

Dr. John Walton, Job, Session 3

Job as a Book with Authority and Inspiration

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Walton, Job, Session 3, Job as a Book with Authority and Inspiration, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture excerpt from John Walton's "Walton_Job_Session03.pdf" discusses the Book of Job's authority and inspiration. **Walton argues that the book's authority stems not from historical accuracy but from its wisdom message**, which reveals God's character and actions. He emphasizes discerning the book's affirmations, recognizing that not all statements within the text reflect truth. **The lecture compares Job's structure to that of Jesus' parables**, highlighting the importance of understanding the underlying wisdom rather than focusing solely on the narrative's literal truth. **Walton concludes by stressing the importance of complete submission to the book's authoritative wisdom message**, which reveals how God works and relates to humanity.

2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Walton's, Job, Session 3 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Psalms & Wisdom → Job → Walton).



Walton_Job_Session03.mp3

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpts of John Walton's "Job Session 3," focusing on Job as a book with authority and inspiration:

Briefing Document: John Walton on the Book of Job - Session 3: Authority and Inspiration

I. Introduction

- **Problem Statement:** The central problem addressed is how to consider the Book of Job as true, authoritative, and inspired by God when much of what the characters (Job's friends, and sometimes even Job) say is wrong.
- **Quote:** "So, here's the problem, if much of what Job's friends say is wrong, and if even some of the things that Job himself says are wrong, how do we talk about the book as true? How do we consider it to have authority? How does this come from God?"

II. Core Concepts

- **Inspiration:**
- **Definition:** Inspiration means the book's source is God; it's "God-breathed." It does not imply dictation or direct mental planting of thoughts. It is the origin, not necessarily the content, that makes it inspired.
- **Quote:** "When we talk about inspiration, what we mean is that the book has its source in God. Inspiration doesn't imply some kind of whispering voice in the ear or thoughts planted in the mind. Inspiration indicates that the source is God."
- **Implication:** God is not "whispering wrong thoughts" into the minds of Job's friends.
- **Authority:**
- **Definition:** Authority means the book provides reliable information and has the right to speak because of its divine source (inspiration). It requires a submissive response from the reader.
- **Quote:** "Authority means that the book gives information we can rely on. It is what authority has to do with. Authority indicates that the book has a right to speak. And, of course, that's because of its inspiration."

- **Revelation:**
- **Definition:** The Bible, including Job, is a revelation of God, conveying truth and dependability. The book reveals aspects of God's plans, purposes, and character.
- **Focus:** The book's authority is tied to its *wisdom message* rather than its narrative events or speeches. Much of the content is "wrongheaded thinking," intentionally presented as such, so that readers can discern right thinking.
- **Quote:** "The idea that this is God's revelation of himself means that we are going to find the authority of the book in the revelation that it gives us. It's revelation in that message, which is being affirmed through the wisdom literature that it contains."
- **Discernment is Key:** Readers need to discern what the book affirms as true. Not everything spoken by all the characters is necessarily true, and even the "heavenly antagonist" may at times speak truth.
- **Quote:** "We have to identify what it is that the book affirms as true. Not everything in the content of the book is affirming some kind of truth or true message. We have to discern that as careful readers."

III. Authority and Historicity

- **Key Point:** The authority of the Book of Job does *not* depend on its historicity (whether the events literally happened).
- **Quote:** "The authority of the book is not tied up in whether it's an accurate account of real events in a real past... The truth does not depend on its historicity, whether the events really happened, whether they're really events in a real past."
- **Analogy:** This is similar to Jesus' parables. They are not actual historical events but convey deeper truths. Job has realistic and unrealistic elements. This does not mean the events did not occur, but that their historicity is not the basis of their authority.
- **Quote:** "This is the same thing that happens with Jesus' parables. They are narratives, but Jesus is not presenting them as real events in a real past... We find the same thing here with Job. I'm not suggesting it's a parable, but in the same way, it's like parables that are not dependent on these being real events."

- **Emphasis on Wisdom:** The authority comes from the wisdom message, which transcends events. Wisdom provides deeper truths about how to think about, respond to, and understand events.
- **Quote:** "Authority is in the wisdom message of the book, regardless of the extent to which these are real events in a real past. Wisdom gets at a deeper truth than events themselves."

