

## **The Book of Job**

### **Session 29: The Message of the Book of Job**

**By John Walton**

This is Dr. John Walton and his teaching on the Book of Job. This is session 29, The Message of the Book of Job.

#### **No Answer to the Why Question [00:21-2:35]**

So, at last, we're ready to summarize the message of the Book of Job. Does it give answers? It depends on what your questions are. If your question is, "Why?", probably not. Job has never told why he suffered. There's no reason or cause in Job's behavior for that suffering. When we look to the past, we are seeking reasons. As we talked about in John 9, we should look to the future on Jesus' advice, seeking purpose. The former attempt to ask why about the past should be abandoned. And even the latter seeking purpose should be held loosely because the fact is even when we seek purpose, we don't always find it. There is no basis for thinking that reasons exist.

Our modern inclination is to say that, well, maybe I can't know the reasons, but I'll find out in heaven. I imagine people lining up at the reason's booth to try to get the reason why they suffered this or that. Don't count on it. Because it's not just that we don't know the reasons, and it's not even that we can't know the reasons; it is that there may very well be no reasons. Some of our experiences are the result of living in a world that includes non-order and disorder; then, those experiences are not the result of reasons. They are the result of the world being the way that it is. That's not a reason.

#### **Wrong to Call on God to Defend Himself [2:35-2:55]**

In contrast, we can seek out purposes for our suffering, but there's no guarantee that we will find them, and purposes themselves can be complex. So, if your question is why you shouldn't expect the answer in the book of Job or ever. If your question is, what is God doing? And you have in mind the idea that God has a lot to answer for what in the

world is he doing; well, no, we shouldn't expect that answer either. We shouldn't expect God to defend himself. That's the Job mistake to call God into court, make him defend himself. No, No, we shouldn't expect God to defend himself. The explanations of what God is doing are certainly way above our pay grade and beyond our discovery.

### **Disinterested Righteousness [2:55-4:49]**

What if our question is: is there disinterested righteousness? Now, of course, that's not usually the question that people ask, but that is the question that the Challenger posed, and it is the question that is a topic for a large portion of the book. That really is the most important question to ask because it is the question the book poses. Does anyone serve God for nothing? Do I? Do you? We are encouraged to do so, to be willing to serve God for nothing. As Christians, we have benefits, eternal life, forgiveness, salvation, and benefits, but we don't earn those. It's not like we deserve them. We should be willing to serve God for nothing even if we have no such benefits that we receive.

### **There May Be No Reason at All [4:49-5:27]**

Beyond the fact that we don't get an explanation of why something happened, the book helps us to arrive at the important insight that we should not think that there is an explanation. Again, there are no reasons. In other words, it's not just a case that there is an answer, and we simply can't know because we can't comprehend it or because it's being withheld. There may very well be no reason, and we have to be willing to live with that.

### **We Can't Out God, God [5:27-6:22]**

Another thing that we learn is that we can't out God, God. We must not permit ourselves the illusion that, given the reigns of the world, we could do it better. Remember, in chapter 40, God offers that to Job rhetorically. Go ahead, give it a shot. How's that going? We cannot do it better. That doesn't mean that we're therefore saying, "Well, God doesn't do a very good job. I couldn't do it better, but he's not doing very well." No, no, but we shouldn't think that we can out God, God. Such mistaken thinking

puts us precisely in Job's shoes, thinking too simplistically and mechanically about God and thinking too highly of ourselves.

**The Key Message is to Trust God in the Midst of Suffering [6:22-8:05]**

Key to the message of the book is that trust is the only possible response. Our experiences are beyond explanation. Reasons are fleeting and inadequate if anything exists at all. The worse the situation is, the harder it is to trust and the more it is necessary to do so. But that's what trust is. If we had all the answers, we wouldn't need to trust. Trust comes in where reason has failed.

God's wisdom prevails. God's justice is to be affirmed but cannot be expected to be evident in our experiences. Our benefits must be devalued in our minds. We don't live for the benefits. Our partnership with God is foremost. He has made us partners in a great enterprise of his plans and purposes for the cosmos. We need to be participants, partnering with him in what he is doing. What we get out of it has value but must not be the driving factor in our commitments and behavior.

**Abraham and Serving God without Benefits [8:05-10:37]**

The message of the book of Job: Do you serve God for nothing? Or are you only serving God for what you get out of it? Again, Abraham was asked to do something very similar. It wasn't just his son bound on that altar. It was the covenant and all the covenant promises because if there was no Isaac, there was no covenant. Family dies out, no land, no family, no blessing. The covenant was on that altar up until that time; everything that God asked Abraham to give up, he promised him something better in return. Still, it took faith for Abraham, but he always stood to gain through the covenant by responding in faith.

In chapter 22, that is not the case. Abraham has nothing to gain, nothing that will make it easier to get over that hump. He stands to gain nothing. In fact, he stands to be giving up everything that he could have gained. That's why God says in chapter 22, verse 12. "Now I know that you fear God." The alternative to that word would have been. "Now I know that you're in it for yourself, that you're in it for the benefits, that you're

only showing faith when you get something out of it." That would have been the other alternative. But now, all the covenant sat on that altar with his beloved son when he was ready to give it up; God said, "Now I know that you fear God." That is what disinterested righteousness is: being willing to give up all the rest.

So that's the question of the Book of Job. Do any of us fear God for nothing? It's an important question to ask, and that'll lead us to our last segment. The application of the Book of Job.

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