

Dr. John Walton, Job, Session 16 – Podcast

BiblicaleLearning.org [BeL]

Alright, buckle up everybody, because today we are diving deep into the book of Job. Oh boy. I know, I know, it's not exactly light reading.

It's one of those books you need to read with a pot of coffee nearby. Exactly, but trust me, it's worth the effort. Oh, absolutely.

Job is one of those books that just grabs you by the collar and won't let go. It really does. So to set the scene, we've got Job, a man who seems to have it all.

Righteous, wealthy, respected, the whole nine yards. And then, bam, everything gets taken away. It's like a cosmic rug pull.

Exactly. And Job's friends are all convinced he must have done something terrible to deserve this. Right, because back then, there was this strong belief in divine retribution.

Good things happen to good people. Bad things happen to bad people. So Job's suffering throws everyone for a loop.

He's insisting he's innocent. But his friends are all like, come on man, spill the beans, what did you do? It's like they can't accept the idea that bad things can happen to good people for no reason. Exactly.

And that's what makes the Book of Job so fascinating. It grapples with these really tough questions about suffering, justice, and the nature of God. Questions that are still relevant today, thousands of years later.

Totally. But to really understand the Book of Job, we need to understand the world it came from, right? The ancient Near East, a totally different way of thinking. Oh, absolutely.

Their worldview was so different from ours. Okay, so what was so different? Well, for them, existence wasn't just about something being physically there. Hmm, okay, that's a little different.

It was about order and function, having a purpose in the grand scheme of things. So it's not just about whether something is, but about what it does. Right.

Imagine a world where things only truly exist if they have a role to play, a place in the cosmic order. Whoa, that's a pretty mind-blowing concept. It is.

And it helps us understand some of the confusing verses in Job. Like which ones? Well, like Job 22.2-3 and 26.7. These verses get translated in wildly different ways, and it all comes down to how we understand this concept of existence. Oh, okay, so give me an example.

Okay, in Job 26.7, it talks about the earth being suspended. Some people read that and think, oh, the ancient Hebrews knew the earth was hanging in space. I can see how someone would think that.

But in the context of the ancient Near East, it's more likely talking about how the forces of chaos, the non-existent realm, are being held back. So the earth being suspended is more about maintaining order than about physics? Exactly. It's about keeping that chaos of the non-existent realm from overwhelming the ordered world.

Wow, that's so different from how I would normally read that. And that's why diving deep into these ancient texts is so rewarding. You start to see the world through completely different eyes.

All right, so now that we've got a handle on the ancient mindset, let's get back to the drama. Oh, yeah, because things are about to heat up. Big time.

We're now in the third round of Job and his friends going back and forth, and it's getting intense. Especially with Eliphaz. Oh, yeah, he's really laying into Job at this point.

He basically tells Job, look, God already knows you're guilty. Stop with all this talk about mediators and hearings. Ouch.

And what's really striking is that Eliphaz seems almost happy about Job's suffering. Right. It's like he's saying, see, I told you, you did something wrong.

Talk about adding insult to injury. Seriously. It makes you wonder if Eliphaz is really a friend at all.

Yeah, it seems like he's more concerned with being right than with actually comforting Job. And he keeps going on and on about Job getting his possessions back as if that's the most important thing. Right, like, hey, as long as you get your camels back, everything will be fine.

It's like he's totally missing the point of what Job is going through. Exactly. Job isn't just upset about losing his stuff.

He's wrestling with a much deeper question. Which is? Why would a righteous person suffer at all? Ah, that's the million-dollar question, isn't it? It is, and it's a question that Job keeps coming back to again and again. So even though he's questioning everything, he still believes in this idea of divine retribution, right? Yeah, the idea that good deeds are rewarded and bad deeds are punished.

But his own experience just doesn't seem to fit that mold. It doesn't, and that's what's driving him crazy. He's like, okay, if God is just, then why am I suffering? Poor Job.

It's like his whole world has been turned upside down. It has. He's longing to plead his case directly to God, but he feels completely abandoned.