IV. Knowing God

- **Limited Revelation:** While the Book of Job offers insight into *how* God works and wants us to think about Him, it does not give us exhaustive information about *who* God is. It gives limited information, but enough for us to know how to be partners with Him.
- **God's Inscrutability:** There are limitations on how much we can know God. Trying to fully know God can lead to creating Him in our own image, instead of understanding God on His terms.
- **Quote:** "The more we get to thinking that God is fully known by us is, probably the same extent to which we have made him in our own image."
- **Syllabus Analogy:** The Bible, like a syllabus, reveals God's plans and purposes, enabling us to participate in His kingdom. We can learn about God's character, but there are limitations. God reveals enough to make us partners in his work, but does not reveal the entirety of his being.
- **Quote:** "I think there's a benefit to thinking about the Bible a bit like a syllabus. In its pages, God has revealed his plans and purposes, his kingdom, and what role we have in that kingdom. He's given us enough to participate in his work, to be partners with him."

V. Summary and Implications

- **Key Takeaways:** The Book of Job is inspired by God and has authority.
- Authority resides in its wisdom message, not its historicity.
- Readers must discern truth from falsehood in the book's content.
- The book reveals aspects of God's work but doesn't give complete knowledge of Him.

- **Call to Action:** Once we accept the Bible as authoritative, we must submit to its message without picking and choosing. Just like we can't choose which tax laws we follow, we can't pick and choose which parts of the bible we follow.
- **Quote:** "Once we accept the Bible as authoritative, we can't allow ourselves the luxury, the freedom, to pick and choose...Once we discern the authoritative message, we are committed to submitting ourselves to that message as an inspired piece that has authority."

VI. Conclusion

- John Walton emphasizes that the Book of Job, like the rest of the Bible, has divine origin, therefore authority. The authority rests in the revealed wisdom message, not the historicity of the narrative. Understanding Job requires careful discernment and a recognition that the book reveals much about God's ways but not the fullness of his nature.

This briefing document should provide a comprehensive overview of the key points from John Walton's Session 3 on the Book of Job.

4. Job Study Guide: Session 3, Job as a Book with Authority and Inspiration

Study Guide: The Book of Job - Authority and Inspiration

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What does it mean for the Book of Job to be "inspired" according to Walton?
2. How does Walton define the "authority" of the Book of Job?
3. Where does the authority of the Book of Job lie, according to Walton, and where does it NOT lie?
4. Why is it important to discern the wisdom message within the Book of Job?
5. How does the presentation of truth in the Book of Job compare to Jesus' parables?
6. According to Walton, what is the relationship between events and wisdom in the Book of Job?
7. What are the limitations on our knowledge of God that Walton discusses?
8. How does Walton use the illustration of a syllabus to explain how we can understand the Bible?
9. What does the Book of Job reveal about God's work and how he wants us to think about him?
10. What are the implications of accepting the Bible as authoritative, according to Walton?

Quiz - Answer Key

1. Inspiration, according to Walton, means the book has its source in God. It does not imply a direct dictation, but rather that God is the origin of the book's message. The concept is similar to the New Testament idea of "God-breathed."
2. Walton defines the "authority" of the Book of Job as the book's right to speak because of its inspiration from God and its ability to provide reliable information that we should submit to.

3. The authority of the Book of Job, according to Walton, lies in its wisdom message, rather than in the historicity of the events described. It is the truth communicated by the ideas presented, not necessarily the accuracy of the narrative.
4. It's crucial to discern the wisdom message because much of the book contains wrongheaded thinking, including many statements by Job and his friends. The goal is to learn from the wrong thinking and identify the right way of thinking.
5. Like Jesus' parables, the Book of Job's authority doesn't depend on its being a real event in the past. Both use narratives that can include unrealistic elements to convey deeper truths.
6. Wisdom, according to Walton, does not automatically come with the unfolding of events. Wisdom comes when we look beyond the events and seek to understand the deeper truth and how we should respond to the events.
7. Walton states that we cannot know God fully because he is God, and we are not. God has revealed himself, but our understanding is limited because God's ways are not our ways, and any complete understanding is limited to the parts he has revealed.
8. Walton uses the syllabus as an analogy to the Bible, where just as the syllabus reveals the professor's plans and purposes, the Bible reveals God's plans and purposes for the world. We can learn something of the person of the professor through a careful reading of the syllabus, similar to how we can know something of God through the Bible.
9. The Book of Job, according to Walton, reveals how God works, how he doesn't work, and how he wants us to think about him. It does not, however, provide an intimate look into the reasons behind everything God does.
10. The implication of accepting the Bible as authoritative means we can't pick and choose which parts to follow. Just as we submit to governmental authority, we must submit to the authoritative wisdom message presented in the Bible.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the relationship between inspiration, authority, and revelation as they apply to the Book of Job, according to Walton. How does this framework influence our reading and interpretation of the text?
2. Walton suggests that the authority of the Book of Job is not in its historicity, but in its wisdom message. Explore what this means for readers of the text, and how

it might change the way we approach difficult or seemingly contradictory narratives in the Bible.

