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Prologue

Gospel preachers have unique access to God’s children. We see them at their best and worst; in good times and bad. The best times are full of joy and thanksgiving and we need little help to enjoy them. But the worst times can be full of resentment, anger, and doubt and it may take everything we possess to survive them.

Many times, with brethren who were in the midst of heart-wrenching, faith-challenging trials, I’ve been asked to give a godly perspective to encourage a soul in anguish. The absolute best answer for why bad things happen to good people is found in the Book of Job. Its lessons are both practical and profound. I recommend it highly and often.

But, the book is 42 chapters long and written in a challenging style. The average saint has neither the focus nor the tools to unpack and access the encouragement Job can provide while in trenches of despair. Sometimes I distill a few drops of encouragement from this great work, but those few drops seldom provide the comfort that would come from understanding the entire book.

The best way for saints to profit from Job’s lessons is to have studied and assimilated them before trouble comes. With that great goal in mind let us seek to understand the first book in Hebrew wisdom literature. I hope you will be spared from heart-wrenching, faith-challenging trials. But if they come, I hope you will have prepared by understanding the Book of Job and that you may overcome, as he did.

Study Plan

Year	Date		Lesson	Topic	Chapters	
	Month	Day			From	Through
2017	10	1	1	Introduction, Tests	1	3
		8	2	Rounds, Eliphaz - Job Exchange	4	7
		15	3	Bildad and Zophar Exchanges	8	14
		22	4	Eliphaz - Job Exchange	15	17
		29	5	Bildad and Zophar Exchanges	18	21
	11	5	6	Eliphaz - Job Exchange	22	24
		12	7	Bildad Exchange, Summary	25	28
		19	8	Job's Summary Defense	29	31
		26	9	Elihu's Take	32	37
	12	3	10	God Rebuke's Job	38	42
		10	11	Epilogue and Analysis	42	

Prior to each class please, 1) read the chapters of Job, 2) read the study guide section, 3) assemble a list of questions and comments, and 4) bring the list to class to be prepared to discuss them.

Introduction

Introduction and First Test

1. Introduction to Job:
Character, possessions, generosity, faith. – 1:1-5
2. God invites Satan to consider Job – 1:6-12
3. First test: Loss of family and possessions 1:13-22

Second Test and Three Friends

1. God again invites Satan to consider Job. – 2:1-5
2. Second test: Loss of health 2:6-10
3. Arrival of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar – 2:11-13

Job's First Lament

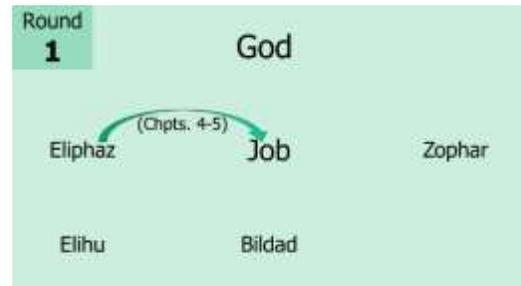
1. Curses the day of his birth – 3:1-10. Key word: darkness.
2. Laments not dying at birth – 3:11-19. Death gives rest to all. Key word: rest.
3. Why do I continue living when I want to die? – 3:20-26. Key words: misery, bitter, groaning.



Round 1

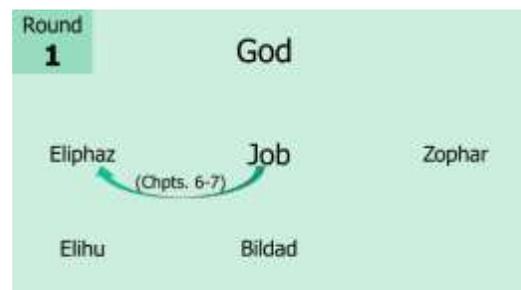
Eliphaz's First Speech

1. Initial complement – 4:1-5.
2. Theological statement – 4:6-11. Insinuates Job is guilty via his experience, observation.
3. Claim of divine vision – 4:12-21. "I have seen" (4:8) bolstered with "I heard a voice" (4:16).
4. Frail men should not question God.
5. The foolish are eventually undone; his sons are crushed – 5:1-7. Insinuation against Job.
6. God's goodness to the upright; defeat of crafty – 5:8-16. True statements; faulty application.
7. God chastens sinful man, and further great material blessings come upon good men – 5:17-27. Unwittingly, Eliphaz essentially makes Satan's argument: God builds hedges around faithful.



