

## Dr. John Walton, Job, Session 13

### Dialogue Series 1 (Job 3-14)

### Resources from NotebookLM

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

#### **1. Abstract of Walton, Job, Session 13, Dialogue Series 1 (Job 3-14), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

This lecture by Dr. John Walton analyzes Job chapters 3-14, focusing on the first dialogue cycle between Job and his three friends. **Walton examines Job's lament**, exploring the nuances of the Hebrew word for "curse" and Job's invocation of Leviathan. He then **discusses Job's unwavering integrity**, distinct from his previous positive attributes. The lecture subsequently **analyzes key statements** from Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, highlighting interpretive complexities and contrasting viewpoints on righteousness and God's justice. Finally, **Walton summarizes each speaker's arguments**, emphasizing the friends' focus on restoring Job's former status and contrasting it with Job's despair and lack of hope for such restoration.

**2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Walton's, Job, Session 13 – 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  
n13.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpt of John Walton's lecture on Job 3-14:

#### Briefing Document: John Walton on Job 3-14 (Dialogue Series 1)

##### I. Overview

This document summarizes John Walton's analysis of the first dialogue cycle in the Book of Job (chapters 3-14), focusing on Job's initial lament and the subsequent speeches by Job and his three friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar). Walton emphasizes the importance of understanding the nuances of the Hebrew language and the rhetorical strategies employed by the author of Job. He highlights the shift in Job from confident to distraught and how the dialogues explore the question of suffering and God's justice.

##### II. Key Themes and Ideas

- **Job's Lament (Chapter 3):**
  - **Purpose:** Job's lament serves as the transition between the narrative prologue and the dialogue sections, shifting the focus to theological questions about God and the world. It is a soul-rending expression of Job's grief and despair.
  - **Cursing:** Job uses three different words translated as "curse," each with a distinct meaning:
    - **"Qalal":** An incantation with a word of power against the day of his birth, indicating an attempt to use supernatural power to affect his past.
    - **'Arar':** Removing something from God's protection, a disruption of order. This is the word used for cursing the day itself.
    - **"Barak" (in euphemism):** Not used here, but elsewhere in the book it refers to "bless" using irony.
  - **Rousing Leviathan:** Job invokes the chaos creature Leviathan, representing a world of non-order, to further illustrate his experience of chaos and his longing for the world to be disrupted.
  - **Desire for Death:** Job wishes he had never been born, preferring to have gone directly from the womb to the netherworld, demonstrating his profound despair and the lack of hope in life.

- **Asking "Why?":** Job's lament is punctuated by "why" questions (verses 11, 12, 16, 20, 23). Walton notes that the Book of Job does not answer the "why" question directly, but helps us to realize that the "why" question might be the wrong question to ask.
- **Job's Integrity:**
  - Job's integrity is not based on his past righteousness, but rather on his *insistence* that his righteousness stands on its own, and that he is not just pursuing benefits. His integrity lies in his disinterested righteousness, pursued for its own sake, not for what he gets out of it.
  - Walton acknowledges that Job's responses to God are not blameless, and that God himself will later accuse Job of wrongdoing. Despite his flawed response, Job's insistence on his disinterested righteousness remains crucial to the narrative.
- **Eliphaz's Speech (Chapters 4-5):**
  - **4:6:** Eliphaz questions Job's confidence, suggesting that his piety may be self-proclaimed and his hope may not be justified. He says, "Should not your piety, be your confidence and your blameless ways your hope?" Walton rephrases to, "Is not your self-proclaimed piety the basis for this irrational confidence?"
  - **4:17:** Eliphaz's famous rhetorical question, "Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can even a strong man be more pure than his Maker?" Walton argues that this traditional understanding is problematic because the word "pure" (tahar) is never used to describe God (it describes a clean condition achieved from an unclean state).
  - **Walton's Interpretation of 4:17:** Walton suggests an alternate reading: "Can a mortal be righteous in God's perspective? Can a man be clean in the perspective of his Maker?" He argues that Eliphaz is questioning the absolutes of righteousness and challenging whether anyone can truly achieve cleanliness in God's perspective. This introduces the idea of universal sin, familiar to other parts of the ancient Near East and Christian theology.
- **Job's Response to Eliphaz (Chapters 6-7):**
  - Job speaks of the transience of life and expresses his anguish. He wishes for death.