3. Compare and contrast Walton's explanation of wisdom in the Book of Job to how wisdom is traditionally understood in other contexts. How does focusing on wisdom as a "deeper truth" change our understanding of the book?
4. Walton uses the analogy of a syllabus to help us understand how we can learn about God from the Bible. Explain this analogy and discuss its strengths and weaknesses in terms of understanding divine revelation.
5. How does the idea that the Book of Job reveals more about "how God works and doesn't work" than "who God is" impact your understanding of the purpose of the book and its place in the Bible?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Inspiration:** The concept that the Book of Job has its source in God, meaning God is the origin of the book's message, though not necessarily a literal dictation.
- **Authority:** The right to speak and the reliability of the information provided in the Book of Job, derived from its divine inspiration. Readers should submit to this authority.
- **Revelation:** The idea that the Book of Job is a means by which God reveals his plans, purposes, and aspects of his character.
- **Wisdom Message:** The deeper truths and understanding conveyed by the ideas presented in the Book of Job, which is distinct from the narrative or historical events depicted. This is where the authority of the book lies, according to Walton.
- **Historicity:** The accuracy of a text as an account of real events in a real past. Walton contends that the truth and authority of Job do not depend on its historicity.
- **God-breathed:** A reference to the New Testament concept that the Bible is inspired by God and has its source in him, often used synonymously with inspiration.
- **Submissive Response:** The act of acknowledging and submitting to the authority of the wisdom message presented in the Bible, recognizing that God has the right to be heard and obeyed.

5. FAQs on Walton, Job, Session 3, Job as a Book with Authority and Inspiration, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on the Book of Job's Authority and Inspiration

1. **What does it mean for the Book of Job to be "inspired"?** Inspiration, in this context, means that the book has its source in God. It doesn't imply that God dictated every word or whispered thoughts into the minds of the characters, but rather that the underlying source and origin of the book's message and wisdom is divine. The book is considered "God-breathed," having its ultimate origin in God.
2. **How does the book's inspiration relate to its authority?** Because the book is considered to be inspired by God, it has the right to speak authoritatively. Its authority derives from its divine source, indicating that it contains reliable information to which readers should submit themselves. The book's authority is not just about being able to speak, but also about speaking truthfully.
3. **Is everything spoken within the Book of Job considered to be true?** No, not everything spoken in the Book of Job is considered true. Much of what Job's friends say is incorrect, and even some of Job's statements are flawed. The book uses these wrongheaded perspectives as a way to help the reader discern what is the right way of thinking. The authority is in the wisdom message that the book is affirming, not in all the content of the narrative.
4. **Where does the authority of the Book of Job lie—in its narrative or its wisdom message?** The authority of the Book of Job lies primarily in its wisdom message, rather than its historicity or narrative. The book uses the narrative and speeches as a vehicle to convey deeper truths and insights about God, suffering, and wisdom. Its wisdom transcends the events described in the book, offering profound lessons.
5. **Is the historical accuracy of the Book of Job essential to its authority?** No, the authority of the book is not dependent on its historical accuracy. Whether the events described actually happened is not the basis of its truth. The wisdom that the book conveys is what gives it authority, and that wisdom exists separately from the question of whether the narrative is based on real events. The book, like Jesus' parables, prioritizes conveying wisdom over strict historical accuracy.

6. **How should readers approach discerning the true message of the book when so much of it is flawed?** Readers should carefully discern what the book affirms as true. This involves identifying the wisdom teaching that transcends the flawed arguments and speeches presented within the text. It requires recognizing the right way of thinking amidst wrongheaded ideas, understanding that the book's primary goal is to provide a message of wisdom, not to present a flawless narrative.
7. **What does the Book of Job reveal about God?** The Book of Job reveals aspects of God's work, how he operates and wants us to think about him. It does not give an exhaustive look into his reasoning, nor does it offer a complete picture of who God is. It is more about God's ways than his essence, which are ultimately beyond our full comprehension.
8. **What does it mean to submit to the authority of the Book of Job, and why is it important?** Submitting to the authority of the Book of Job means accepting its wisdom message as authoritative and trustworthy. It implies not being selective about what parts of the text one accepts, but rather yielding to the book's full wisdom message as inspired and divinely sourced. This submission stems from recognizing the book's authority derived from God, and it is vital to understanding the wisdom and truth that the book offers.