

## Dr. John Walton, Job, Session 10 Sons of God and the Challenger Resources from NotebookLM

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

### 1. Abstract of Walton, Job, Session 10, Sons of God and the Challenger, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

**Dr. John Walton's lecture** analyzes a section of the Book of Job, focusing on the heavenly scene where God and the "Challenger" (often interpreted as Satan) discuss Job's righteousness. **The lecture highlights** the "Challenger's" assertion that Job's piety is self-serving, prompting a test of Job's faith through immense suffering. **Walton emphasizes** the use of the Hebrew word "barak," meaning both "bless" and "curse," creating a wordplay central to the narrative. **He also examines** Job's response to his trials, noting his unwavering acceptance of God's actions despite the lack of explanation, and how this challenges the concept of a simple equation governing divine justice. **Finally**, the lecture discusses the hidden information of the heavenly scene and its impact on understanding God's policies.

**2. 13 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Walton's, Job, Session 10 – 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\_Session  
10.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document based on the provided excerpts from John Walton's Session 10 on the Book of Job:

#### **Briefing Document: John Walton on Job, Session 10 - "Sons of God and Satan"**

##### **Overview:**

This session focuses on the opening scene of the Book of Job, specifically the heavenly court where God engages in conversation with "the Challenger" (often understood as Satan). Walton emphasizes that this scene isn't meant to portray God as ignorant, but rather as a king gathering information. The scene introduces the core challenge of the book: whether righteousness is truly disinterested, and sets the stage for Job's suffering and response. Importantly, the scene also reveals hidden information – information that Job and his friends will never have – which significantly impacts the book's interpretation.

##### **Key Themes and Ideas:**

##### **1. The Challenger's Role:**

- The Challenger is not depicted as an equal to God but as a figure tasked to "go and discover things and bring them." (0:30)
- The Challenger's role is to present a case, questioning Job's motives and thus triggering the narrative's central conflict.
- Walton stresses that the heavenly scene operates within a kingly court framework, where a king would seek reports and information from his agents.

##### **1. Disinterested Righteousness:**

- The central question posed by the Challenger is whether Job serves God for nothing. "Does Job serve God for nothing?" (1:30)
- This introduces the idea of "disinterested righteousness," meaning righteousness without self-interest, a concept that challenges the established retribution principle (that good behavior is always rewarded, and bad behavior punished).
- Job's response to suffering will serve as a test case for this principle.

### 1. The "Bless/Curse" Play on "Barak":

- The Hebrew word "barak" is used in the text to refer to both "blessing" and "cursing" within this context, creating a linguistic play. (2:50)
- The Challenger claims Job will *barak* (curse) God, while Job in his initial response *baraks* (blesses) God.
- This sets up a dramatic irony, as Job's initial response perfectly counters the Challenger's prediction.

### 1. Job's Response to Tragedy:

- Job's reaction to the multiple disasters is a model of acceptance and worship: prostrating himself, mourning, and blessing God's name. "Naked, I came from my mother's womb, naked, I will depart. Yahweh has given, Yahweh has taken away. May the name of Yahweh be praised." (5:00)
- Job's use of the name Yahweh (as opposed to Elohim or El Shaddai which he uses elsewhere) is significant in this context.
- Walton emphasizes that Job does not charge God with wrongdoing, but acknowledges God as the source of his situation. "that in all this Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing." (6:50)

### 1. Hidden Information:

- A crucial element of the book is that Job and his friends never know about the heavenly scene that instigates the trials.
- This lack of explanation forces the characters, and by extension the readers, to grapple with suffering without a clear answer. (7:40)
- The reader, however, is privileged to this information, so as to reflect on how this heavenly scene impacts the book and theological questions.
- This hidden information removes the typical answers for suffering that would have been common in the ancient Near East. (7:20)

### 1. Rejection of Simplistic Retribution:

- The initial scene sets up that God's actions cannot be reduced to a simple equation of reward and punishment. "Job thought in terms of the retribution principle... It's always a mistake." (9:40)

- Walton implies the book of Job itself will serve as a "corrective" to this simplistic view.
- The book is going to offer a more nuanced view of suffering and God's actions.

### 1. **God's Policies are Under Scrutiny:**

- The heavenly scene targets God's policies and the retribution principle, rather than Job personally. "The scene in heaven targets God's policies. Job is just the test case." (7:55)
- The entire narrative is used to explore these policies rather than question Job's character.

### **Key Quotes:**

- "He has tasked the Challenger to go and discover things and bring them. And so, the Challenger's playing the assigned role, and God is gathering information." (0:45)
- "Does Job serve God for nothing? This challenge strikes right at the heart of the retribution principle and the great symbiosis." (1:30)
- "Remember that we've talked about Job then as the star witness for the defense, the defense of God's policies." (2:35)
- "Naked, I came from my mother's womb, naked, I will depart. Yahweh has given, Yahweh has taken away. May the name of Yahweh be praised." (5:05)
- "The scene in heaven itself is removed from Job's knowledge... It's, rather, pulling all of those things out of the picture so that we can discuss this whole idea of how it is that we think about God." (8:50)

### **Implications:**

- The Book of Job does not offer a simple answer for the problem of suffering but rather forces a critical engagement with traditional ideas about God and justice.
- The initial heavenly scene is not a historical account, but functions rhetorically to highlight central questions of the book.
- The lack of information given to Job creates a scenario where faith and trust must operate despite the absence of rational explanation.

