

## Dr. John Walton, Job, Session 17 Conclusion of Dialogue Series and Wisdom Interlude (Job 28)

### Resources from NotebookLM

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

#### 1. Abstract of Walton, Job, Session 17, Conclusion of Dialogue Series and Wisdom Interlude (Job 28), [Biblicalelearning.org](https://www.biblicalelearning.org), BeL

This lecture excerpt from John Walton's "The Book of Job" session 17 focuses on Job 28, a pivotal "wisdom interlude." **Walton interprets this chapter not as Job's words, but as the narrator's commentary**, transitioning the narrative from dialogues between Job and his friends to subsequent discourses. **The interlude contrasts the friends' justice-focused worldview with a God-centered wisdom**, emphasizing that true wisdom originates from God, not human efforts, and involves fearing and trusting God's authority. **This shift prepares the audience for the book's next section**, which addresses the coherence of righteous suffering rather than the righteousness of prosperity. Finally, **Walton stresses the importance of understanding this chapter to grasp the book's overall theological message**.

**2. 20 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Walton's, Job, Session 17 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the [Biblicalelearning.org](https://www.biblicalelearning.org) [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Psalms & Wisdom → Job → Walton).**



**Walton\_Job\_Session  
n17.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of John Walton's lecture on Job, Session 17, focusing on Chapter 28.

#### **Briefing Document: John Walton on Job 28 - The Wisdom Interlude**

**Subject:** Analysis of Job Chapter 28 ("Hymn to Wisdom") and its Role in the Book of Job

**Source:** Excerpts from "Walton\_Job\_Session17.pdf" by John Walton

**Date:** [Not Specified in the Document]

#### **Introduction:**

This document summarizes John Walton's analysis of Job Chapter 28, a "wisdom interlude," within the broader context of the Book of Job. Walton argues that this chapter serves as a pivotal transition, shifting the book's focus from the dialogues concerning justice to the source of wisdom and the understanding of its importance. He also emphasizes that Chapter 28, while not spoken by Job himself, provides a crucial commentary on the preceding and subsequent sections of the book.

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

##### **1. Transition and Structure:**

- Chapter 28 is a "narrator's intermission" and not part of Job's speech. Walton states, "it's easy to conclude that somehow Job continues to speak...the things being said in chapter 28 don't reflect very well at all on Job's actual viewpoints." He sees it as a work of the narrator to transition the reader to a new way of thinking.
- The chapter serves as a structural bridge between the dialogue section, where Job debated with his friends, and the discourse section, where God addresses Job.
- It moves the focus from the "Challenger's" contention that rewarding the righteous is counterproductive, to Job's contention that it is unjust for the righteous to suffer.

## 1. The Nature of Wisdom:

- **Wisdom as Elusive:** The first part of Chapter 28 (verses 1-19) uses the illustration of mining to illustrate that wisdom, like precious metals, is hidden and difficult to find. Walton notes, "It's suggested that wisdom is inaccessible to humans yet beyond value and beyond human effort and ingenuity."
- **Wisdom from God:** Walton stresses that wisdom comes from God (28:20), not from human search. God is the one who provides it, not a discovery made by humans.
- **Wisdom as Order:** Wisdom is connected to the *ordering* of the cosmos. Walton says, "Wisdom is found when one goes about pursuing order and perceiving order, and practicing order. An ordered world, ordered life, and ordered society are all the pursuits of wisdom." This order, although not readily seen in daily life, is fundamental to creation and its ongoing operations.

## 1. Critique of the Retribution Principle:

- The dialogues with Job's friends focused on the "retribution principle" - the idea that the righteous are rewarded, and the wicked are punished. This principle, Walton argues, is their attempt to understand cosmic order, but it's insufficient and simplistic, as it makes justice the foundation of order.
- Chapter 28 shifts this perspective by emphasizing that God's approval of creation was based on *wisdom*, not justice. "Here God approves creation by the criterion of wisdom, not by the criterion of justice."

