

Dr. John Walton, Job, Session 20 – Podcast

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Hey everyone, and welcome back for another Deep Dive. This time we're going to be jumping into the Book of Job. Ah, Job.

Specifically, Elihu's speeches. Yeah, those are pretty interesting. They're often overlooked.

Yeah. And they're fascinating. So as always, let's quickly set the scene for our listeners who might not have cracked open Job in a while.

Right. So you've got Job whose life is basically... Imploded, yeah. Imploded, yeah.

Totally fallen apart. And his friends are trying to make sense of it all. Right.

They're trying to give him... Through the lens of... Yeah, well, they're clinging to that idea that suffering equals sin. Divine retribution. Yeah.

You do something bad, you get punished. If you're suffering, you must have done something. Right.

And that's the lens through which they're trying to understand what's happening to Job. Exactly. But Job, despite his agony, fiercely defends his innocence.

Oh yeah, he's adamant. He's like, I've done nothing wrong. Yeah.

And it goes so far as he actually swears an oath, demanding that God himself explain what's going on. It sets the stage for this confrontation. Yes.

It's like he's saying, all right, I want to take you to court. Yeah. The ultimate court, the cosmic court.

And his friends are like, well, you know, we have this classic idea of how this all works: divine retribution. Right. But then Job's situation... Throws a wrench into it.

It just throws everything off. Yeah, it completely messes up their whole system. And then he's like, okay, well, I want to speak to the manager.

Right. And that's where things get even more interesting. Exactly.

Because just as we're on the edge of our seats waiting for this divine showdown, this meeting with the almighty... This face-to-face... In walks Elihu... Uh-oh. This new character who's been silently observing this whole philosophical brawl... He's just kind of there. Yeah.

He's lurking in the background. In the back. Taking it all in.

And even his name, which means he is my God, kind of hints that he's about to drop some serious theological truth bombs. The name's kind of a giveaway. It is.

It is. Yeah. But honestly, when I first read this section, I was kind of like, who is this guy? Yeah.

And why is he the main event? What's he doing here? The timing is just so strange. It's like, come on. We were about to have the big showdown.

I know. Now we've got to wait for this guy. Right.

So what do you think? What does Elihu have to say that's so important they can push back this meeting with God? Well, unlike Job's friends... Yeah. Who could only speculate about Job's hidden sins. Yeah.

They were just guessing. Elihu, he kind of goes straight for the jugular. That does.

He accuses Job of self-righteousness. Oh, interesting. So he's not saying that Job's lying about his actions.

No. But that there's a problem with his attitude? Yeah. There's something deeper going on.

That's a bold move. It is. Especially for someone who's just kind of strolled into this philosophical brawl.

He's coming in hot. He is coming in hot. And how does this accusation add a new layer of complexity to the whole story? So remember the challenger from earlier? Oh, yeah.

Yeah. He also questions Job's righteousness. He does.

But he thinks that Job is putting on a show. He's like, Job is totally faking it. Yeah.

He's doing it for personal gain. Right. Right.

Elihu's critique is different, though. Okay. How so? He doesn't doubt Job's sincerity.

He's like, I believe that Job really believes what he's saying. But he's challenging the righteousness itself. Whoa.

Okay. So to Elihu, Job is clinging to his innocence. Yeah.

It's actually a form of pride. Okay. Something that's blocking him from truly understanding God.

So it's like he's saying, you're so focused on being right. Yes. That you're actually missing the bigger picture.

Yeah. Exactly. That's really interesting because it feels like Elihu is not just adding fuel to the fire, but he's changing the entire conversation.

He's coming at it from a whole different angle. He's like, whoa, hold on, guys. Yeah.

You're thinking about this all wrong. Let's go a little deeper. Yeah.

And it's like he's saying, even someone who's seemingly good as Job can be messed up by self-righteousness. It's a universal human problem. But doesn't that kind of make Elihu the bad guy here? I mean, isn't Job allowed to be upset and confused about his situation? That's a great question.

Yeah. And it gets to the heart of what Elihu is trying to do. Okay.

He's trying to reconcile God's justice with the very real problem of suffering. Right. Because if God is just, and if God is all-powerful, then why is there so much pain and suffering in the world? It doesn't seem to add up.

Right. It doesn't make sense. And Elihu is trying to figure out- he's trying to explain it.

Yeah. And he does it by presenting his own theodicy. His own explanation.

Yeah. And just for our listeners who maybe haven't encountered that term before, a theodicy is basically an attempt to explain why a good God allows bad things to happen. Right.

It's wrestling with that age-old problem. Okay. So how does Elihu's theodicy actually play out? How does he score that circle? Yeah.

Well, his take on retribution is actually fascinating. He suggests that suffering might be preventative. Preventative.

Yeah. In other words, God might inflict pain not as a punishment for past sins. So not like you did something bad.

