

Dr. John Walton, Job, Session 27

Theology of the Book of Job

Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Walton, Job, Session 27, Theology of the Book of Job, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This is a lecture by Dr. John Walton on the theology of the Book of Job. **He focuses on Job's misconceptions about God**, exploring how Job perceived God as **petty, unjust, and manipulable**. Walton argues that **these flawed perceptions are common even today**, illustrating how our own expectations of divine justice and intervention can lead to misunderstandings of God's nature and plans. The lecture concludes by highlighting that a proper understanding of Job helps correct these misconceptions, paving the way for a more accurate theological perspective on suffering. A subsequent session will address the theology of suffering in the Book of Job.

2. 14 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Walton's, Job, Session 27 – 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
n27.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 "Theology of the Book of Job" lecture:

Briefing Document: Theology of the Book of Job (Session 27, John Walton)

Introduction

This document summarizes the key theological points made in Dr. John Walton's lecture on the theology of the Book of Job (Session 27). Walton emphasizes that understanding Job's *incorrect* views of God is crucial for developing a correct theology from the book. The lecture primarily focuses on three flawed perspectives that Job holds about God: that God is petty, that God is unjust, and that God can be manipulated. The goal is to identify these common misconceptions and correct them in our own understanding of God.

I. God Isn't Petty (0:48 - 3:09)

- **Job's Perception:** Job tends to view God as overly attentive to minor transgressions and excessively focused on judgment. He feels that God might be holding onto past mistakes or perceived slights.
- Walton notes, "Job is suspect not only concerning the possibility that he is over-attentive to God's rewards but that he's over-attentive to God's judgment."
- **Modern Parallel:** This is a common modern tendency, where individuals, especially during suffering, wonder "what does he want from me?" They imagine that God is exacting and will punish the slightest deviations.
- **Corrective Theology:** This view is flawed. While scripture calls for perfection (Matthew 5:48), it doesn't mean God mercilessly punishes every minute deviation. God understands our weaknesses and frailties (Psalm 103).
- **Key Takeaway:** We must avoid the misconception that God is petty, over-attentive to minor flaws, or holding onto past transgressions. We must re-think this view of God.

II. God is not Unjust (3:09-8:02)

- **Job's Initial Position:** Job initially accepts God's actions without question ("The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord," 1:21).

- **Job's Shift:** Job later accuses God of injustice. He demands a hearing in court, claims God is using abusive power, and asserts that God has withheld *mishpat* (justice) from him (e.g., 9:19, 9:22, 19:7, 27:2, 34:5). Job portrays God as an assailant, an opponent, and a betrayer (16:9-14).
- **Modern Parallel:** When bad things happen, it's common for us to question God's justice. We often expect that a just and all-powerful God should ensure that our daily experience reflects his justice.
- **Flaw in the Assumption:** The error lies in thinking the cosmos is a direct reflection of God's attributes, and that God's plan is to ensure justice is done day by day. "The flaw in this thinking is that it assumes that the cosmos is stamped with the attributes of God. That's a view of the book discards."
- **Walton's Point:** Justice does not reign in every situation in a world with order, non-order, and disorder. God's design is a reflection of his wisdom, and while God is the source and center of order, non-order and disorder are not outside of his control.
- **Key Takeaway:** We cannot appraise God according to an external standard of justice. It's not our place to hold God accountable because doing so would diminish His status as God. "Our place is not to hold God accountable. It's not to call him to accountability because to do so would ultimately construe God as less than God."

III. God Cannot be Manipulated (8:02-11:00)

- **Job's Strategy:** Job attempts to manipulate God. Having failed to draw God into court, Job tries to use God's silence against him. In his oath of innocence (Chapter 31), Job lists all his virtues, essentially inviting God to prove him wrong (implying God should strike him dead if he's guilty).
- **Reasoning:** Job hopes that God's silence will be interpreted as tacit exoneration. If Job is proven unjustifiably ruined, God would appear inconsistent and his reputation would be damaged.
- **Job's Initial Belief:** Job initially believed he could manage God by his behaviors. This progressed to the belief that he could outmaneuver God using rituals.

- **Modern Parallel:** We often believe we can manipulate God through giving, church attendance, or adherence to religious disciplines. This is a "benefits-oriented" view, which assumes that specific actions can force a particular reaction from God.
- **Key Takeaway:** God cannot be manipulated. This view is flawed. We must not think we can control God or force him to do our will through religious acts or "good" behavior.