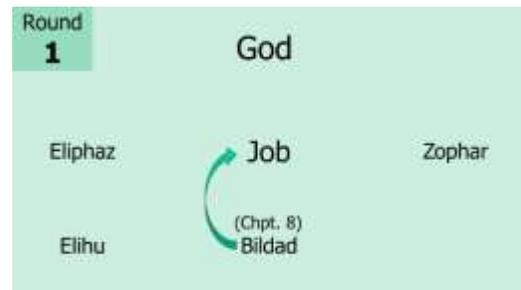
Job's Response

1. Job admits he has spoken rashly because of God's terrors upon him – 6:1-7. He wants God to take his life – 6:8-13.
2. Job criticizes his friends for their harshness – 6:14-23. Job just wanted comfort, but he got accusations. Job challenges their charge against him – 6:24-30.
3. Job laments his condition – 7:1-10. He is despondent, weary and hopeless.
4. Job is emboldened to take issue with God – 7:11-21. He challenges why God's hand has been so heavy upon him. He just wants God to leave him alone; he wonders why God doesn't just forgive his sins and let him die. Why is God making him suffer so much?



Bildad's Speech

1. Bildad insinuates through his theology that Job and his sons have sinned; he calls on Job to repent so that God will bless him again – 8:1-7.
2. Appeal to the ancient wisdom – 8:8-10.
3. More insinuations: Job has forgotten God, is a hypocrite, and is thus suffering God's punishment – 8:11-22. Again, more general truths are spoken, but wrongly applied.



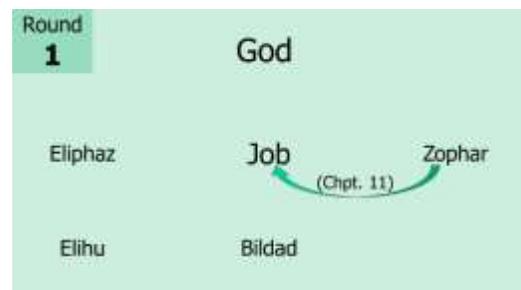
Job's Response

1. Job acknowledges God's great power but says this creates an unbridgeable gap between Him and man – 9:1-13.
2. Job makes harsh accusations against God in his pain and ignorance – 9:14-24. He feels God is unconcerned with man, has punished Job without cause, destroys the blameless with the wicked and treats them both alike. He is confused about God's moral government.
3. Job again states how swiftly his life is passing: a runner, ship or eagle. He is frustrated because he wants to argue his case before God, but God is too superior and distant. He wishes for a mediator and feels he would be successful in pleading his cause.
4. Homer Hailey: "In this chapter Job reached his lowest ebb and made harsh statements about God when he concluded that there is no moral government in the universe, and that therefore it is all one with God whether man does right or wrong" (99).
5. Job is harsh toward God – 10:1-7. He takes God to task and challenges Him to show him the reason for this contention with him. He accuses God of the very injustices seen among men, but notes that God is greater than men. He does not understand.
6. Job acknowledges God's creation of him – 10:8-12. But he doesn't understand why God would treat His magnificent creation in the way that He has.
7. At his best, Job cannot stand before God – 10:13-17. Why has God been so opposed to Job? He has hunted him like a lion and directed His power against a helpless creature.
8. Once again Job laments not dying at birth – 10:18-22. Since he feels he cannot get justice or compassion from God, he just wants God to leave him alone and live out his final days in peace. He has a dark view of the world beyond this created one.



Zophar's Speech

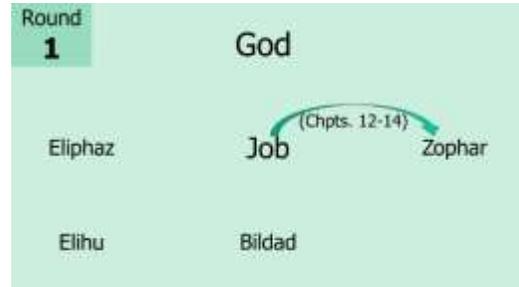
1. "The spirit of Zophar is dogmatic, cold, heartless and unfair in its accusations" (HH 109).
2. Zophar upbraids Job for his empty talk and mockery – 11:1-6. He misrepresents what Job has said and declares that God has not actually punished him enough.
3. Zophar also says true things (11:7-9), but they don't apply to Job. He slyly suggests that God has found out Job's sins and insinuates that wisdom is far from Job – 11:10-12.