- **7:17:** Job questions, "What is mankind that you make so much of them?" reversing the positive sentiment of Psalm 8 to express resentment at God's perceived excessive attention and scrutiny. Walton notes, "With all due respect, bug off; leave me alone, please."
- Job feels he is being treated like a sea monster or enemy, watched and guarded by God. He sees himself as on trial and undergoing punishment without having been found guilty.
- Job calls God "a watcher of men," a term that usually has positive connotations, and turns it into a negative one of incessant scrutiny.
- **7:20:** Instead of "if I have sinned," Walton reads it, "I have sinned" – referring to a hypothetical situation in which God has indicted him for *something*, and that he wishes God would forgive that sin.
- **Job 13:15 - A Key Verse:**
  - The traditional translation, "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him" is challenged.
  - Walton highlights the difficulty in the Hebrew, where "in him" and "no" sound very similar.
  - He cites alternate translations: "Behold, He will slay me; I have no hope," and "If He were to slay me, I would have no hope."
  - He sides with other commentators who translate it, "Yes, though he slay me, I will not wait in silence".
  - Walton's interpretation: "Even though he may slay me, I will not wait in silence." Job is asserting that he will confront and argue against God, despite the potential consequences.
- **The Retribution Principle:** All three friends appeal to the retribution principle (the idea that the righteous prosper and the wicked suffer), which is part of traditional wisdom, and they urge Job to acknowledge his sin. Job, however, refuses to admit this, and argues against it.
- **Summary of the First Dialogue Cycle**
  - The first dialogue cycle emphasizes the friends desire for Job to appeal to God to get his benefits back.

- Job makes it clear that he is not interested in these benefits, which sets the stage for the second cycle.

### III. Summaries of Speeches in Cycle One

- **Eliphaz:** You've counseled others, now take your own advice. Trust in your piety. The retribution principle holds. The wicked perish, but no mortal is righteous in God's eyes. Appeal to God and accept his discipline.
- **Job (Response to Eliphaz):** My misery justifies my outcry. I wish God would kill me. I feel helpless. My friends are no help. I want to know what I did wrong. Why is God targeting me? Can't you show tolerance? Stop treating me as guilty; I will confront God for vindication.
- **Bildad:** God doesn't pervert justice. Your children probably sinned. Come clean, and things will go well for you. The retribution principle stands.
- **Job (Response to Bildad):** No one can be righteous before God. Arguing with God is futile. I wish I had an advocate. God is unjust and destroys both the good and the wicked. I wish God would let me die.
- **Zophar:** You are arrogant and not as pure as you think. You haven't gotten what you deserve. Repent of your sin.
- **Job (Response to Zophar):** You mock me. Show wisdom by being silent. You are ignorant. I suffer while the wicked escape. I want to bring my case before God but only if he ceases the torment. Show me the evidence of wrongdoing before it's too late.

### IV. Conclusion of Cycle One

The cycle concludes with Job rejecting his friends' appeals for him to seek restoration and material benefits. He has no hope for restoration or material gains, which launches the narrative into the second dialogue cycle. He will argue and not "wait in silence."

## **V. Significance**

Walton's analysis emphasizes the complexity of the Book of Job, highlighting the importance of careful translation, understanding the nuances of the Hebrew, and paying attention to the rhetorical strategies employed by the author. The first dialogue cycle establishes the fundamental questions of the book: the nature of suffering, God's justice, and the validity of disinterested righteousness. The friends' focus on the retribution principle and material rewards contrasts sharply with Job's focus on justice and his willingness to confront God, even when it may cost him everything.

## 4. Job Study Guide: Session 13, Dialogue Series 1 (Job 3-14)

### Study Guide: Book of Job, Session 13 (Job 3-14)

#### Quiz: Short Answer Questions

1. How does Job's lament in chapter 3 function within the larger structure of the Book of Job?
2. What are the three different Hebrew words for "curse" used in Job 3, and what are their specific nuances?
3. How does Job's understanding of death impact his lament?
4. According to Walton, what is the primary definition of Job's "integrity"?
5. What is the main point that Eliphaz makes in 4:6, and how does Walton interpret it?
6. What does Walton say about the traditional translation of 4:17, specifically the idea of comparing human purity to God's?
7. How does Job use the line "What is mankind that you make so much of them?" differently from Psalm 8?
8. How does Walton interpret Job's statement in 7:20, "I have sinned?"
9. What is the alternate reading of Job 13:15, and how does Walton understand this verse in its context?
10. What is the central focus of the first cycle of dialogues, according to Walton?