## 1. The Fear of Adonai:

- Verse 28, "the fear of the Lord—that is wisdom, and to shun evil that is understanding," shifts the focus to the fear of *Adonai* (Lord/Master) instead of Yahweh. This is unique in the book, and the only use of the term Adonai. Walton says, "It's not fear of Shaddai, not fear of Elohim, not fear of Yahweh, but fear of Adonai."
- This choice of "Adonai" emphasizes God's *authority* and the need for *submission*. It draws out the idea of trusting God as the source of wisdom. This submission is contrasted with ideas that would make God appear detached, incompetent, limited, corrupt, short-sighted, or petty. Fearing God is described as taking him seriously.

- The “fear of the Lord” is linked to ethics – “to shun evil” — not to ritual observance.

#### 1. **Rhetorical Role of Chapter 28:**

- **Transition:** It moves from dialogues to discourses, and from the challenger’s claims to Job's suffering.
- **Shift in Focus:** It pivots from justice to wisdom as the key element of understanding the universe.
- **Job's Righteousness:** It acknowledges Job's "disinterested righteousness" demonstrated throughout the dialogues, setting the stage for the second part of the book.

#### 1. **Coherence and Suffering:**

- The central question moving forward is now: "Can there be coherence when righteous people suffer?"
- The chapter implies that Job is not in control, and that God’s wisdom is the ruling principle, not Job’s expectations.
- The chapter suggests the friends had a flawed understanding of coherence, as following their simplistic views would not have brought resolution to Job’s situation.
- Wisdom, not justice, is presented as that which brings order and coherence.

#### 1. **God as Source of Wisdom and Order:**

- Walton emphasizes that God is the source, the author, of both order and wisdom, "God is the source of wisdom."
- He cautions against simply labeling God as "wise" or "good" as those adjectives derive their meaning from God. God is the ultimate standard. He says, "affirmation such as God is wise, or God is good, or God is holy are misleading because the adjectives themselves actually find their definition in God. One may as well say that God is God."
- The poem doesn’t suggest God IS wisdom, but rather the source of it.

### 1. Fear as Trust:

- The "fear of the Lord" should be expressed through *trust* in God, even amidst suffering.
- This includes accepting that there might not be clear explanations for every circumstance. We trust that the system is setup in the best way possible by God, which is the wisest way.
- Trusting that his just nature is unassailable. We can trust in his love through trials, even when suffering.

### Conclusion:

John Walton underscores that Job Chapter 28 is a crucial text for understanding the book of Job's theological message. It moves the focus away from a human-centric view of justice and towards a recognition of God as the source of wisdom and order, demanding trust and submission, especially amidst suffering. This chapter is not just a structural element but a pivotal piece of the book's theological message. As Walton concludes, "Chapter 28 is one of the key chapters of the book. We need to attend to it carefully so that we glean its message."

## 4. Job Study Guide: Session 17, Conclusion of Dialogue Series and Wisdom Interlude (Job 28)

### Job: Session 17 Study Guide

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the main point of the dialogue section of the Book of Job, and how does Job's position at the end of it serve as a challenge to the Challenger's claim?
2. According to the speaker, what is the primary structural function of chapter 28 in the Book of Job, and why is it unlikely to have been spoken by Job?
3. How does the illustration of mining in the first 11 verses of Job 28 relate to the concept of wisdom?
4. According to the speaker, what is the relationship between wisdom and order? How is this relationship demonstrated in the cosmos and in daily life?
5. What is the "retribution principle," and how does it relate to the friends' understanding of the world's order? Why is it insufficient in the context of the Book of Job?
6. How does the focus of the Book of Job shift from justice to wisdom? How does this change affect the way we should understand the book and its characters?
7. What is the significance of using the term "Adonai" instead of other names for God (e.g. Yahweh, Elohim) in Job 28:28, and what aspect of God's authority does this emphasize?
8. How does fearing God, as it is presented in Job 28, contrast with other ways of viewing or relating to God?
9. What is the rhetorical role of chapter 28 in terms of transitioning from the dialogues to the discourses, and what new question does it raise?
10. According to the speaker, what does it mean to trust God and his wisdom, especially in the context of suffering and a broken world?