- Zophar accuses Job of being unwilling to repent; if he would only do so, things would be better – 11:13-20. His parting shot is that the wicked will be overcome, thus issuing a not-so-subtle warning to Job.

Job's Response

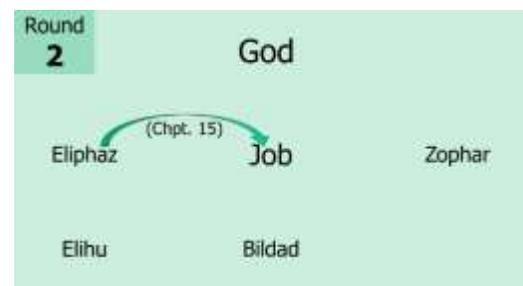
- Job sarcastically ridicules them for overstating their wisdom – 12:1-3. He accuses them of saying the obvious and declares he knows what they know – 12:4-6.
- Job acknowledges that observations of the world teach about the power of God and His hand in the world – 12:7-12.
- Job extols the effective power of God; what He determines will be done – 12:13-25. “Job’s comprehension of God’s wisdom, might and providence was equal to, or greater than that of his friends. However, ... he was baffled that he could not find an answer to the question of his suffering as an innocent friend of God” (HH 121).
- Job has strong words for his friends – 13:1-12. They are forgers of lies, worthless physicians, speaking wickedly for God and proverbs of ashes. He accuses them of attempting to defend God’s integrity with deceitful principles. These are harsh accusations, but God supports Job’s conclusions when He later condemns the friends.
- Job wishes to speak boldly to God and argue his case – 13:13-19. He is willing to risk God’s wrath to be heard. “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” (13:15).
- He pleads with God not to withdraw His hand from Job (which to Job it seems that He has) and not let his dread of God make him afraid – 13:20-21. Job then presents some questions he desires for God to answer – 13:22-25. In his pain, he falsely accuses God of writing bitter things against him, making him inherit the sins of his youth, putting his feet in stocks, etc. These charges arise from his pain and ignorance of the cause.
- Job laments the frailty and brevity of life – 14:1-6. Man is like a flower and a shadow. Why doesn’t God just look away from him and let him finish his life in peace?
- Job contrasts the life of man with a tree – 14:7-12. The tree stump with sprout again, but man dies and is laid away; so man lies down and does not rise. The concept of eternal life was obscure to the patriarchs. Not until Jesus does God fully reveal the fuller scope of eternity.
- Job seems to hope for life after death – 14:13-22. But in the end, he concludes that as mountains and earth erode and wash away, never to be built up again, so man departs from this world in hopelessness. Job is at a low ebb at this point in the discussion.



Round 2

Eliphaz's Speech

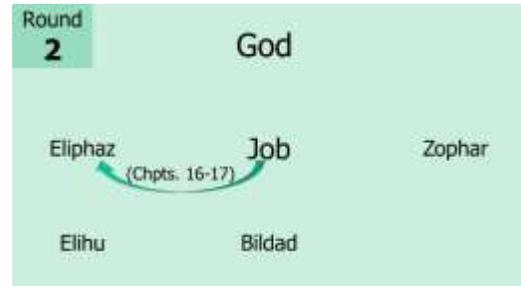
- Eliphaz attacks Job more vociferously than in his first speech – 15:1-13. He accuses Job of being ignorant (15:2-3), insincere (15:4-6), arrogant (15:7-10) and rebellious (15:11-13).
- Eliphaz exaggerates the sinfulness of man and denigrates him – but he somehow seems to exempt himself from his characterization – 15:14-16).



3. Eliphaz then launches into a long dissertation on the misfortunes of the wicked. “Much of what he said was so completely untrue or exaggerated, so contrary to the facts of reality, that such would be clearly visible even to the casual observer. Instead of inclining Job to moderate his views, Eliphaz only turned him farther away” (HH 146).