And then you've got Bildad coming in with his words of wisdom. Oh, Bildad. What does he have to say? Basically, God is big, you are small.

Deal with it. Uh-huh. No kidding.

It's like he's saying, just accept things the way they are and stop asking questions. Which, you know, is not exactly helpful when someone is going through what Job is going through. Right.

Like, hey, thanks for the pep talk, Bildad. I feel so much better now. Bildad's whole argument hinges on this idea of the wisdom of the ages, this unquestionable tradition passed down through generations.

So basically, we've always believed this, so it must be true. Pretty much. But in a situation like Job's, where personal experience clashes so violently with tradition, that kind of argument just doesn't hold up.

No, it definitely doesn't. And I'm guessing Job doesn't buy it either. Nope.

Not one bit. What does he say? He fires back, calling Bildad's ideas pointless. Yeah, I bet he's not mincing words at this point.

He's like, all this talk about God's order is meaningless when my life is in complete chaos. You can really feel the tension building here. It's reaching a boiling point.

So what happens next? Job makes a bold declaration. He says he will never accept his friend's accusations because his integrity, his righteousness, is all he has left. Wow, that's a powerful statement.

It is. And then he drops a bombshell. He calls his friends God's enemies.

Oh, boy. Yeah, things have definitely escalated. So now it's not just Job versus his friends, it's like Job versus everyone.

It is. And it sets the stage for an even bigger confrontation. You're talking about that mysterious challenger we met at the beginning of Job, right? The one who made that bet with God.

Exactly. The one who said Job would curse God when things got tough. But what does this challenger even want? That's the big question, isn't it? Is he just a cosmic gambler who gets his kicks from watching humans suffer? Or is there something more to it? And is Job really just putting on a show of righteousness to win this bet? Is there such a thing as disinterested righteousness? Can someone be good just for the sake of being good without expecting any reward? Those are the questions we're going to explore as we continue our deep dive into the book of Job.

This is getting good. Oh, it's about to get even better. I can't wait.

Buckle up. So Job is basically saying, my life is falling apart, and you want me to be quiet. It's even more than that.

Remember we talked about the ancient Near Eastern worldview. Right, how existence wasn't just about being there physically. Yeah, it was about having a purpose and being part of the ordered world.

Chaos, the non-existent, was what they feared. So like a desert or a raging storm. Exactly.

And for Job, being cast out from that order, suffering these losses, it was kind of non-existence. So when his friends keep saying he needs to repent, they're basically telling him to get back into that ordered world. Yeah, like stop being non-existent.

Get back to where you belong in God's favor. But remember, Job has glimpsed the abyss, the chaos. And he can't just pretend it isn't there.

Exactly. Job's whole world has been shattered. He can't just accept those easy answers his friends are giving.

Because it's not about losing stuff. It's about this existential crisis he's having. Exactly.

And that's what makes the book of Job so relatable even today. I mean, yeah, haven't we all had those moments where something terrible happens, and the easy answers just don't cut it anymore? Absolutely. When you experience a loss or witness some injustice and you just can't make sense of it with simple explanations.

It's like the world suddenly feels chaotic and unpredictable. That's where things get really interesting with Job. He's not content with simplistic answers.

He demands a genuine reckoning, right? Wants to understand why a righteous person like him is suffering. Exactly. He's not just accepting his fate.

He's wrestling with God, demanding answers. That's pretty brave, challenging God like that. It is.

And it marks a turning point for Job. He's not blindly obeying anymore. He's engaging on a deeper level, more honestly.

And that's a powerful message for us. We're always being bombarded with information and easy answers. But sometimes the real truth is found in the struggle, in the questions themselves.

Precisely. Job's story reminds us that it's okay to question, to doubt, even if it's uncomfortable. It's like that saying: the unexamined life is not worth living.

Job is showing us that it's okay to wrestle with the big questions. Absolutely. And speaking of challenging things, what about that challenger figure? The one who bet Job would curse God? Oh yeah, the cosmic gambler.