Conclusion (11:00 - 11:56)

The theology of the Book of Job emerges from recognizing and correcting Job's flawed perceptions of God. By recognizing these tendencies in ourselves, we can develop a more accurate understanding of God. The book's theology also includes a picture of suffering, which will be covered in a subsequent lecture.

Summary of Key Theological Corrections:

- **God is not Petty:** He is not overly concerned with minor infractions or holding onto past mistakes.
- **God is not Unjust:** His actions aren't measured by an external standard of justice and we must not hold him accountable.
- **God cannot be Manipulated:** We cannot control him through our religious performance or behavior.

This briefing document should provide a helpful overview of the key points of Session 27. It helps us understand that the Book of Job serves not just as a narrative of suffering but as a framework for examining and correcting our own theology.

4. Job Study Guide: Session 27, Theology of the Book of Job

The Book of Job: A Theological Review

Short Answer Quiz

1. What is one way, according to Walton, that we can approach understanding the theology of the Book of Job?
2. What does Walton suggest is a common misconception that people have about God's attentiveness?
3. How does Job's view of God shift over the course of the book in regards to justice?
4. What is "mishpat" and why is it important to Job's accusations against God?
5. According to Walton, what is a flaw in the thinking that leads people to believe that God is unjust?
6. How does Job attempt to "manipulate" God in chapter 31?
7. What is the logic behind Job's attempt at manipulation of God?
8. What does Walton say are some modern examples of how people try to manipulate God?
9. What does Walton say is the key to arriving at a "good theology" from the Book of Job?
10. What is the next topic Walton will discuss in the following segment?

Short Answer Quiz - Answer Key

1. One way we can approach understanding the theology of the Book of Job is by learning from Job's false views of God. By analyzing what Job gets wrong about God, we can better understand what the book intends to teach us.
2. Walton suggests that a common misconception is that God is over-attentive, either to rewards or to judgments, responding to small slights or past lapses and holding onto them.
3. Initially, Job affirms that God's actions cannot be challenged, but he later accuses God of being unjust, demanding a hearing and charging God with using abusive power.

4. "Mishpat" is the Hebrew word for justice, and it's important because Job uses this term to claim that God has withheld justice from him, indicating a perceived failing on God's part.
5. A flaw in the thinking that leads people to believe God is unjust is the assumption that God's plan is to ensure justice is seen in every circumstance of our lives, and when that does not happen, people tend to see God as not acting in justice.
6. Job attempts to "manipulate" God through his vow of innocence, enumerating all the offenses he has not committed and inviting God to strike him dead if he is lying, using silence as a way to force God to vindicate him.
7. The logic behind Job's attempt at manipulation is that if God remains silent in response to his vow of innocence, it would tacitly exonerate him, thereby undermining God's initial actions and implying inconsistency.
8. Modern examples include trying to manipulate God through giving, church attendance, worship, or rigidly following Christian disciplines, believing these actions can force God to do what we want him to do.
9. The key to arriving at a "good theology" from the Book of Job is to recognize Job's errors in thinking about God and then to identify those same inclinations within ourselves so we can correct those misconceptions.
10. The next topic Walton will discuss is the theology of suffering in the Book of Job.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the progression of Job's understanding of God's justice throughout the book. How does his initial acceptance of God's actions evolve into his accusations of injustice?
2. Compare and contrast Job's view of God with Walton's assertion that God cannot be held accountable to an outside standard. How does this perspective challenge common ideas about divine justice?
3. Discuss the significance of Job's attempt to manipulate God through his oath of innocence. What does this action reveal about his understanding of God and his relationship to Him?

4. How does the Book of Job challenge the common human tendency to believe that God can be manipulated or controlled? Explore the different ways that we might try to manipulate God and how the book offers a correction to this way of thinking.
5. Consider the connection between Job's misunderstanding of God and his experience of suffering. How does the Book of Job present a theology of suffering that addresses Job's misconceptions?

Glossary of Key Terms

Mishpat: A Hebrew word meaning justice. In the Book of Job, Job uses this term to accuse God of withholding justice from him.