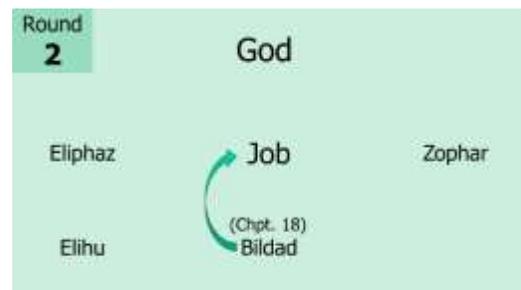
Job’s Response

1. Job turns Eliphaz’s own words against him, and he says if the roles were reversed he would offer comfort and strength to his friends – 16:1-5.
2. Job then turns back to his complaints against God – 16:6-14. In very strong language he portrays God as a wild animal hunting him and tearing at him to devour him. He even says God hates him (16:9). God has violently brought enemies against him and set him up as a target for the archers. Job gives full vent to his complaints and his sense that God has become his enemy for no reason.
3. Job laments his present condition yet maintains his innocence – 16:15-17.
4. Job cries for his cause not to be forgotten – 16:18-22. He seems conflicted, declaring that heaven is witness to his innocence but his friends scorn him. He still desires to plead his case with God, for he sees a dismal and brief future life on earth.
5. The thought continues from ch 16; Job’s outlook is very dark. He goes back and forth between thoughts of his impending death (17:1, 11, 13-16), the unfaithfulness of his friends (17:2, 10), the rejection of society (17:6).
6. Job still maintains his innocence (17:9) while his eye has dimmed with sorrow (17:7). He has lost hope that his life will fulfill what he desired for it (17:11, 15).



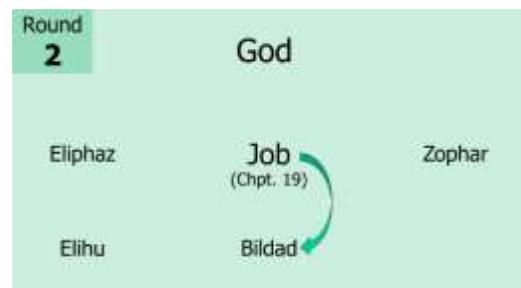
Bildad’s Speech

1. Bildad is indignant that Job has been dismissive of the friends (18:3). He says Job should be quiet and search for wisdom (18:2). He accuses Job of thinking of himself as the exception to the rule and that God should alter the whole flow of reality for him (18:4).
2. The rest of the chapter (18:5-21) is another lengthy generalization about the fate of the wicked (insinuating that Job is in this category), but he cannot cite evidence to affirm his position.



Job’s Response

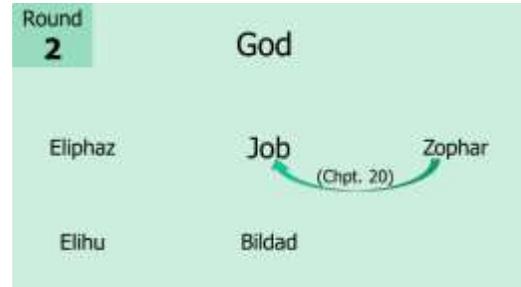
1. This chapter begins with Job’s lowest ebb but ends on a note of soaring optimism.
2. He continues to harshly criticize the friends – 19:1-6. Both they and God have wronged him.
3. In 19:7-12 he turns his complaint against God. “Where is the justice that should be found in a moral world ruled by a righteous God?” (HH 170).



4. A long list of family, friends and other associates who have forsaken him and become disgusted with his condition is in 19:13-20. Then follows 19:21-22, “probably the most pathetic cry in the book” (HH 175).
5. Suddenly Job’s mood swings upward in 19:23-29. Perhaps he had hit “rock bottom” and had nowhere to go but up, or maybe his arguing the matter out had solidified his sense of innocence. It is a passage of difficult interpretation, but HH draws three conclusions: 1) his Redeemer lives, 2) Job will eventually see Him, and 3) God will be his advocate, not his friends.’