Right. And now you're getting punished for it. Not a tit for tat.

Okay. But to steer you away from screwing up even worse in the future. Oh, so it's like a divine intervention.

Exactly. To course correct your life. Like a cosmic GPS.

Wow. Okay. So it's not just what goes around comes around.

Nope. But God might knock you down to keep you from falling off a cliff later. Yeah.

Or like a divine wake-up call. Yeah. Before things get really bad.

That's a pretty intense idea. It is. What do you think, listener? Does that make sense? Or does it feel like Elihu is putting words in God's mouth? Yeah.

Is this a legitimate interpretation? It's hard to say, right? It is. Like, is he onto something profound here or... Or is he just projecting? Yeah. Is he just projecting his own ideas? Onto a God he can't possibly fully grasp.

Yeah. And it seems like he's pretty sure of himself. He even goes so far as to say that humans can't judge God.

Right. Or hold him accountable for anything. He's like, look, God is God, and you're not.

Right. Don't question him. But there's also this irony there, because he's criticizing Job for questioning God's justice.

But isn't he doing the same thing? In a way, yeah. It's like he's saying God's ways are a mystery. But here's the formula I've figured out.

He's like, I've cracked the code. Yeah. I've got God all figured out.

Gotcha. So is there anything we can actually take away from Elihu's speeches that might help us understand this bigger picture? I think there are two key takeaways. So first, Elihu, like the challenger, shows us that there are multiple ways to view Job's righteousness.

This isn't a simple good guy versus bad guy situation. Right. The book wants us to wrestle with these different perspectives.

And form our own conclusions. Exactly. Okay.

That's a good one. And second, Elihu highlights the inherent tension between wanting to understand God's actions and accepting the fact that we might never fully grasp his ways. That's a tough one.

It is. But it's true. Even if his logic is flawed, Elihu makes us confront the limits of human understanding when it comes to divine justice.

A great point. So it's like, he's a stepping stone, forcing Job and us to grapple with these bigger questions. Before we even get to God's answer.

Right. It's setting the stage. Which we are going to talk about.

Exactly. That's the main event. So stay tuned, folks.

Don't go anywhere. We'll be back soon to dive into that long-awaited confrontation. The cosmic showdown.

Between Job and God. It's going to be good. Yeah, it is.

All right. All right. See you next time.

See you. And so we come to it, the cosmic showdown. Oh, yeah.

Job versus God. The main event. Yeah.

It's been a long road. It has been. But we're finally here.

Talk about anticipation. Yeah. After all that philosophical sparring.

Right. After Elihu trying to make sense of it all. Yeah.

Trying to explain God. God actually shows up. He does.

And honestly, it's not what I expected at all. Yeah. You build up this idea in your head.

Like, okay, it's going to be this calm, measured response. Just stacking forth. This like debate.

Right. Almost like a courtroom drama. And it is not that.

No. At all. Not even close.

What would you even call it? It's more like a whirlwind. It is. A torrent of poetic imagery.

Yeah. Questions that completely upend Job's understanding of the universe. I bet you felt that, listener.

Oh, yeah. When you first read this part of the text. Like, what is going on? Yeah.

Because God doesn't offer any easy answers. No. And he doesn't try to fit his actions into some neat theological system.

Right. Instead. He confronts Job with the sheer vastness and mystery of creation.

It's overwhelming. Oh, yeah. Even for us as readers.

Definitely. Thousands of years later. Do you have any of those lines that really stood out to you? I mean, you've got lines like, Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Oh, yeah.

Who shut in the sea with doors? Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades? Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Whoa. It's powerful stuff. It is.

And they're asked with the power of a force of nature. Yeah, like a cosmic storm. It's like God is saying, Job, before you judge me, before you demand answers, try to grasp the complexity of the world I created.

Right. You think you know suffering. You think you understand.

You think you know justice. Look at the scope of what I'm dealing with here. It's humbling.

To say the least. Say the very least. Yeah.

And that's the point, right? I think so. God's speeches aren't about justifying his actions. No.

In terms that we can understand. It's not a legal defense. He's not trying to prove anything.

He's about expanding Job's perspective. Totally. Shattering his limited view of the divine.

Like opening up a whole new way of seeing things. So wait, is God saying that Job is wrong to question him? That suffering is just something that we have to accept without trying to understand? I don't think it's quite that simple. Okay.

I mean, God acknowledges that Job has spoken rightly about him. He does. He's not condemning the questioning itself.

It's more about the approach, maybe. Yeah. It's about challenging Job.

Okay. And maybe us too, listener. Yeah.

To move beyond that simple suffering equals sin equation. God's operating on a level that goes way beyond our human ideas of justice. Way beyond.

So if it's not about defending his actions. Right. What's the point of this divine whirlwind? I think at its core, it's about acknowledging the limitations of human perspective.

