Job was the author of the Elihu speeches and their connective observations and comments. I would not attribute any sort of blind or narrow doctrinal faith to Professor Freedman, his conclusions were based on careful analysis, but I mention him because many of his conclusions about the Hebrew Bible do integrate very well with my own convictions.

I suspect that while Job's experiences happened hundreds of years before David and Solomon's time, it is quite likely that Job, the book in its Scriptural form as we know it, entered the sacred canon. We know from Samuel/Kings/Chronicles that there was a great deal of prophetic activity in that time frame, including much writing of both historical annals and poetry/songs for the United Kingdom and the temple liturgy, with a robust epoch of associated priestly and Levite activity. We know that Solomon actively gathered wisdom literature at that time (these things are all alluded to in the Bible), and that he kingdom of Israel was at its apex of wealth, power, and geographic extent. Job most like entered the Hebrew corpus in those days, and very likely was reworked into the memorable poetic form we know by one of the prophets associated with the royal court or temple. As to its legitimate place in scripture, including the Elihu speeches, there is no doubt of its place in the Hebrew and Greek Bibles of both Jews and Christians, and no doubt that the events of the story have always been regarded as real events involving real people, including the arguments, including Elihu. All available evidence points to the authenticity of the entire book of Job in the Jewish and Christian canon of scripture. Which, considering its nonJewish hero is really quite remarkable, and a strong hint of divine purpose in itself.

Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:

Thank you, Charles! The writer of Job, most likely an Israelite himself, took great pains to portray Job as Everyman to show the timelessness and universality of the questions and struggles that all people have to some degree. The lessons of the wisdom books point to the same thing:

Job says:

Job 28:28 "And he said to the human race, 'The fear of the Lord – that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.'"

What does Proverbs tell us?

Pr 9:10-12 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

And what does Ecclesiastes conclude?

Ecc 12:13 Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter:
Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.

The beginning of wisdom AND the conclusion of wisdom is the same.

May 18: Job 39-40 (Kevin Crittenden)

Week 20

Poetry reading for 5/18/17

Job 39 & 40

Hello again!

In Chapter 39, God continues to catechize Job with unanswerable questions, driving home the point that God's plan is unknown and unknowable by mere humans. We've seen this in Isaiah:

Isaiah 55:8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.

God is in charge, He is the One who comprehends everything, the One who formed everything so we need to learn to trust in Him.

God expounds on examples from the animal kingdom in the last verses of both 38 and 39. Some of the animals that God mentions are useful to man and some are not. God's Creation extends beyond man's needs.

It is one thing to read these verses and take them in intellectually but quite another to PROCESS these words in our hearts. I look outside my window at the birds contending with each other at the bird feeders. I can marvel at their agility, their quickness, their sharp vision, their beauty, their communication through chirps and displays. The greatest joy I get from watching birds is not through trying to understand the mechanics of flight or beak and feather evolution but just to watch them and to share in the joy of their existence. God has made a beautiful Creation and it gives Him joy to share its beauty with us. So let us take time to marvel at everything around us and see its goodness.

God ends His first speech with 40:2 "Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!"

Job had wanted a chance to present his case and now his time has come. But what can he say?

Job replies, not by listing his grievances, but by apologizing.

40:4-5 "I am unworthy – how can I reply to you?

I put my hand over my mouth.

5 I spoke once, but I have no answer –

Twice, but I will say no more."

The action of covering your mouth with your hand shows that you know you are in the presence of someone much greater and more worthy than yourself. To speak in such circumstances would be presumptuous.

Job mentioned this previously in 29:7-10

7 “When I went to the gate of the city
and took my seat in the public square,
8 the young men saw me and stepped aside
and the old men rose to their feet;
9 the chief men refrained from speaking
and covered their mouths with their hands;
10 the voices of the nobles were hushed,
and their tongues stuck to the roof of their mouths.

Chapters 38 and 39 are a wonderfully written tribute to God’s power. But God’s power was never in question. Job and his friends all agreed that God has immense power. It is God’s fairness and goodness that are in question.

Would God let bad things happen to undeserving people because He is not constrained by issues of fairness or people’s unhappiness?

Job’s lament has been, “What can I do? It’s His Creation and He can do what He wants. I was just hoping that He would treat good people kindly. “

If the Book of Job ended here, we would be left with the answer that “Yes, the world is unfair but what can we do about it?” God would have intimidated Job into withdrawing his challenge and we would be left without an answer to his question, Why do good people suffer?

