

# Dr. John Walton, Job, Session 25

## The World in the Book of Job: Order, Non-order, and Disorder

### Resources from NotebookLM

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

#### 1. Abstract of Walton, Job, Session 25, The World of the Book of Job: Order, Non-order, and Disorder, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This session from Dr. John Walton's lectures on the Book of Job explores the nature of order, non-order, and disorder in God's creation. **Walton argues that creation involved establishing order but not total order**, leaving room for non-order and the intrusion of disorder caused by humanity's actions. He refutes the "retribution principle," asserting that natural events are not solely instruments of divine justice or punishment. Instead, **God's wisdom is evident in the overarching cosmic system**, not in micromanaging individual events. Ultimately, the text emphasizes that **God's justice is not the sole governing principle of the cosmos**. The world operates according to God's wisdom, a system which allows for both order and non-order, even amidst the effects of humanity's actions and the presence of disorder.

**2. 10 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Walton's, Job, Session 25 – 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  
n25.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of John Walton's "The World in the Book of Job: Order, Non-order, and Disorder" lecture:

#### Briefing Document: John Walton on Order, Non-Order, and Disorder in the Book of Job

##### I. Introduction

- This session (Session 25) focuses on understanding how the Book of Job presents the world and how God operates within it.
- Walton introduces and reviews the key concepts of order, non-order, and disorder as they relate to the cosmos and God's interaction with it.

##### II. Creation: Order, Non-Order, and Disorder

- **Creation as Ordering:** The most important aspect of creation, according to Walton, is not just the making of objects but the *ordering* of those objects into a functional system controlled by God to serve his purposes. This extends beyond the material.
- *Quote: "Creation was, most importantly, an act of ordering the cosmos, making everything function the way God wanted it to."*
- **Non-Order:** Genesis 1:2 describes the initial state of "non-order," a state where raw materials exist but lack assigned roles and functions. This is illustrated as "boxes that needed to be unpacked" and "rooms that needed to be arranged."
- It's essential to understand that non-order is *not* evil; it is simply an unfinished or incomplete state.
- *Quote: "This non-order, again, is not evil. It's just not completed in its final form. It's a work in progress."*
- **Continuing Non-Order:** Even after creation, there were areas and aspects of non-order that remained intentionally, such as the sea and areas outside of the Garden of Eden. This was not a failure on God's part but a deliberate part of his design.

- **Human Role:** Humans were created to work alongside God to continue the process of ordering as vice-regents. They were intended to work in partnership with God in this process, which was a deliberate choice by God to work through an extended process.
- **Disorder:** Disorder is introduced in Genesis 3 as a result of human actions. It is evil, and while cosmic forces may contribute, disorder is primarily attributed to human actions.
- **World's Character:** The world, therefore, is characterized by order established by God, continuing non-order, and unfortunately, the intrusion of disorder. Because of the presence of non-order and disorder the world is not fully endowed with God's attributes.
- *Quote: "So, we live in a world that's characterized by order, as God has established it, by continuing non-order, which has not yet been addressed and is dominated, unfortunately, by disorder."*

### III. Retribution Principle & the Fallen World

- **Rejection of Retribution Principle:** Job and his friends believed in the retribution principle, the idea that God's justice is infused into the natural world, and the world operated accordingly. Walton argues this is not the case.
- **Fallen World:** Because the world is fallen with the presence of disorder and non-order, the regular operations of the world do not reflect the direct, immediate character or attributes of God.

### IV. Wisdom and Non-Order

- **God's Wisdom:** God chose to bring order gradually, and allows non-order to remain and disorder to intrude. God could impose his will at any time, but chose not to.
- **Natural Events:** Natural disasters like rain, floods, hurricanes, and tsunamis are aspects of non-order. They aren't intrinsically evil or direct responses of God's justice (or punishment/blessing).
- God can use non-order to achieve ordered objectives, and some natural disasters can have positive effects on ecosystems.
- *Quote: "That's only another indication that God can use non-order to achieve ordered objectives."*

- **Not Automatic Punishment:** Natural disasters, though subject to God's control, are not mechanical instruments of punishment. God is not pictured as micromanaging individual events.
- *Quote: "They're subject to his bidding as humans are, though we are not robots. So, there's no remote control. They are biddable, subject to God's control, yet not mechanical."*

## V. God's Control and Wisdom

- **Cosmic System:** God's wisdom is evident in the way he set the world up to work, as a cosmic system, not in every specific event or expression.
- **No Specific Correlation:** It's a mistake to seek God's will or attribute through each specific instance of gravity or cell division, or with sickness and health. God's wisdom is connected to the way he set up the cosmic system.
- *Quote: "His wisdom is not in the specifics. It's in the way he set the world up to work."*
- **Individual Experiences vs. Cosmic System:** God's control is more connected to the overall cosmic system than individual experiences or conduct. This is in contrast to the retributive justice understanding of the world.

