

Dr. John Walton, Job, Session 19 – Podcast

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Welcome back, deep divers, ready for another fascinating journey into the text already excellent. Today we're going to be looking at just one verse. Okay, from the book of Job, Job 31.1. Interesting now, on the surface. It seems pretty simple, you know, like just a statement about not looking lustfully at women, right? But with the help of Old Testament scholar John Walton.

Ah, we're going to see that there's actually a lot more going on. I like it. I like it so much more than meets the eye, right? Yeah, let's dive in. Let's dive in. Ah, so the verse starts with I made a covenant with my eyes Hmm.

I mean, that's pretty strong imagery, right? Like, who makes a covenant with their own eyes? It's a striking image for sure, right, and it's because the Hebrew word for covenant is a pretty weighty one. Oh, okay. It's the kind of agreement you'd usually see between a king and his subjects. So by using this term, you know, Job is kind of suggesting a level of seriousness, right? Almost like he's treating his eyes like rebellious subjects that need to be kept in check. So instead of it being just like a casual promise, yeah, it's more like a formal treaty. Exactly. Listen up, eyeballs.

We have an agreement here. Ha, ha. Exactly, like it's kind of funny to imagine, but it really emphasizes how important this is to Job. It really does, and then you know, the next part of the verse seems to, you know, reinforce that idea of self-control. He says he won't look lustfully at a young woman. Yeah.

Yeah, but here again the Hebrew gives us a slightly different perspective. Okay, I'm already sensing a theme here. What's the twist? Well, the Hebrew word at Bonin doesn't actually carry that same sense of lustful. Oh, it's closer to carefully examine or inquire after. Oh Interesting.

So that already starts to kind of shift our understanding of what's happening. Yeah, so maybe not about avoiding temptation initially, right? What's the real concern then? Well, to understand that we have to look at the Hebrew word for Young woman.

Okay, which is Betula. Okay, now it's often translated as virgin, right? Right, but it actually refers to a woman under her father's protection. Mm-hmm, a marriageable candidate. So it's more about her Social standing than her sexual experience, exactly.

Yeah, that's it. That's a big difference. It is, it is from how we might read it today. Yes, and that really sheds some light on what might be going on here. Okay, Wolfen suggests that Job is actually talking about avoiding the temptation to acquire more wives.

Oh Interesting. Yeah, that makes a lot of sense when you think about it like, you know, he's defending his righteousness, right? And in that culture, having a big harem was like a sign of wealth and power. Absolutely. So by saying that he's not even looking at potential guys, right? He's saying that he's not driven by those earthly desires, exactly, and there's another interesting thing.

Oh, okay. Job uses a specific word, mah, to introduce a rhetorical question. Hmm, it's suggesting that he's not just stating a fact but actually kind of challenging his accusers. So it's more like, why would I even bother looking at another woman, exactly, considering, you know, this covenant that I've made? Yes, it's like he's preempting any accusation, right, and emphasizing his integrity. Absolutely. It's amazing how much depth we're finding in just this one verse, and this is just the beginning.

Yeah, we'll be back with you more from John Walton on Job 31.1. Can't wait, you know, before we go any further, it's good to remember that Job is speaking from within a very specific cultural context. You know, in ancient Israel, polygamy was common, right? Having a bunch of wives was seen as a sign of status and wealth, uh-huh. So when Job says he's not even looking at other women. Yeah, he's really going against the grain here, right? Yeah, he's choosing a different path.

It really highlights how his commitment to, you know, righteousness is more than just following rules. Yeah, it's like a deeper desire to live with integrity. Absolutely, even if it means like challenging the norm, and that's such a powerful message for us today. You know, we might not live in a world of harems and covenants, right? But we're still surrounded by messages about what makes a successful life. What makes a happy life? Yeah, yeah, and Job's story reminds us that true fulfillment comes from within, from aligning our actions with our values, right? Even when it's tough, even when it's tough, you know. It's interesting because we often think of integrity as like an individual choice- yeah, a personal thing, right? But here we see how it can also be a social act, like pushing back against expectation.

Absolutely, you know, I'm also struck by how much we're learning from just this one word. Petula, it's not just about virginity, but also about a woman's place in society. You know, under her father's protection makes you wonder, like, are there even other ways to understand what Job is saying? That's a great question. Yeah, and it highlights the importance of considering, you know, multiple perspectives. I mean, while Walton focuses on Job's rejection of power, some scholars see this verse as reflecting Job's respect for women and for social boundaries. So instead of it just being about Job and his integrity. Yeah, it could also be about honoring those social structures that protect women, exactly.

Huh? That really adds another layer to it. It does; it makes it even more complex. It reminds us that there's rarely just one right? Interpretation, right? The beauty of these ancient texts is they can spark so many different conversations. Yeah.