But God’s not finished with Job (or us) yet. He continues in 40:7 repeating His challenge to Job:

7 “Brace yourself like a man;
I will question you,
and you shall answer me.”

God will now in His second speech introduce two monsters, Behemoth (from the Hebrew behemah, “beast”) and Leviathan, both extremely powerful, impossible for humans to control, and dangerous. We’re done talking about cute does giving birth to their fawns. (39:1)

The creature God calls Behemoth is thought to be modeled after a hippopotamus; it’s an amphibious beast that eats grass and is the fiercest land animal.
40:19 “It ranks first among the works of God, yet its Maker can approach it with his sword.”

Behemoth is first, not in time but in strength and awe. Only God can subdue this monster and even HE carries a sword.

40:24 “Can anyone capture it by the eyes . . .” can be thought of as “can anyone capture it when it is looking at you.”

We will meet Leviathan next week.

The point is: both these beasts are representative of the Creation, which Job has no ability to control, direct or manage.

Have a great week!

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Kevin!

Comment:

Steven Wright:
Indeed, "God has made a beautiful Creation and it gives him joy to share its beauty with us."
And, "God's Creation extends beyond man's needs." Amen brother! And thank you for this fine study today!

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:
Thank you, St. Eve. Next week's post will be bigger and bolder, with added words, and comes with a new look! I'm adding bleach, borax and brighteners.
And, by the way, your new word is the noun "hendiadys." That should keep you nice and warm.

Marc Hermon:
I crossed off the "possibly hippopotamus or elephant" note on this chapter and "possibly crocodile" note for chapter 41. They sound an awful lot like what men use to call dragons and what we have called dinosaurs since the year 1842. I've never seen a hippopotamus's tail swing like a cedar.



Kevin Crittenden:
Actually, come to think of it, I've never seen a cedar swing. The identities of Behemoth and Leviathan as hippo and croc come from the notes in my NIV Zondervan Study Bible (the printed notes, not my scrawls). Behemoth is the fiercest land animal; Leviathan the most awesome water creature. Whatever they are or whatever they represent, the point is that Job cannot control them. He cannot subdue these forces.
Also, even a mighty cedar starts out as a sapling, tiny like the hippo's tail.

Steven Wright:
Who is St. Eve?

Steve Wright:
Just tell me plain and simple!

Kevin Crittenden:
That would be Chrissy: Plain and Simple

May 25: Job 41-42 (Kevin Crittenden)

Week 21

Poetry reading for 5/25/17

Job 41 & 42

Hello All!

This will be our final week in Job, as we read the last chapters of the book, which we find we won't be able to put down until we're done. So leave those dirty dishes in the sink, let the grass grow a little longer, and get comfy with your Bible as you turn with me to the book of Job, chapter 41.

Last week, we met the fierce creature known as Behemoth; this week, God continues his questioning of Job by introducing a second monster, Leviathan, a powerful and dangerous water creature.

Leviathan seems, by some, to represent a fearsome crocodile on steroids. As Behemoth is the fiercest land creature, Leviathan is the most fearsome water creature. Both these brutes are chthonic creatures that only God can subdue. Job has no control over these nightmare beasts, a point that God drives solidly home through His series of questions. I can almost visualize Job shrinking back.

I do wonder, though, if Behemoth and Leviathan could possibly represent those dark, damaging, psychological forces lurking in the shadows within us, a deontologopathy that drives our worldly desires and furtive actions; damnable forces which breach our defences and to which we capitulate from time to time.

Is this, then, what Paul is alluding to in Romans?

Rom 7:15-20 For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. 17 So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

We've met Leviathan before, described as a dragon, in Isaiah 27:1

"In that day the LORD with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea."

Sometimes Leviathan is used as a symbol of the wicked one who opposes God, as in Psalm 74:14. "You crushed the heads of Leviathan; You gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness."

We remember the reference in Gen 3:15 where God pronounces judgement on Satan, saying that "he [man] will crush your head."

Note the plural form of “heads” in Psalms which reminds us of Hydra, the many-headed serpentine water monster in Greek mythology. Whether Crocodile, Dragon, Hydra or Satan, Job has no control over it.

Even earlier, though, we have met Leviathan.

Gen 1:21 (JPS) “And God created the great sea-monsters, and every living creature that creepeth, wherewith the waters swarmed, after its kind, and every winged fowl after its kind; and God saw that it was good.”

Both Behemoth and Leviathan were created by God as a necessary part of His Creation. And His Creation was good. Why were (are) they necessary?