## Quiz Answer Key

1. The dialogue section ends with Job rejecting the retribution principle and asserting his innocence. This challenges the Challenger's claim that righteousness is based on the expectation of reward, demonstrating that Job's righteousness is "disinterested."
2. Chapter 28 serves as a transition from the dialogues to the discourses. It's not likely spoken by Job because the chapter's views on wisdom contrast with Job's previous statements.
3. The mining illustration symbolizes that wisdom, like hidden resources, is something to be sought and brought to light. It represents a deep understanding that requires effort and is not easily accessible.
4. Wisdom is found in the ordering of the components of the cosmos, and it manifests itself in an ordered world, life, and society. It is instrumental in the foundation of creation and is inherent in its ongoing operations.
5. The retribution principle is the belief that the righteous will prosper and the wicked will suffer. The friends use this to interpret Job's suffering as punishment, and it is shown to be an inadequate basis for understanding the world's order.
6. The book shifts its focus from the search for justice (as seen in the dialogues) to a focus on the source of wisdom and the understanding of its importance. It highlights that the friends failed to prioritize wisdom when understanding order, which is why they struggle to make sense of Job's suffering.
7. The use of "Adonai" in Job 28:28 emphasizes God's authority as Lord or master, and highlights the element of submission to that authority. This is significant because it places an emphasis on the human perspective and the need to acknowledge and trust God's authority and order.
8. Fearing God, in this context, means taking him seriously and recognizing his authority, and stands in contrast to thinking of him as detached, incompetent, limited, corrupt, short-sighted, or petty.
9. Chapter 28 transitions the book from a focus on the dialogues to the discourses, and from the Challenger's to Job's contentions. It sets up the question of whether there can be coherence when righteous people suffer and that it is by God's wisdom that such coherence is created.

10. Trusting God means accepting that there might not be an explanation for suffering, believing in his just nature, trusting the system God has created, and relying on his love, even amidst trials and a broken world.

### **Essay Questions**

**Instructions:** Answer each question in a well-developed essay format.

1. Analyze the significance of the structure and content of Job 28 within the broader context of the Book of Job. How does this chapter act as a turning point in the narrative?
2. Compare and contrast the concept of "wisdom" as presented in Job 28 with the "retribution principle" held by Job's friends. How does the chapter reframe the understanding of order in the cosmos?
3. Discuss the significance of the shift from justice to wisdom in the Book of Job, and how this affects our understanding of God's nature and actions within the book.
4. Examine the meaning and implications of "fearing Adonai" in Job 28. How does this concept challenge traditional views of God and human relationships to the divine?
5. Explore the connection between the ideas of wisdom, order, and coherence as they are presented in Job 28. How do these concepts contribute to our understanding of the book's overall message about faith and suffering?



## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Retribution Principle:** The belief that the righteous will be rewarded and the wicked will be punished, reflecting a simplistic understanding of justice and divine order.
- **Disinterested Righteousness:** Righteousness that is not motivated by the expectation of reward or benefit, but by a genuine commitment to what is right.
- **Wisdom:** In the context of Job 28, this is not mere intellectual knowledge, but a divine attribute that is the foundation of the cosmos' order and coherence, found in God.
- **Order:** The arrangement and structure of the cosmos as a result of God's wisdom, which is not always immediately apparent. It encompasses an ordered world, an ordered life, and an ordered society.
- **Adonai:** A Hebrew term meaning "Lord" or "Master," used to emphasize God's authority and the need for submission to that authority.
- **Fear of the Lord:** In Job 28, this is described as taking God seriously, not just being afraid, but having a deep respect and reverence for God's authority and wisdom, leading to obedience and trust.
- **Coherence:** In this context, it refers to the interconnectedness and meaningfulness of events and circumstances, which is brought about by God's wisdom and order.
- **Hymn to Wisdom:** The poem in Job 28 that sings of the value and inaccessibility of wisdom, ultimately tracing its source to God.
- **Narrator's Intermission:** The speaker's interpretation of Job 28 as a narrative break and transition from the dialogue to the discourse sections of the book.
- **Challenger:** A reference to the accuser who suggests to God that Job only serves him because of the rewards.