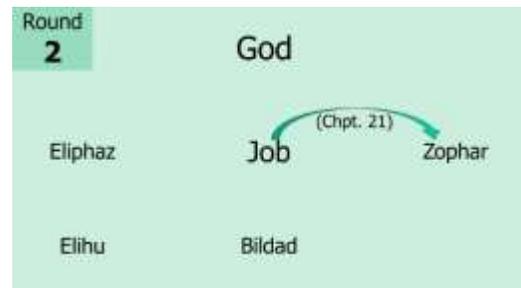
Zophar’s Speech

1. Zophar is highly offended by Job’s closing rebuke of chapter 19, and his anxiety and turmoil of spirit cause him to answer Job – 20:1-3.
2. What follows is another long, picturesque diatribe against the wicked, insinuating that Job is the very subject of his condemnation. In 20:4-11, Zophar says the wicked rejoice only momentarily; they will perish, fly away, and their children will seek the favor of the poor they once despised.
3. Zophar then describes the man who cherishes evil only to see it turn to a viper’s venom; he will die from the wickedness he did not forsake – 20:12- 18. If 20:19 is a swipe at Job, Zophar is dead wrong, and therefore his whole speech vilifying the evil is pointless (in Job’s case).
4. Note the descriptive phrases in 20:20-29: no quietness, not save anything, nothing to eat, distress, misery, fury of His wrath, iron weapon, terror, total darkness, etc. Zophar’s diatribe is an overstatement and doesn’t apply to Job. His anger is misplaced; his conclusion wrong.



Job’s Response

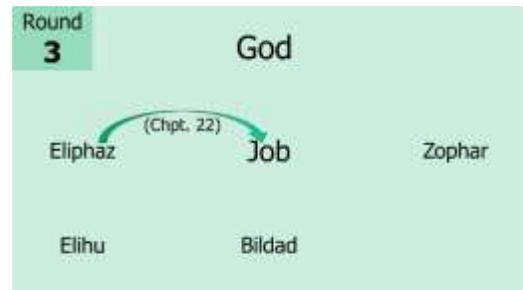
1. Job pleads for a hearing, after which he knows his friends will keep on mocking – 21:1-3. He rebukes them for not understanding and sympathizing with his true situation – 21:4-6.
2. He counters that the wicked *do* prosper – 21:7-16. As they age, their descendants are established, their cows calve, etc., they say to God, “Depart from us ...”. This puzzles Job greatly.
3. Job calls for the punishment of the wicked – 21:17-21. He then laments that one “dies in full strength” while another “dies in the bitterness of his soul” (21:22-26).
4. Job closes out by exposing the thoughts of the friends who have implicated him in wickedness - 21:27-28. He further laments the injustice of the wicked being honored – 21:29-33. He takes a final shot at the friends who try to “comfort” him with empty words and lies – 21:34.



Round 3

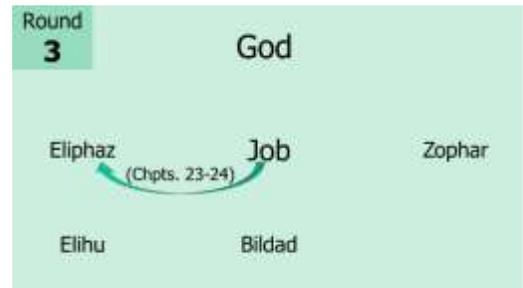
Eliphaz's (Final) Speech

1. Eliphaz “fell into the fault of many: if one fails to meet the facts of truth and argument, leave these and attack the person, manufacture charges” (HH 197). Ad hominem attack – 22:1-11. Eliphaz reasons that there must be sin in Job’s life that God is reacting to – 22:2-5. With no warrant, he launches into a laundry list of trumped up charges against Job.
2. Eliphaz then attributed things to Job that he had not said – 22:12-14. “Eliphaz virtually charged Job with denying the omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence of God” (HH 202). But Job had said that God held him under intense scrutiny and Job could not escape God’s notice.