## VI. Justice is Not the Linchpin of the Cosmos

- **Justice Not Central:** The cosmos was not created and is not ordered for the sake of justice. Forces in the world are non-volitional, not moral, and not discerning. God does not micromanage.
- **Fallen Creation:** If justice was the sole focus of the cosmos, we would not exist as fallen creatures.
- **God's Wisdom:** God's wisdom is displayed in how the cosmos operates, even in its fallen state.
- **Book of Job's Message:** The Book of Job helps us understand that the world does not operate as we think it should, or the way we think it does. It operates according to God's wisdom.
- *Quote: "In its fallen state, the world can only operate by his wisdom. We cannot assess everything in terms of his justice. This is the message of the Book of Job to help us understand the world doesn't necessarily operate the way that we think that it does or the way that we think that it should."*

## VII. Key Takeaways

- The world is a mixture of God's established order, continuing non-order (not evil, just incomplete), and disorder caused by sin.
- The retribution principle (that the world directly reflects God's justice) is not how the world operates.
- God's wisdom is seen in how the *system* of the cosmos is set up, not in every specific event.
- Natural events are not necessarily direct acts of judgment or reward.
- The Book of Job challenges our common assumptions about how God interacts with the world, and reminds us that justice isn't the only operating principle.

This briefing provides a foundation for understanding Walton's perspective on the world as presented in the Book of Job, focusing on the nuanced relationship between God, order, non-order, and disorder.

## 4. Job Study Guide: Session 25, The World of the Book of Job: Order, Non-order, and Disorder

### The World in the Book of Job: Order, Non-order, and Disorder - Study Guide

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences, based on the provided source material.

1. According to Walton, what is the most important aspect of creation in the ancient world?
2. What does Walton mean by "non-order"? Is it inherently evil?
3. How did the introduction of "disorder" come into the world?
4. What is the "retribution principle" that Job and his friends believed?
5. According to Walton, can we assume natural disasters are punishments from God?
6. How does Walton explain the concept that natural disasters are not intrinsically evil?
7. According to Walton, how does God exercise control over the world?
8. Where, according to Walton, should we look to understand God's wisdom?
9. Why does Walton claim that "justice" is not the linchpin of the cosmos?
10. How does the Book of Job help us understand how the world operates?

#### Quiz - Answer Key

1. The most important aspect of creation, according to Walton, is the act of ordering the cosmos, establishing how everything functions according to God's purposes. It is not simply the creation of objects, but the organization of the world into an ordered system.
2. "Non-order" refers to the state of something being incomplete or not yet fully developed according to God's plan; it is not inherently evil, but a work in progress. It represents the raw materials and potential that still need to be given roles and functions.

3. "Disorder," according to Walton, primarily entered the world through the actions of people and is related to evil. While there may be cosmic forces of evil, it is largely due to human actions.
4. The "retribution principle" is the belief that God's justice is directly reflected in the natural world, meaning that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people as a result of God's judgment.
5. Walton states that natural disasters are not automatically responses of God's justice or punishment and it is incorrect to assume that they are. He explains that they are more a function of the non-order in the cosmos.
6. Walton explains that while natural disasters can cause negative impacts and be used by God as punishment, they are not intrinsically evil. He suggests they are rather an aspect of non-order that God can use to achieve ordered objectives, indicating that they do not have inherent moral value.
7. Walton describes God's control as being connected to the cosmic system he established rather than the specifics of individual experiences and outcomes. He suggests God is not micromanaging each individual event, but that everything is subject to His control.
8. According to Walton, God's wisdom should not be found in individual occurrences but in the way that He set up the world to work. He emphasizes the established cosmic system as the key, rather than specific instances of how the world operates.
9. Walton suggests that if justice were the core of everything, fallen creatures like humans would not exist. He explains that there's more to the operation of the cosmos than justice and that God uses his wisdom to order the world.
10. The Book of Job helps us understand that the world does not operate based on our expectations or the retribution principle. It shows that we cannot assess everything in terms of God's justice, but rather his wisdom in setting up the cosmos as it is.

## Essay Questions

**Instructions:** Develop a well-organized and thorough essay for each of the following prompts, using the provided source material and your understanding of the concepts presented.

1. Explain the concepts of order, non-order, and disorder as defined by John Walton in his lecture on the Book of Job. How do these concepts help us understand the world around us?
2. Discuss the implications of the "retribution principle" and why Walton argues it is not the foundation of the cosmos, according to the Book of Job.
3. Analyze the role of wisdom and control in John Walton's interpretation of God's governance of the world.
4. How does Walton use the concept of natural disasters to clarify the relationship between order, non-order, and God's plan for the cosmos?
5. Discuss the significance of the Book of Job's message on how the world operates, contrasting the retribution principle with Walton's interpretation.

## Glossary of Key Terms

**Order:** The state of the cosmos where everything functions according to God's purposes and plan. It is the result of God's initial act of creation and his establishment of a functional system.