Okay. God reminds Job and us that he's dealing with a being whose ways are beyond comprehension. Right.

Like we're not going to get it. We can't fully grasp it. And it's not about blind faith or passive acceptance of suffering.

So it's not just, okay, well, God's God. So I just have to deal with it. Right.

It's not that. It's about recognizing the mystery, the unknowable depths of the divine. It's like saying there are things that are just bigger than us.

Absolutely. Than our human minds can comprehend. And that's okay.

Okay. Yeah, I can see that. It's kind of terrifying and awe-inspiring at the same time.

It is both. Yeah. But it also makes me wonder if God is so far beyond our understanding, why even bother engaging with us at all? That's the remarkable part.

Yeah. In this vast, unfathomable universe. Yeah.

God still chooses to engage with Job. He does. He doesn't ignore him.

He doesn't punish him. Yeah. For daring to question.

For speaking truth to power. Right. Yeah.

He speaks to him, challenges him, and ultimately, I think, invites him into a deeper relationship. There's a kind of intimacy in that. Yeah, there is.

The sense of personal connection between God and Job, even amidst all this cosmic power. It's very personal. On display.

Yeah. Yeah. And that's key to understanding how this whole story resolves.

Because Job doesn't get a neat explanation for his suffering. Yeah. He doesn't have all of his questions answered.

Nope. But he gets something much more profound. Yeah.

What's that? The direct encounter with God. Yeah. What do you think, listener? Yeah.

Have you ever felt that tension? Oh, I have. Between wanting answers and just being in the presence of something much bigger than yourself? So how does Job actually respond to all of this? Right. What does he say? Does he back down? Does he admit he was wrong to challenge God in the first place? It's interesting.

Yeah. His response is both humble and defiant. Okay.

How so? He acknowledges God's power and the limits of his own understanding. He says, you know, I know that you can do all things and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. Therefore, I have uttered what I did not understand.

Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. So he's admitting that he overstepped. Yeah.

He tried to put God in a box. Oh, to figure him out. Yeah.

Yeah. But he's not exactly apologizing for asking the tough questions, is he? No. There's this subtle defiance.

I love that. Yeah. He's not retracting his pain.

Right. Or his confusion. Wow.

He's simply acknowledging that God operates on a level he can't fully grasp. Like, look, I was trying to understand, but it's beyond me. Yeah.

It's almost like a surrender. Yeah. But not to some distant, uncaring force.

Right. Not just giving up. Yeah.

It's a surrender to a God who's both terrifying and magnificent. And powerful. And that surrender opens Job up to a whole new way of seeing things.

Exactly. And this shift, it leads to a profound transformation in Job. Oh, absolutely.

Do you remember what he says after this? I think so. Okay. I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you.

Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes. Whoa. That's a lot to unpack there.

There is a lot there. He's not just intellectually understanding God anymore. It's not just head knowledge.

It's experiential. Yeah. He's experiencing God.

On a whole other level. It's an epiphany. Right.

It is. Yeah. This realization of his own smallness in the face of God's greatness.

Yeah. It's humbling. And that leads to a whole different kind of repentance.

Not for any specific sin. Right. But for trying to make God fit into his limited human understanding.

Yeah. Trying to put God in a box. Yeah.

It's like, I'm sorry for trying to understand you. Yeah. That's beautiful.

So after all the suffering, all the questioning. Yeah. Job finds peace not through answers.

But through a direct encounter with the divine. Yeah. That's powerful stuff.

It is. But I have to ask. Yeah.

Does God actually give Job any answers at all? Like a straight-up explanation. Yeah. Does he actually explain why all this happened? Not in a way that satisfies our human need for explanations.

Okay. I mean, instead of a point-by-point breakdown of Job's suffering. Right.

God shows him the wonders of creation. Okay. The incredible diversity and complexity of the world.

Yeah. He points to creatures like Behemoth and Leviathan. Oh, right.

These symbols of untamed primordial power. Yes. As reflections of his own unfathomable might.

It's like God is saying, Job, instead of fixating on your own pain, look at the bigger picture. The incredible beauty and power I've woven into the very fabric of existence. Like zoom out.

Yeah. Get a wider perspective. Yeah.

It's a subtle but profound shift in perspective. It is. God doesn't dismiss Job's pain.

No. But he's offering a new way to see things. Yeah.

He's inviting Job. Yeah. And maybe us too, listener.

Yeah. To move beyond our limited human understanding and embrace the mystery of existence. It's a pretty radical idea.

It is. Especially considering how much emphasis we put on finding explanations for things. Yeah.

We want to know why. Yeah. We want to make sense of everything.

To hear it all out. Yeah. So what do you think about this approach, listener? Yeah.

Does encountering the vastness of creation, the mystery of it all. Yeah. Offer any solace in the face of suffering?