## 5. FAQs on Walton, Job, Session 17, Conclusion of Dialogue Series and Wisdom Interlude (Job 28), Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ on Job Chapter 28 (Wisdom Interlude)

1. **What is the significance of Job chapter 28 in the overall structure of the Book of Job?** Chapter 28 serves as a crucial interlude, transitioning the narrative from the dialogues between Job and his friends to the discourse section, which focuses on Job's challenge to God. It also shifts the focus from a search for justice, which dominated the dialogues, to an emphasis on the importance of wisdom and God's role as its source. It highlights the inadequacy of Job's friends' reliance on the retribution principle and sets the stage for exploring the question of coherence in the face of righteous suffering.
2. **Who is the speaker in Job chapter 28, and why is it important to understand this?** The speaker in chapter 28 is not Job, as might be assumed, but the narrator. This is important because the perspectives expressed in the chapter don't align with Job's previous or subsequent statements. The narrator uses this chapter as an intermission to guide the reader to a new way of thinking.
3. **What is the main point of the illustration of mining in verses 1-11?** The mining illustration demonstrates how humans can uncover hidden things through effort and ingenuity. It serves as a backdrop to the main point of chapter 28 that wisdom, while highly valued, is inaccessible through human effort or ingenuity alone.
4. **According to Job 28, where does wisdom come from, and what is its relationship to order?** Wisdom, according to chapter 28, comes directly from God. It is not something that can be discovered through human effort. Wisdom is intrinsically linked to the establishment and maintenance of order in the cosmos. An ordered world, life, and society are all expressions of wisdom, and wisdom itself is manifested when one pursues, perceives, and practices order.

5. **How does the wisdom perspective presented in Job 28 differ from the justice-focused perspective of Job and his friends?** Job and his friends operated under a retribution principle, believing that justice should be the foundation of order in the cosmos (the righteous prosper, the wicked suffer). Chapter 28 asserts that the criterion by which creation is approved is *wisdom*, not justice. It reframes the foundational element of order in creation as wisdom, thereby showing the inadequacy of a purely justice-based view.
6. **What does it mean to fear the Lord according to Job 28, and what is it contrasted with?** The fear of the Lord (specifically Adonai in this verse) is equated with wisdom, and it means taking God seriously. This contrasts with viewing God as detached and ignorable, incompetent and to be disdained, limited and to be scorned, corrupt and to be admonished, short-sighted and to be advised, or petty and to be resented. It is to view God as an authority figure who is to be respected and submitted to.
7. **Why is the term *Adonai* used instead of Yahweh, Elohim, or Shaddai in Job 28:28?** The use of *Adonai*, which means "Lord" or "Master," emphasizes the aspect of authority and submission. It highlights the need for humans to submit to God's authority as the source of wisdom. Unlike the common "fear of the Lord" found elsewhere, here the specific term *Adonai* brings out the necessary component of submission to divine authority. God uses this term to refer to Himself in this verse.
8. **How does Job 28 connect to the problem of righteous suffering, and what does it suggest about our response?** Job 28 establishes that God's wisdom is the basis of order, not justice. Therefore, when righteous people suffer, it doesn't mean that God's system is broken or that justice is absent; rather, it points to a reality where human understanding is limited. The chapter encourages a response of trust in God's wisdom, even in the midst of suffering and confusion. This trust should also include an ethical response in that it parallels the fear of the Lord with "shunning evil". We are to trust that God has set up the system wisely, even when we cannot see or understand it.