**Non-order:** The state of incompleteness or potential in the cosmos, where raw materials and situations exist but have not yet been fully developed or given roles. It is not inherently evil but represents the ongoing work of ordering and development.

**Disorder:** A state characterized by evil and the corruption of God's original design. It is largely caused by the actions of people and deviates from the established order.

**Retribution Principle:** The belief that the natural world operates on a system of divine justice, where good people are rewarded with blessings and bad people are punished with suffering. It assumes a direct correlation between a person's moral status and their life circumstances.

**Linchpin of the Cosmos:** The central organizing principle of the universe. Walton argues that justice is *not* this, but rather that God's wisdom is what allows it to operate.

**Micromanage:** The act of having overly detailed or specific control over all aspects of a situation. According to Walton, God has the capacity to do this, but it is not typical of His actions.

**Cosmos:** The universe as an ordered system. According to Walton, the cosmos is not entirely in order, but is an ongoing process of order, non-order, and disorder.

**Vice-regents:** A person appointed to rule in the place of a king. In this context, humans are created to partner with God to continue the ordering process.

**Biddable:** Subject to God's control, yet not mechanically determined, like robots, by God's will.

## 5. FAQs on Walton, Job, Session 25, The World of the Book of Job: Order, Non-order and Disorder, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

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

### FAQ: The World in the Book of Job

- **What are the key concepts of order, non-order, and disorder, as presented in the Book of Job?**
- In the context of the Book of Job and creation, order refers to the way God intentionally designed the cosmos to function. This includes both the physical and functional aspects of the world, all operating according to His purposes. Non-order refers to the state of things not yet completed, or aspects of creation that are not brought into complete order, such as the sea or wilderness outside the Garden. This isn't evil, just unfinished, or in a different state of order. Disorder, on the other hand, is a result of evil and human actions, and it disrupts the intended function of the cosmos. The world is a mix of these three elements, rather than being entirely ordered.
- **Why is the concept of non-order important in understanding the world in the Book of Job?**
- Non-order is crucial because it highlights that creation is not static or fully complete. It indicates a continual process of ordering and signifies that some aspects of the world are not meant to be under complete control at all times. It is not a negative concept, but rather an aspect of the way God chose to structure the cosmos. Understanding this prevents us from expecting the world to always conform to a perfect, fully ordered state. Non-order also shows God's process in involving humans in co-creation.

- **How does the Book of Job challenge the idea that the world operates based on a principle of retribution?**
- The Book of Job demonstrates that the world's operations are not based on a simple principle of reward for good behavior and punishment for bad. The natural world, including events like storms, plagues, and famines, are not necessarily divine responses to human actions. These are part of the system established by God, which includes non-order and the possibility of disorder, rather than direct actions of divine judgment every time. In other words, the natural world does not mirror God's attributes, particularly justice, in every event or outcome.
- **Does God control everything that happens in the world, including natural disasters?**
- God is ultimately in control, but not in a micromanaging or mechanistic way. Natural events are not simply instruments of God's judgment or punishment that He manipulates with a remote control. These events are a part of the system God created, including non-order, and are subject to His bidding. While He *could* use them for specific purposes, they are not *always* indications of direct divine intervention. They operate within the parameters of the cosmic system set in place by God's wisdom.
- **How should we understand God's wisdom and actions in a world that includes both order and non-order?**
- God's wisdom is most visible in how He designed the entire system to function, not in the specifics of individual events. His wisdom lies in establishing a world with both order and non-order, not in micromanaging every outcome. The fact that the world doesn't always seem "wise" to us is because we can't fully understand God's broader plan, which goes beyond what appears to be simple justice.
- **What does the Book of Job teach about the relationship between human actions and the world's events?**
- Human actions, especially those causing disorder, have a significant impact on the world. However, individual experiences or misfortunes are not always direct consequences of a person's actions. While there can be cosmic forces of evil, the disorder in the world is largely attributed to human behavior. This emphasizes the fallen nature of humanity and its contribution to suffering. However, suffering isn't always direct punishment for individual wrongs.

- **Why does the world not always appear to operate with justice as its core principle?**
- The world is not structured with justice as its central organizing principle. If it were, humans would not exist in their fallen state. God created the world to operate through His wisdom, which is different from simply acting out of a principle of strict justice or retribution. He created the system, which allows room for non-order and disorder, but does not mean he isn't ultimately in charge. While God can intervene, the typical state of the world is not one that reflects direct divine reward or punishment for every action.
- **What is the significance of understanding the difference between God's attributes and the operations of the cosmos in the Book of Job?**
- Understanding that the cosmos doesn't always mirror God's attributes, particularly justice, is crucial. The Book of Job teaches that the regular operations of the world do not reflect the natural character or attributes of God in every single event. God's wisdom goes beyond what our human understanding of justice would dictate and incorporates a broader cosmic system that involves order, non-order, and disorder. The natural world is biddable and subject to his control but is not mechanical or robotic. By acknowledging this, it prevents us from viewing every natural phenomenon or personal hardship as divine judgment.