Job's Response

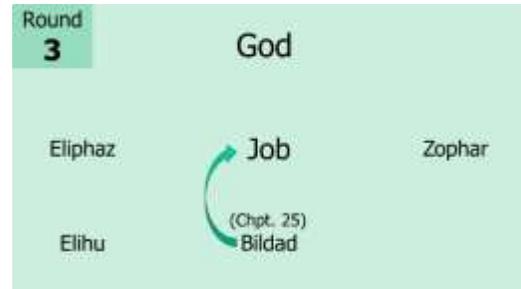
1. Job basically ignores the friends and laments God’s inaccessibility – 23:1-12. Job longs to present his case before God, feeling that he would be exonerated – 23:4-7. But he cannot find or see God, although he knows God sees him – 23:8-10. Job still holds to his integrity thinking that in the end he will “come forth as gold.”
2. Job laments God’s unchallenged sovereignty – 23:13-17. God does as He wills, and yet Job cannot understand why things happen as they do. But who can hold God to account? “Although Job earnestly desired to come before the Almighty and present his cause, the contemplation of God’s mighty power and the fear of death terrified him. Moreover, when we look back on Job’s terrible plight, should we not praise God for taking away the fear of death ...?” (HH, 211).
3. Job expounds upon his observations that the wicked do prosper in this life, although at the end of his speech he declares that they eventually get their just desserts.
4. In 24:1 Job still doesn’t understand why God doesn’t respond more readily to His people.
5. In 24:2-12 Job catalogs sins of those who extort from the poor and helpless, “*yet God does not charge them with wrong*” (2:12).
6. In 24:13-17 Job speaks of a different class of evil men – those who murder, steal and commit adultery with brazen criminal pursuits. The theme of light/dark is used; these avoid the light in fear of being recognized. They use the darkness and disguise to mask their crime.
7. The chapter closes with a passage of textual difficulty – 24:18-25. Some claim the passage is misplaced and attribute it to the friends. While Job does speak of the demise of the wicked, it is often only after years of peace and profit. However, the grave will consume them; they will be forgotten even by their mothers; the worms will feast on their flesh. They have security for a while, but God will eventually bring them low. Job ends with a taunt and challenge: “*Now if it is not so, who will prove me a liar ...?*”
8. HH offers: “Bildad and Zophar had failed to prove him false; the facts were against them. On some points there was agreement between Job and his friends. They were not completely wrong; Job was not entirely correct ... The friends’ theological philosophy, ‘piety pays; perversity



punishes,’ has been defended only by tradition and prejudice. Job, though not always correct, exploded their myth by observable facts” (220-221).

Bildad’s (Final) Speech

1. “The brevity of Bildad’s third speech and Zophar’s silence when his time came to speak, indicate one of two things: either the friends had given up on Job, considering him a hopeless case and continuing the discussion useless, or they had realized the weakness of their own position and their failure to establish it and decided to proceed no further” (HH 223).
2. Bildad’s address is in two parts: God’s transcendent majesty (25:2-3); transition and man’s impurity and unworthiness (25:4-6). There is some truth to Bildad’s observations, but he omits God’s grace, mercy, love and kindness. Man does not *merit* standing before God, but to conclude that man can have no meaningful interaction with his Creator is untrue and is self-condemning.
3. “So, whether we can be absolutely certain of the exact meaning of the symbols and metaphors in his speech, we can understand Bildad’s point: God is mighty and great, transcending all creation; and man is sinful, unclean, and insignificant to the point that he is presumptuous in even desiring to come before Him” (HH 225).



Job’s Response

1. 26:1-4 are sarcastic barbs at Bildad. His words have done nothing constructive.
2. 26:5-14 express wonder at God’s power and omniscience. Job acknowledges God’s awareness of Sheol, space, the atmosphere, seas, storms ... all cause us to stand in awe yet “these are the mere edges of His ways, and how small a whisper we hear of Him!”
3. Job boldly advances his complaint in 27:1-6, culminating in “Till I die I will not put away my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go.”
4. Job pronounces an imprecation upon his “enemy” (27:7-10) – perhaps his “friends” – and declares he will teach his friends the whole truth about God (27:11-12).
5. In a passage that first sounds contradictory to what Job said earlier about the wicked, Job now speaks of their ultimate demise (27:13-23). “The difference ... is that in the earlier one he considered the temporary escape of the wicked and in this one he considered their ‘heritage’ – what they will receive as a final inheritance” (HH 236).
6. Discourse on wisdom. Job begins with an analogy: Men can mine precious metals and jewels from the earth – risking life, developing technologies (28:1-11).
7. “But where can wisdom be found?” – 28:12. Job declares that wisdom cannot be purchased with the precious resources mined from the earth; neither death nor the bottom of the sea holds the secret of wisdom – 28:13-19.
8. “God understands its way” – 28:23. God, who established the physical properties of wind, sea, rain and lightning, said “Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding” – 28:28.