Petty: In the context of the lecture, this term describes a false view of God in which he is seen as over-attentive to small deviations, holding onto past mistakes, and being overly exacting in his expectations.

Unjust: In the context of the lecture, this term describes a false view of God in which his actions are seen as not living up to the expected standards of justice.

Contingent: Dependent on something else; in the context of the lecture, Walton states that God cannot be appraised by an outside standard or he would be considered contingent on that standard, making him less than God.

Manipulation: The act of attempting to control or influence someone to get a desired result, especially through indirect or deceptive methods; in the context of the lecture, this refers to Job's and modern attempts to control or change God's actions.

Vow of Innocence: In the context of the Book of Job, this is a ritual in which Job lists all of the actions that he has not committed as a way of calling on God to act; God's silence, in Job's view, will either prove his innocence or indict God as being unjust.

Retribution Principle: The belief that actions always result in direct consequences, whether they be positive or negative, and that such consequences are in line with the degree of the action.

5. FAQs on Walton, Job, Session 27, Theology of the Book of Job, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions about the Theology of the Book of Job

1. **What is one of the main ways we can understand the theology presented in the Book of Job?** A key way to understand the theology of Job is by examining Job's *false* views of God. By identifying and correcting Job's mistaken beliefs, we can arrive at a more accurate theological understanding of God. The book of Job reveals the incorrect ways that humans might conceive of God and helps us to recognize these tendencies in our own thinking.
2. **What is Job's initial, and ultimately incorrect, view of God's attention to detail?** Job initially seems to believe that God is petty, overly concerned with minute details, and that he is meticulously tracking human behavior to a point of exacting judgment. He suspects God is quick to punish even small lapses, almost as if God is "holding onto" past mistakes and not letting go of them. This view assumes that God is constantly monitoring, ready to pounce on any minor transgression.
3. **How does Job's view of God's justice evolve throughout the book, and how does this relate to modern reactions?** Job begins by accepting that God's actions are beyond challenge. However, his view of God's justice evolves as he begins to accuse God of injustice, demanding a hearing in court and even accusing God of abusive power. He comes to feel that God is not upholding what should be reasonably expected of him, concluding that God has "withheld mishpat" (justice). This mirrors modern reactions where individuals often question God's justice when life's circumstances seem unfair or when they witness suffering in the world.
4. **Why is it a mistake to assume that the cosmos should reflect God's justice on a daily basis?** The error lies in assuming that God's plan is to ensure justice in every circumstance we face each day. The book of Job suggests that God's design is a reflection of his wisdom, and while he is the source of order, the world also includes non-order and disorder, all of which remain within his control. God cannot be appraised according to an outside standard, as doing so would make him contingent on that standard. Expecting justice in every daily situation can lead to disappointment and frustration with God.

5. **How does Job try to manipulate God?** Job, after failing to engage God in court, tries to use his "vow of innocence" in an attempt to regain equilibrium. By enumerating the offenses he has not committed, Job invites God to strike him dead if he's guilty, essentially trying to force God's hand and in God's silence, have it serve as tacit exoneration. He attempts to manipulate God's silence to his own benefit, showing a belief that God is not simply above being maneuvered through ritualistic actions.
6. **How does Job's initial behavior suggest that he might think God can be managed?** Job's initial behavior, detailed in Job 1:4-5 where he makes regular sacrifices for his children shows an inclination that God can be managed with ritual or pious behavior, that his favor can be maintained by consistent religious action. This indicates that Job believes he can influence God's actions through his own conduct, suggesting that God is somewhat predictable and subject to human influence.
7. **What common modern misconception about God does the Book of Job help us correct?** The Book of Job helps correct the common modern misconception that God can be manipulated through our actions, giving, church attendance, worship, or rigid adherence to religious disciplines. This is a "benefits-oriented" way of thinking that assumes we can somehow control God to do what we want. The book emphasizes that we cannot and should not attempt to manipulate God, and should instead strive for a healthy understanding of His wisdom and will.
8. **What is the broader purpose of studying the flawed views of God in the book of Job?** By recognizing Job's mistaken beliefs about God as well as how those inclinations reflect our own, the book of Job leads us towards a healthier theology. It helps us correct our own misconceptions about God and prevents them from shaping our own thinking. Furthermore, it encourages us to focus not just on God's character, but also on the theology of suffering, which will be addressed in subsequent parts of the study.