#### Answer Key

1. Job's lament in chapter 3 launches the dialogues, and it is later paralleled by his two responses to God's speeches towards the end of the book, serving as a kind of balancing component.
2. The three words are "barak" (a euphemistic bless), "qalal" (an incantation with words of power), and "'arar" (removing something from God's protection and disrupting order).
3. Job has no hope for an afterlife where things will be rectified. Death is desired only as an escape from his current suffering, not as a solution.

4. Job's integrity is his insistence that his righteousness stands on its own, not based on any benefits he might receive from it; it is a "disinterested righteousness".
5. Eliphaz, in 4:6, is questioning if Job's self-proclaimed piety is the basis for his confidence, implying Job's piety is insufficient, rather than undermining Job's integrity.
6. Walton explains the Hebrew word for purity, "tahar," cannot apply to God because it signifies a movement from an unclean state to a clean one, a state that is impossible for God. He argues that Eliphaz is questioning whether anyone can achieve righteousness or purity from God's perspective.
7. Job turns the positive line from Psalm 8 on its head, using it to express frustration that God pays too much attention to humans and requests to be left alone.
8. Walton understands "I have sinned" not as an admission of guilt, but as an expression of falling out of favor with God that resulted in God's action against him.
9. The alternate reading of Job 13:15 is "Behold, he will slay me; I have no hope." Walton interprets it as Job expressing his intention to argue against God even if it means being killed, or he will not wait in silence.
10. The first cycle of dialogues is focused on the friends appealing to Job to think about getting his benefits back and doing whatever is necessary to accomplish that.

### **Essay Questions**

1. Analyze the progression of Job's emotions and arguments from his initial lament in chapter 3 to his responses to the friends in the first cycle of dialogues (chapters 4-14). How does his understanding of God and the world change over this section?
2. Compare and contrast Eliphaz's, Bildad's, and Zophar's arguments in the first cycle of dialogues. In what ways do their perspectives differ, and how do their assumptions about God's justice influence their advice to Job?
3. Discuss the different interpretations of key verses in the first dialogue cycle, such as 4:17 and 13:15, as presented by Walton. How do these alternative readings impact our understanding of the book's themes?



4. Explore the concept of "integrity" as it is defined in the context of the Book of Job. How does Job's integrity play a crucial role in the unfolding of the story?
5. Considering the suffering of Job, analyze how the Book of Job challenges or reinforces traditional views on the relationship between righteousness, suffering, and divine justice in the ancient Near East and beyond.

### Glossary of Key Terms

- **Lament:** A passionate expression of grief or sorrow, often taking the form of a complaint or cry for help.
- **Incantation:** A series of words said as a magic spell or charm.
- **Leviathan:** A mythological sea monster representing chaos and disorder in ancient Near Eastern cultures.
- **Netherworld:** In ancient belief systems, the realm of the dead.
- **Integrity:** In the context of Job, the quality of maintaining disinterested righteousness, not based on benefits or rewards.
- **Retribution Principle:** The belief that righteousness leads to blessings and wickedness leads to suffering.
- **Mystical Experience:** A subjective experience of union or connection with the divine or spiritual realm.
- **Tahar:** A Hebrew word meaning "clean," referring to a condition achieved from an unclean state; not used to describe God.
- **Ketiv:** In Hebrew, the written form of a word in the biblical text.

## 5. FAQs on Walton, Job, Session 13, Dialogue Series 1 (Job 3-14) Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ on Job Chapters 3-14