- The audience should consider the book as a way to examine how we ourselves think about God. (8:55)
- The book calls to question the notion that God's actions are able to be reduced to an equation. (9:40)

This briefing document provides a detailed overview of the key ideas discussed in Session 10 of John Walton's teaching on the Book of Job, particularly regarding the heavenly court scene and the themes of disinterested righteousness, the play on "barak," the hidden information, and the rejection of simplistic retribution.

## 4. Job Study Guide: Session 10, Sons of God and the Challenger

### Job Session 10 Study Guide: Sons of God and Satan

#### Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each:

1. What role does the Challenger play in the heavenly court scene?
2. What is the "disinterested righteousness" question raised by the Challenger?
3. What does the Hebrew word "barak" mean in the context of the Challenger's claims about Job?
4. What three extreme disasters are inflicted upon Job, and what is the significance of their rapid succession?
5. What are the common acts of mourning that Job engages in after the disasters?
6. How does Job's initial response contrast with the Challenger's expectations?
7. What is significant about Job using the name Yahweh in his initial response?
8. What does the heavenly scene reveal about Job's innocence?
9. Why is it significant that Job is not given an explanation for his suffering?
10. How does the first heavenly scene challenge the retribution principle?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. The Challenger is tasked by God to go and discover things and bring them back to the heavenly court, playing an assigned role to gather information. He acts as a catalyst by presenting a challenge to God's policies regarding Job.
2. The "disinterested righteousness" question asks whether Job serves God for genuine faith and devotion, or because God has blessed him with prosperity and protection. It challenges the idea that righteousness is only motivated by self-interest.
3. The Hebrew word "barak" means "to bless," but in the Challenger's claims it is used euphemistically to mean "curse." The play on the word barak in the context shows that Job both blesses God when the challenger expects him to curse God.

4. The three disasters are human foes, divine judgment from heaven, and natural disasters. Their rapid succession emphasizes the totality and extreme nature of Job's suffering, creating a test case for God's policies and Job's righteousness.
5. Job's acts of mourning include prostration, which symbolizes acknowledgment and acceptance of God's actions, not blaming of evil agents. He acknowledges that God is the one who took away the gifts he was given.
6. The Challenger claims that Job will "curse" God (barak euphemistically), but Job responds by "blessing" (barak literally) God. This shows that Job's initial response is the exact opposite of what was predicted.
7. The use of the name Yahweh is notable because Job only uses other names for God (El, Elohim, or El Shaddai) in the rest of the book, and the name Yahweh is not used until the end of the book by God himself. It seems to bookends Job's initial and final moments of faith in the book.
8. The heavenly scene reveals that Job is indeed innocent of wrongdoing, and his suffering is not a punishment for his sin. This is a departure from common explanations in the ancient Near East. It shows that Job is being used as a test case for the Challenger's challenge to God's policy.
9. Job not being given an explanation for his suffering highlights the theme of hidden information and challenges the expectation of a simple cause-and-effect relationship between actions and consequences. This allows for us to question God's policies, and understand Job better.
10. The first heavenly scene challenges the retribution principle by showing that suffering can occur even in the absence of wrongdoing. It highlights that God's actions cannot be reduced to a simple equation of reward and punishment.

### **Essay Questions**

1. Analyze the narrative function of the Challenger in the first heavenly scene of Job. How does this character contribute to the theological and philosophical themes of the book?
2. Compare and contrast the different uses of the word "barak" in Job 1 and 2. How does this linguistic play contribute to the overall meaning and purpose of the text?

3. Discuss the significance of "hidden information" in the Book of Job. How does the reader's knowledge of the heavenly scene affect their interpretation of Job's suffering?
4. Evaluate the significance of Job's initial response to his suffering. In what ways does this initial response function as an ideal of faith? Why does he find it difficult to maintain?
5. How does the first heavenly scene in the Book of Job subvert traditional ancient Near Eastern views of divine justice and the relationship between righteousness and prosperity?



## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Challenger:** A figure in the heavenly court of Job who challenges God's policies and tests Job's righteousness. Often understood to be Satan.
- **Disinterested Righteousness:** The concept of serving God without any self-interest or expectation of reward. It questions whether Job's piety is genuine or simply a result of God's blessings.
- **Barak:** A Hebrew word that can mean "to bless" or "to curse," used euphemistically by the Challenger to refer to Job cursing God. This play on words is used to challenge the nature of Job's faith and his responses to suffering.
- **Retribution Principle:** The idea that righteous behavior is always rewarded with prosperity and blessings, while evil behavior is punished with suffering.
- **Yahweh:** The personal name of God in the Old Testament. Its use is restricted to specific parts of the book and contrasts with Job's use of other names for God (El, Elohim, El Shaddai).
- **Euphemism:** A mild or indirect word or expression substituted for one considered to be too harsh or blunt.
- **Prostration:** A physical act of bowing down, used by Job as a sign of mourning, acknowledgment, and acceptance of God's will.
- **Hidden Information:** Narrative technique where the reader is aware of information not known to the characters, such as the heavenly scene in Job, creating dramatic irony and adding layers of meaning to the text.
- **Catalyst:** A person or event that precipitates an event or change. In this case, the Challenger catalyzes Job's trials.
- **Symbiosis:** A mutually beneficial relationship. This term refers to the relationship between God and a righteous individual who experiences the benefits of his righteousness.