God asks Job:

41:5 “Can you make a pet out of it like a bird or put it on a leash for the young women in your house?”

Who says God doesn’t have a sense of humor? But can we easily discount this question?

God’s question may seem innocuous enough but it puts me in mind of the great forces that we want to control today without sufficient knowledge or wisdom or guidance. Nuclear power. Biological agents. CRISPR/Cas-9. GMOs. More stuff you don’t know about. We may think we are holding the reins on Leviathan but it is going where it wants to go. And sometimes it goes on a rampage. (Fukushima Daiichi)

God says:

41:11 “Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me.”

Job has implied that God owes him something and God refutes him by reminding Job that since everything belongs to God, God makes the rules. He is in charge.

This point is made in the Doxology of Romans 11:33-36

33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable his judgments,
and his paths beyond tracing out!

34 “Who has known the mind of the Lord?

Or who has been his counselor?”

35 “Who has ever given to God,
that God should repay them?”

36 For from him and through him and for him are all things.

To him be the glory forever! Amen.

It is good to remember that whatever blessings we have, whatever luxuries we enjoy, whatever comforts us and gives joy to our lives – all that comes from God.

But God wants to address Job’s question, essentially “Why do good people suffer?”

God’s world needs His constant attention – his involvement and intervention. God is telling Job to behold His two creatures, Behemoth and Leviathan, who are responsible for the bad things that happen, the misery that good people encounter.

But God needed both of these creatures to be a part of His world.

You can think of Behemoth as the Primal Life Force that gives people the impetus to do things, whether for good or evil. It is Eros, the force that brings people to seek their mates and

produce children. It is the drive to do better and be competitive. Part of this Force is the human ability to choose an action over instinct. People can choose to go hungry, they can choose to employ their conscience to act according to a sense of right and wrong over instinct.

To have the power to choose good, we also need the power to choose evil, thus harming or destroying others. Without Behemoth, without the freedom to act selfishly and choose wickedness, you might have obedience but not goodness. Behemoth is necessary for free will.

You can think of Leviathan as the Force of Chaos. Chaos, randomness, plays a part in our world. You decide to drive a different way to work and experience a flat tire whereupon the tow-truck driver later becomes your husband. Many crucial events in our lives came about through randomness.

Leviathan, Chaos, shows up in natural disasters, such as earthquakes, tornadoes, tsunamis and the like. They are (so far) unpredictable and are responsible for the suffering of many, many good people. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans. Some people preached that this disaster was a punishment from God because of gay pride events. But I personally don't agree. Many innocents were lost; Chaos is an element of the world we live in.

The world we live in, the world that God had in mind, needs to have both Behemoth and Leviathan, ambition and randomness and all the harm that those can cause.

God has given us the freedom to choose between good and evil, the freedom to choose, as we will see in Proverbs, between Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly. Our ability to choose is precious in God's sight; He wants us to freely and joyfully align to His will and be willing and conscious participants in our own salvation.

In 42, the final chapter of Job, Job replies to God's second speech by acknowledging his submission and concession to the overwhelming power of God.

Job 42:1-6

Then Job answered the Lord and said:

2 "I know that you can do all things,
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

3 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?'
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

4 'Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you make it known to me.'

5 I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;

6 therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes."

Job has proven himself worthy of God's confidence in him. Job's knowledge is adequate, he doesn't need to know everything about the universe or God's Creation, he just needs to know that God is the Lord of the universe who can do all things.

42:5 “My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.” Theology has given over to Religion.

Job concludes his remarks in 42:6 “Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

This concluding remark of the Poem of Job, the key to understanding the book, is given in 7 Hebrew words, which are untranslatable with any degree of certainty.

Al ken em’as v’nihamti al afar v’efer. (42:6)

King James translation renders it: “Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.”
The Revised Standard Version: “Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”
My NIV Version: “Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

These translations imply that Job was admitting that God was right and Job was a sinner for doubting Him.

But there are issues with this. “Dust and ashes” never refers to a location (firepit) but rather is a synonym for human frailty and mortality.

Al ken means “therefore.”

Afar v’efer means “dust and ashes.”

The verb em’as: can mean to refuse, to reject, to deem worthless.

What is Job rejecting? Perhaps the answer is in the second verb, nihamti.

Nihamti – To be sorry, to console oneself, to have compassion for others, to repent for what one has done, and to be comforted.

Stephen Mitchell takes the first half of the verse to mean “Therefore I consider worthless [everything I have said to this point].” It is Job’s uninformed arguments, not Job himself, that deserve to be rejected.