Job's Summary Defense

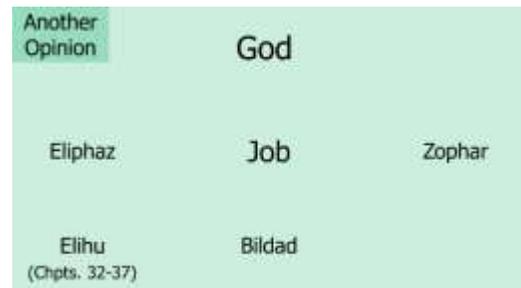
Job's Summary Defense

1. Oh, for the good old days! 29:1-25
2. Now I have become like dust and ashes. 30:1-31, esp. 19
3. Let me be weighed in a just balance. 31:1-40, esp. 6

Elihu's Take

Let Me also Declare My Opinion

1. Let me also declare my opinion 32:1-22
2. God is greater than man. Why do you contend against him? 33:1-33
3. God does no wrong. Job speaks without knowledge. 34:1-37
4. Elihu condemns Job. 35:1-16
5. God is mighty and does not despise any. 36:1-33
6. God does wonderful things that we cannot comprehend. 37:1-24



God Rebukes Job

God's Response

1. "To defend his innocence amidst the charges made against him was not wrong; but to charge God with mismanagement of His world and to accuse Him of cruelty toward him, and to challenge him to a case at law was extremely presumptuous and definitely wrong. Jehovah's speech was directed to the end of convincing Job of impudence and saving him from ruin" (HH, 349).
2. "He acknowledged his insignificance before God and put his hand upon his mouth indicating that he would speak no more. But he was not ready to confess, 'I have sinned,' in what he had said, or to admit that he had erred in his judgment, which he must be brought to realize before God can fully pronounce him just ... Seemingly Job had not sensed the magnitude of his sin, or else he persisted in stubbornness; in either case Jehovah was moved to sternness or even harshness. His question was, "How could you be so carried away with defending your own righteousness that you made void my judgment and condemned me that you might be considered just?" (HH 350).
3. "Job should have known that in His provision for all the animals God provided also for the needs of man. If He made no provision to satisfy some of man's questions, it was because the answers to such questions are not needful. God owes no one anything; He was not indebted to Job that He should respond to his request by granting a court trial. All things under heaven are His as Creator and Ruler; He is obligated to no one" (HH 359).
4. "In the compendium flashed before him in Jehovah's speeches, Job saw Jehovah as the great superintendent watching over the whole, interested in and concerned about the welfare of each, from the raven and the sparrow to the hippo and crocodile. Such a God is Jehovah! Who is this puny Job to question what God does or to challenge His wisdom and ways? How foolish he had been to challenge such a one. He was now humbled, his arrogance crushed" (HH 364).

Epilogue

Resolution

1. “God achieved His desire in Job, and Job received what his heart yearned for: a true view of God and complete fellowship with Him. He now had something that could not have been acquired apart from the experience through which he had passed. WE may read about or be told a great truth, but until we have experienced its teaching or purport in life we never fully comprehend its fullness. When we have passed through the crucible of experience, we can say with Job, ‘I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye ... seeth thee.’ This insight remains one of the great blessings and rewards of human suffering” (HH 366).
2. “When Jehovah said that Job had spoken ‘the thing that is right,’ it is possible that He referred to the words of Job’s confession (vv 1-6). However, He said to the friends, ‘ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right,’ which seems to refer to the whole of their speeches throughout the debate. If so, Job’s would be included” (HH 367).
3. “And so, bereft of all worldly possessions, enduring physical and mental suffering, being ridiculed and rejected by all those about him, Job became the mediator, intercessor, and priest for those who in their ignorance ridiculed and rejected him. Yet, throughout it all he held on to his faith in God. In this he foreshadowed Him who would come, who willingly laid aside all glory and possessions, was rejected, reviled, and suffered that He might become for all the world what Job yearned for: an umpire, mediator, and priest, becoming also the sacrifice itself for all who had rejected and reviled Him” (HH 368).

References

A Commentary on Job, Hailey, Homer, Religious Supply Center, Inc, 1994

Notes