So Job doesn't get the answers he wants. Nope. But he gets something much bigger.

Yeah. What's that? A sense of awe. Uh-huh.

A renewed appreciation for the majesty of God. Yeah. But that doesn't erase his pain, does it? It doesn't.

And the book doesn't pretend that it does. Okay. But this shift in perspective opens the door for a new kind of healing.

Totally. It allows Job to move forward. Not with a complete understanding.

Right. But with a deeper trust in the God who allowed him to go through this ordeal. It's not about forgetting the pain or pretending it didn't happen.

Right. It's about finding a way to live with it. To find meaning and purpose.

Yeah. Even in the midst of suffering. That's beautifully put.

And what's remarkable is that even after this encounter. Right. Job still doesn't have all the answers.

Yeah. He still doesn't know why he suffered. Right.

But he's no longer consumed by the need to know. Exactly. And that, I think, is a kind of victory in itself.

Okay. So we've got this incredible encounter between Job and God. A real cosmic conversation.

But what about Elihu? Oh, yeah. After all those passionate speeches, he just kind of vanishes from the story. It's like he drops off the face of the earth.

I know. What do you think is going on there? It's really interesting, isn't it? It is. After God enters the picture, Elihu's totally silent.

Yeah. It's like he was just a warm-up act getting Job and us ready for the main event. Maybe, or maybe, and this is just a thought.

Okay. Maybe Elihu was meant to represent those who try to fit God into a box. Oh, interesting.

You know? To explain away the mystery with human logic. And when God actually shows up. Right.

Those neat explanations just kind of fall apart. They don't hold up. It's like, all right, Elihu, you've had your say.

Yeah, your turn's over. Now it's time to listen. Exactly.

And by disappearing from the narrative. Yeah. Elihu highlights the ultimate authority of God's voice.

Right. Like nothing trumps God. Exactly.

No human explanation, no matter how well-intentioned, can fully capture the divine. It really makes you think, though. Do you think that Elihu, after hearing God's speeches, went through a transformation of his own? Oh, possibly.

Like maybe he realized his understanding of justice was way too simplistic? I'd like to think so. Yeah. Maybe he even had a moment like Job.

Yeah. Where he realized the limits of his own perspective. That's a good reminder for all of us listening.

Oh, definitely. Even when we're trying to defend God, even when we think we've got it all figured out. Yeah.

We have to be open to having our minds blown wide open. Absolutely. Absolutely.

So, okay, back to Job. Right. After this mind-blowing encounter with God.

Right. How does his life actually play out? Well, that's where the ending gets really interesting. Okay.

God rebukes Job's friends. He does. What for? For their misguided attempts to explain his suffering.

Oh, wow. Okay. So he's basically saying, hey, you guys were wrong.

You messed up. To judge Job and try to fit his suffering into some neat little category. It's more complicated than that.

Right. Yeah. And then, and this is the part I love.

Yeah. God restores Job's fortunes. He does.

He gets twice as much as he had before. New children, flocks, wealth. Whoa.

A long and prosperous life. It's like a divine, oops, my bad gift basket. Yeah, exactly.

So it's a happy ending. After all that pain and questioning, Job gets everything back, and then some. It's a happy ending.

Okay. It's not a simple reset button. Good.

Job's been through the fire. Yeah, he has. And he's come out changed.

Transformed. Yeah. He's not the same guy who cursed the day he was born.

Right. He's got scars, but he's also got a new perspective. Exactly.

He's got a deeper understanding of God. Yeah. And a whole new appreciation for life itself.

And I think that's a message that resonates with so many people, listener. It does. Even when we don't get the answers we want, even when we don't understand why things happened, we can still experience healing and restoration.

Beautifully said. And the restoration of Job's fortune isn't just about material wealth. Okay.

It's symbolic of God's blessing, a sign that even in the midst of suffering, God's love and presence can bring about new life and hope. So the book of Job, with all its darkness and tough questions, ultimately offers a message of hope. Yeah, I think so.

It's a reminder that even when we're wrestling with doubt and despair, even when we can't make sense of our pain, God is still there working in ways we can't always see. And it reminds us that faith isn't about having all the answers. It's about holding on to hope, even in the darkest of times.

Yeah. Trusting that even if we don't understand God's ways, He is good. That's a powerful message to end on.

It is. Thanks for joining us on this deep dive into Elihu's take on the book of Job. It's been a pleasure.

We hope you found it insightful and, dare we say, even a little bit comforting. And remember, listener, your journey with the book of Job doesn't have to end here. Yeah.

Keep wrestling with the text. Keep asking the tough questions. Keep searching.

And maybe, just maybe, you'll find yourself like Job. Yeah. Face to face with the divine mystery.

Thanks for listening, everybody. We'll see you next time.