What's his role in all this? Well, think about it. His wager is all about testing Job's righteousness. Is it real or just for show? And Job's friends always focus on material rewards.

They almost seem to be on the challenger side. You're right. They represent that worldview.

Be good for the rewards, avoid bad to avoid punishment. But Job rejects that. He shows that true integrity is about who you are, not what you gain or lose.

And that's what silences the challenger. Job wins, not because he gets a reward, but because he holds onto his values. He's proving that integrity isn't about gaming the system.

It's about being true to yourself, even when it's hard. And that's so relevant today when it's easy to get caught up in chasing success and stuff. Job reminds us that there's something more important.

It's a call to be authentic, to live by our values, even when it's tough. A challenge worth taking on. So Job has silenced the challenger, proven his friends wrong, and is still clinging to his integrity.

But his suffering continues, and he still has no answers. What happens next? Does he get that face-to-face with God he's been wanting? He does. And trust me, it's a confrontation you won't want to miss.

Ooh, this is getting good. I can't wait to hear what happens. You'll have to wait for part three of our deep dive to find out.

Alright, I'm ready for this confrontation. Job's been through so much, held onto his integrity, and now he finally gets to face God. This is going to be good.

Oh, it's a powerful moment, but not a warm and fuzzy one. Really? No heavenly hug and a pat on the back? Not quite. Picture this.

A whirlwind- this incredible display of raw power- and then God speaks. Okay, I'm picturing it. But instead of answers or comfort, God starts questioning Job about creation, the universe, all these mysteries.

Whoa, so no explanation for his suffering. It's more like God saying, you think you understand what's going on? Look at the bigger picture. Kind of a reality check for Job, huh? Absolutely.

God's shifting the whole conversation, showing the vastness and complexity of it all. So God's basically saying, Job, you're only seeing a tiny piece of the puzzle. Exactly.

It's about the limits of human understanding, how we can't grasp the grand design from our limited perspective. But Job still gets to ask questions, right? He's not just supposed to shut up and accept things. Absolutely.

And that's what's so amazing about Job's response. He doesn't back down, even facing divine power. Talk about standing your ground.

He acknowledges he doesn't know everything, but he still demands an explanation for his suffering. He's like, okay, God, you're in charge of the universe, but I still deserve to know why I'm going through this. And that's the beauty of it.

It's a real dialogue, honest and raw, between humanity and the divine. It's not just God dictating to Job, but does Job actually get any answers? In a way, yes, but not a simple, neat explanation. Instead, God shows Job the mystery of creation, the sheer power of the forces at work.

It's like God saying, look, Job, I'm not some vending machine giving out rewards and punishments. I'm the one who created it all. Exactly.

And Job is overwhelmed, humbled, but also kind of satisfied. Like he's seeing the bigger picture, even if he can't understand all the details. And he lets go of that need for a clear explanation, embraces the mystery.

And in that surrender, he finds peace. He does. He doesn't get every answer, but his relationship with God is restored.

So the Book of Job isn't about solving the problem of suffering, but about learning to live with it and find meaning even when things are tough. Exactly. It's a powerful message for anyone who's ever asked, why do bad things happen to good people? The Book of Job doesn't give easy answers, but it offers a path towards resilience, hope, and connection with the divine.

It's a reminder that life is messy and sometimes things happen that we don't understand. But even in the chaos, we can hold on to our integrity, our faith, and our sense of wonder. Beautifully put.

And that's what makes Job's story so timeless. It speaks to those deep human desires for meaning, for justice, for connection with something bigger than ourselves. Wow.

What a journey this deep dive has been. Ancient cosmology, philosophical debates, a face-to-face with God. It's really made me see the Book of Job in a new light.

And that's what we're here for: to challenge assumptions, expand understanding, and encourage everyone to engage with these ancient texts in a meaningful way. Well, listeners, I hope this deep dive has sparked some curiosity and given you a new appreciation for the Book of Job. It's a story that reminds us to keep asking questions, wrestling with those big mysteries, and searching for meaning, even when it feels like the world is falling apart.

Until next time, keep diving deep.