## 5. FAQs on Walton, Job, Session 10, Sons of God and the Challenger, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Okay, here's an 8-question FAQ based on the provided source:

### Frequently Asked Questions about Job Session 10

1. **What is the significance of the opening scene in the heavenly court, and what role does the "Challenger" play?**
2. The opening scene in the heavenly court, featuring God and the Challenger, is not meant to portray a God who is ignorant of events but rather highlights God as a king gathering information through an appointed agent. The Challenger's role is to bring a report, in this instance raising a question about Job's motives for righteousness. It sets the stage for the central question of the book: whether Job's righteousness is truly disinterested, or based solely on the blessings he has received. This scene also introduces the idea of hidden information, as neither Job nor his friends will ever know about this conversation.
3. **What is the "disinterested righteousness question," and why is it important in the Book of Job?**
4. The "disinterested righteousness question" is the challenge posed by the Challenger: does Job serve God purely out of devotion, or does he only do so because God has blessed him abundantly? This question is central because it challenges the traditional retribution principle, which suggests a direct correlation between righteous behavior and divine blessing. The book of Job, therefore, functions as a corrective to the idea that righteousness is simply a transaction with God, where good behavior is automatically rewarded with prosperity.
5. **What is the play on the word "barak" (bless/curse) in the book of Job, and why is it significant?**
6. The Hebrew word "barak" can mean both "bless" and, euphemistically, "curse." The Challenger suggests Job will "barak" God (meaning "curse") to his face if he suffers, while Job, in his initial response to the disasters, "baraks" God (meaning "blesses") his name. This wordplay highlights the stark contrast between the Challenger's cynical expectation and Job's initial pious reaction. This demonstrates that Job is not cursing God as the Challenger predicts, but, to the contrary, is blessing God even in suffering.

7. **How does the rapid succession and intensity of Job's disasters contribute to the message of the book?**
8. The rapid and total destruction that befalls Job is essential to the book's message. It creates an extreme scenario that moves away from the idea that Job's situation is a consequence of some personal sin or transgression. It creates a situation which allows the book to address the inadequacy of conventional wisdom regarding divine justice and human suffering. The extremity of the situation also allows for consideration of new ideas regarding the nature of God's policies and the basis for faith.
9. **How does Job initially respond to the loss of his possessions and family?**
10. Job responds to his immense loss by engaging in acts of mourning, including prostration before God, an action which signifies acknowledgment and acceptance that these events are the actions of God and not some malevolent agent acting independently of Him. He also ends his response with an invocation of blessing on the name of God, saying "Yahweh has given, Yahweh has taken away. May the name of Yahweh be praised." This response is directly opposed to the Challenger's assertion. Job does not curse God but blesses Him.
11. **What does Job's initial reaction reveal about his understanding of God's actions, and does he maintain this attitude throughout the book?**
12. Job's initial reaction is one of acceptance. He acknowledges that God is sovereign and has the right to both give and take away. He does not hold God accountable, demonstrating his understanding that God owes him nothing. However, the book reveals that Job does not entirely maintain this initial attitude, and the book explores his process of grappling with profound loss and suffering, suggesting that maintaining such a faith response is not a simple, linear process.

**13. How does the scene in heaven contribute to the overall rhetorical strategy of the book, and why is it hidden from Job and his friends?**

14. The hidden scene in heaven serves several key purposes. First, it reveals Job's innocence. Second, it makes room to move past conventional thinking regarding suffering and divine justice. Third, it frames the events not as a punishment for Job, but as a test case for God's policies themselves. The fact that Job and his friends never learn about this scene underscores that the book is not designed to provide easy answers or justifications for suffering, but rather, to encourage a deeper consideration about the nature of God. It also highlights the theme that God's policies cannot be reduced to simple formulas.

**15. What is the significance of the fact that Job only uses the name Yahweh in the prologue and Yahweh's speeches?**

16. The use of the name Yahweh specifically in Job's speech in the prologue, and later in God's speeches from chapter 38 onward is significant because, while Job typically refers to God as El or Elohim or El Shaddai, he uses the covenant name, Yahweh, only at these times. This is because the prologue and God's speech represent a different kind of encounter and context. Job's use of Yahweh in the prologue highlights a direct response to God and in God's speech it is the self-disclosure of God Himself. The name Yahweh is used to emphasize God's personal, relational connection to His people, in contrast to more generic references to the divine.