Yeah, for sure. You know, speaking of sparking conversations, you mentioned earlier that, you know, if the text was explicitly about lust, then a more likely word choice would have been Hamad, right? Yeah, why is that significant? Well, in the wider context of the Old Testament, Hamad is often used to describe a very intense desire, even like covetousness. Okay, it carries this much more forceful connotation than at Bonin Yeah, so if Job was trying to make a blanket statement about avoiding lust in general Yeah, Hamad would have been the word to use exactly and the fact that he uses at Bonin really reinforces the idea that he's talking about something much more specific this act of Inquiring after a potential wife a betula right for the purpose of adding to his harem.

It's fascinating how one word can completely change our understanding. It is like a little clue that unlocks a whole other level of meaning. It is and that's why it's so crucial to engage with the original Hebrew to delve into the nuances of the language. Yeah, because in those nuances we often find the most surprising and insightful discoveries. It's like we're on an archaeological dig unearthing these little treasures. Uh-huh. Exactly, with every single word we examine. Yeah, before we get too carried away though, right? Is there anything else about this verse that? John Walton highlights in his analysis.

There's one more thing. I think it'll really resonate with our listeners. Okay, and it has to do with the larger context of Job's situation. Remember, this is a man who's been struck by unimaginable suffering, right? He's been accused by his friends. Yeah, he's desperately trying to defend his innocence. It's such a powerful story. It is, and even though it's, you know, thousands of years old.

Yeah, it's still so relatable. Yes, I mean, we've all experienced suffering and questioning and doubt, absolutely, and in that context Job 31.1 takes on a much deeper meaning. Great, you know, it becomes more than just a statement about avoiding temptation. Yeah, it becomes a declaration of Job's unwavering faith in God. Hmm, even in the face of Unimaginable pain. So how does Walton connect this verse? To Job's faith.

Well, remember how Job starts off by saying I made a covenant with my eyes, right? Walton argues that this covenant isn't just a personal vow. It's a reflection of Job's understanding of his relationship with God; he's using this very specific act of self-control, this avoidance of inquiring after a betula, right, to demonstrate his loyalty to God. Wow. So he's saying, even though all this terrible stuff is happening to me, yes. I'm still going to remain faithful. It's a powerful testament to Job's resilience and his unwavering belief. Yeah, you know, and it speaks to the universality of human experience. Yeah, we all face challenges. We all experience doubt, but ultimately it's our choices, even the seemingly small ones, that define who we are. This has been such a fascinating conversation.

It has we started with just this one verse, and now we're exploring, you know, the depths of faith resilience, right? The complexity of, you know, ancient social structures it really shows you how much there is to discover when we take the time to dive deep. It really does, and you know what? We're not done yet. Oh, there's more. There's one final thought-provoking insight from John Walton. Okay, then I think we'll leave our listeners thinking long after this episode, and I'm intrigued, but for that we're going to have to move to our final part.

Okay, let's do it. All right, we're back, ready to wrap up our deep dive into Job 31.1. Yes, I think this last insight from John Walton is going to tie everything together nicely. I'm all ears.

Let's hear it. Okay, so it all comes down to the nature of covenants in the ancient world, you know, these weren't just casual agreements, right? They were serious, binding commitments, and they usually involved sacrifices. You mean like offering something to the gods. Well, not always in the literal sense. Okay, but there was always a cost, a giving up of something to uphold the covenant. Interesting. So what was Job sacrificing in this covenant with his eyes? Well, Walton suggests that what Job is giving up is the potential for more children. Oh, wow, by choosing not to inquire after a betula.

Yeah, he's actually limiting his ability to expand his family. That's a pretty big deal, especially in a culture where having lots of kids was seen as like a blessing, right? He's willingly limiting his own potential for that blessing. Yes to stay true to his covenant with God It's a really powerful testament to his faith and to his understanding of what it truly means to be righteous You know, it's not just about you know, avoiding sin, but it's about actually making sacrifices even difficult ones Yeah for the sake of something greater than yourself exactly makes you wonder if you know this sacrifice Yeah, this willingness to give up something so important to him. Is that what ultimately redeems Job? That's a really great question, and I think it really highlights how true faith often involves sacrifice, right? You know, it's not always easy for sure.

It requires us to make tough choices. Yeah, sometimes to give up things that mean a lot to us. It's definitely a challenging message. Yeah, but so important, especially in a world that emphasizes, you know, instant gratification, right? Me, me, me- exactly. Job's story really reminds us that sometimes the true fulfillment comes from letting go, from surrendering to something bigger than ourselves. Absolutely.

What a powerful way to end our deep dive. It is, you know, we started with what seemed like such a simple verse- yeah, about controlling your eyes, right and now we've gone so much deeper. We have explored faith and sacrifice and what it really means to be righteous. It's amazing what you can uncover. I know, right, when you really take the time to dive deep. I couldn't say it better myself. It's been a pleasure. Thanks for joining us on this incredible journey, everyone. Until next time, keep exploring and keep diving deep.