For the second half of the verse, Mitchell notes that the verb nahem is used ten times in the book of Job, and in every one of them without exception, it means “to comfort or console,” never “to repent”.

6:10 Then I would still have this consolation

7:13 When I think my bed will comfort me

16:2 you are miserable comforters, all of you

21:34 So how can you console me with your nonsense?

He translates that last line as “I am comforted about being mortal.”

Harold Kushner would translate 42:6, then, as

“I reject [everything that has been said to this point by me and my visitors] and [having met God and been reassured that I am not alone and abandoned in this world] I am comforted, vulnerable human being that I am.”

God now expresses His anger towards Eliphaz and his two friends because they have not spoken the truth about Him as Job has. They are to go to Job and offer a hefty sacrifice. God is doing this partly as a means of mending fences between Job and his friends. They were friends before this experience but the experience has created a major rift between them. Hopefully, that rift can be healed.

Matt 5:23-24 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

To finish off the book, Job's fortunes are restored, his siblings come and comfort him with gifts of silver and gold rings. His flocks swell greatly and he has seven sons and three daughters, who are named and described as beautiful. The daughters also receive an inheritance, along with their brothers. Job lived a full life, reaching the age of 140, surrounded by his family.

What we have been doing is conducting a Biblical exegesis of the Book of Job. The Book of Job is written in such a way as to invite you into the discussion and I invite you to continue pondering its meanings.

I have learned a lot in leading this study, THANK YOU, and it is my hope that you, having pondered the book, are not the same person you were when you started. I'm hoping that at least once you've said to yourself "I've never thought of it that way before."

Next week we will (finally!) move on to our next book, Proverbs.

Job 28:28 "And he said to the human race, 'The fear of the Lord – that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.'"

The words of Kevin are ended.

Soli Deo gloria!

Now for those of you with time on their hands, I want to leave you and Job with one last thought which I find intriguing.

In Genesis 22, we have the story of the near-sacrifice of Abraham's son, Isaac. This is a story that you are all familiar with. God stays Abraham's hand at the last second; Isaac is saved to become the progenitor of nations; and Abraham is found to be God-fearing. The story has a good ending but we may be troubled by God's unethical demand to slaughter Abraham's son and Abraham's seemingly unquestioning compliance with this morally perplexing decree.

Like Elihu said, bear with me, I'm getting there.

Right after the story about the binding of Isaac, Genesis 22:20-23 talks about Nahor's sons:

20 Some time later Abraham was told, "Milkah is also a mother; she has borne sons to your brother Nahor:

21 Uz the firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel (the father of Aram),

22 Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph and Bethuel."

23 Bethuel became the father of Rebekah. Milkah bore these eight sons to Abraham's brother Nahor.

Some of these names are links to the Book of Job where they appear as place names. Job lived in Uz.

Elihu was the son of Barachel the Buzite.

Kesed (Cesed) also gets a nod in Job 1:17 "This one was still speaking when another came and said 'A Chaldean formation, Casdim (plural of Cesed), of three columns made a raid on the camels and carried them off and put the boys to the sword; I alone have escaped to tell you.'"

In the account of Abraham and Isaac, Abraham is deemed God-fearing at the END of the story. In the Book of Job, Job is described as God-fearing at the BEGINNING of the story.

Therefore, in a sense, the Book of Job is a sequel to the story of Abraham and Isaac. In the story of Isaac, no children were harmed. The sequel, Job, concerns itself with the "what if". What if – as often happens in the real world – the decree is not miraculously repealed at the last moment and the innocent actually suffer? What might Abraham had said if he was forced to go through with the act of sacrificing his son? Would he protest the injustice? Would God tolerate his objections? Might God reverse or apologize for this undeserved human anguish?

The Book of Job addresses these issues; Job losing not one but ten children.

Shalom.

Comment:

Marc Hermon:

We have all been blessed by your willingness to take on this good mission.

Comment:

Denise Waits:

Excellent, Kevin. Thank you so much.

Comment:

Sandy Buchanan:

One of the things that really stands out from today's verses is the importance God saw in choice. We see government trying to enforce morality, but it really comes down to each individual being responsible for their choices and decisions, regardless of what is currently legislated as "legal" where we live. Government is necessary, but the higher authority asks each of us to make our choices that may or may not align with politics. Jesus taught to help and serve each other, to love each other...the greatest of these is love. So, each day we have many choices of how we can love and put someone else's needs first.