- **What is the significance of Job's lament in chapter 3, and what does it reveal about his state of mind?**
- Job's lament in chapter 3 serves as a crucial transition from the narrative prologue to the dialogue section of the book. It reveals Job's profound distress and despair. He curses the day of his birth using various Hebrew words with different nuances: "qalal," signifying incantation with power; and "'arar," meaning to remove something from God's protection. Job also expresses his wish to have never been born, preferring death to his present suffering. The lament highlights the erosion of his confidence and the emergence of the question, "Why?", marking a shift from the confident Job in the prologue to a questioning and distraught one. He does not see death as a solution but as an escape. He is not willing to say that he did something to deserve his suffering, and despite his questions and eroding trust, he maintains his integrity.
- **How is Job's "integrity" defined in this context, and how does it differ from his earlier reputation in chapters 1 and 2?**
- Job's integrity in this context is not about his blameless actions, as suggested in chapters 1 and 2. It is specifically defined by his insistence that his righteousness is disinterested—that is, he pursues righteousness for its own sake and not for any benefits he might receive from God. Although his accusations against God are clear and wrong, his integrity lies in maintaining the position that his righteousness is not transactional and self-serving. It's about the question of whether Job's righteousness is truly disinterested.
- **What is the main point of Eliphaz's opening speech in chapter 4, particularly regarding his assertion in 4:6 and 4:17?**
- Eliphaz's speech questions the basis of Job's confidence and the validity of his self-proclaimed piety. In 4:6, he asks, "Should not your piety, be your confidence and your blameless ways your hope?" This is a subtle dig at Job, suggesting that Job's self-proclaimed piety is the basis of an irrational confidence. He also implies that it's insufficient. In 4:17, when he asks, "Can a mortal be more righteous than God?" he is not simply stating the obvious. Instead, he's rhetorically questioning

whether a mortal can achieve righteousness *in God's perspective* and can be considered "clean" in the eyes of his maker. The idea is not that one can be more righteous than God, but that all humans are prone to sin and can't achieve true righteousness in the absolute sense, according to the ancient near eastern understanding.

- **How does Job use the familiar language from Psalm 8 in chapter 7, verse 17, and what does it reveal about his current relationship with God?**
- Job uses the language of Psalm 8, where mankind is praised for being just a little lower than the angels, but inverts its meaning. Instead of marveling at God's attention to humanity, Job asks, "What is mankind that you make so much of them?" He questions why God pays so much attention to humanity and tests them every moment. This reveals that Job now views God's scrutiny as torment rather than care. It reflects his desire for God to "look away," indicating a drastically altered relationship from one of reverence to one of resentment and an accusation that God is overly attentive and unrealistic in his expectations.
- **What is the significance of Job's statement in 7:20, and how does it differ from the traditional reading?**
- In verse 7:20, rather than hypothetically admitting to sin, Job acknowledges that he "has sinned." However, his conception of sin is not moral failure but a hypothetical falling out of favor which has led God to act against him. Job doesn't see himself as guilty, but asks why God won't pardon whatever he has done that God has judged as wrong. He is focusing on God's treatment of him, rather than making a moral statement about himself.
- **How can Job 13:15 be interpreted, and what does this multiple potential interpretations reveal?**
- The traditional translation of Job 13:15 is "Though he slays me, I will hope in him." However, the Hebrew word for "in him" (lo) sounds very close to the word for "no" (l'o), leading to multiple interpretations: "Behold. He will slay me. I have no hope," or "If he were to slay me, I would have no hope." Another translation reads, "Yes, though he slays me. I will not wait in silence." The varied interpretations highlight the ambiguity in the text, and the multiple possibilities surrounding Job's feelings about death. It emphasizes that the correct understanding here is not about faith but about Job's determination to confront God, no matter the consequence, and that his intention is to argue with God, even if it results in death.

- **Summarize the main arguments presented by each of Job's three friends in the first dialogue cycle.**
- In the first cycle, the friends consistently offer advice rooted in a belief in a principle of retribution. Eliphaz advises Job to trust in his piety, believing that the retribution principle will hold true and that Job should admit his offense. Bildad argues that God never perverts justice, suggesting that Job's children likely sinned to warrant their deaths, urging Job to come clean so his fortune will be restored. Zophar, in a more black-and-white view, accuses Job of arrogance, stating he's not even gotten what he deserves and calling him to repent. All three friends counsel Job based on the traditional wisdom that righteousness brings prosperity and wickedness brings suffering.
- **How does Job's response differ from his friends' advice in the first dialogue cycle, and what does this difference highlight?**
- Job's responses differ significantly from his friends' advice. He acknowledges the traditions are true, but he is not ready to admit that the conclusions of those traditions apply to him. Rather than accepting their traditional wisdom, Job expresses a desire for death as an escape, questioning God's justice, and challenging the notion that all suffering is deserved. He is not motivated by the desire to get his "stuff" back, as his friends have posited. He expresses that he would rather challenge God than to falsely humble himself and admit to something he does not believe he did. He wants a hearing to restore his relationship with God, but not before he questions what has happened. This highlights that his integrity lies in his commitment to confronting God, showing that his righteousness isn't about material gain but a personal conviction.