

Dr. John Walton, Job, Session 21 – Podcast

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All right, let's jump right in. Today we're going deep on the book of Job, with John Walton's lecture focusing on God's first speech to Job, chapters 38 through 40, verse 5. And this section, I mean, it really shakes up how we typically think about, you know, justice and suffering. Yeah.

And you know, one of the most striking things is how God doesn't really defend his actions. Right. He kind of almost throws the whole idea of justice out the window.

Yeah. It's definitely unexpected. Right.

I mean, we've got Job who's been through it all, you know, lost everything. Yeah. And he spent so much time trying to figure out why, convinced that he must have messed up somehow to deserve it.

And his friends haven't exactly been helpful, right? No, they're kind of stuck in that same, uh, that same cycle. Yeah. That good things happen to good people and bad things to bad people.

Yeah. Very much a cause and effect kind of approach. So it's all about like this strict, you know, retribution.

Exactly. Yeah. So Job's, you know, crying out for an explanation, some kind of justification.

Right. And God finally shows up. But instead of addressing Job's claims of innocence, it's like he takes him on this cosmic road trip.

It's like, wait, Job, you think this is about you? Almost like God saying, like, before we even get to fairness, you need to grasp this. Yeah. And then he describes the world in this way that just completely shatters Job's assumptions.

Yeah. You know, like that example with the rain falling in the desert where nobody lives. Right.

He basically asked Job, if everything happens for a reason tied to what humans do, then why is it raining out there where nobody's around to benefit? Okay. So why is that example such a big deal? Yeah. I mean, I get it's a bit odd, but how does that change things for Job? Well, imagine you're Job for a second.

Okay. You've lost everything. You're desperately trying to make sense of it.

Clinging to this idea that the universe has some moral order. Right. And then God points to this rain in the desert and asks, what about this? What's the moral reason here? Yeah.

And suddenly the world doesn't seem so black and white anymore. So God's emphasizing all this stuff that's happening outside of human control, right? Like beyond our ideas of good and bad. Yeah.

And this is where John Walton introduces these three really important concepts. Okay. Order, non-order, and disorder.

All right. Break it down for us. Okay.

What did those terms even mean? So think of order as like the organized, purposeful parts of the world that we kind of get. Okay. It's like a well-oiled machine, you know, everything running smoothly.

Yeah. And then there's non-order. Okay.

Now, this isn't evil. It's more like the stuff that hasn't been ordered yet or that we don't fully understand. Right.

Kind of like a wild, untamed wilderness. It has the potential for order, but it's not there yet. So is there like a possibility that we could make sense of it someday? Yeah.

Bring it into that order category? It's possible. Yeah. But the point is, it operates outside of what we currently understand.

Right. And then you've got disorder. Yeah.

And this is a genuine threat to order. It's chaos and destruction stemming from evil. Okay.

So three distinct categories. Can you give us some real-world examples? Something we can connect with? Sure. Okay.

Think of a garden, like a well-tended garden that's order. Yeah. Then you've got a field that's just been left to grow wild.

Yeah. That's non-order. Okay.

It may seem messy to us, but it's got its own beauty and purpose. Right. And then there's the disorder of a garden that's been ravaged by pests or disease.

Yeah. That's a genuine threat to the garden's life and beauty. Got it.

So where does Job's suffering fit into this whole thing? Right. Is God saying it's just part of this non-ordered realm? Yeah. Something we shouldn't try to understand through a moral lens? That's a great question.

And it gets to the heart of what God's trying to do here. Okay. He's not dismissing Job's suffering.

Right. He's trying to expand Job's perspective beyond this limited view of justice as simply rewards and punishments. But it kind of feels like he is dismissing it.

I see what you mean. I mean, Job's pouring out his heart and God's talking about ostriches. It's definitely not the answer Job's looking for.

But I think God's highlighting how much Job, and by extension, all of us, don't understand about how the world really works. So is the main takeaway here just that we're ignorant and we should just accept that? It's more than just admitting we don't know everything. Okay.

There's a deeper message here. Yeah. But to get there, we need to look at how Job responds to this cosmic reality check.

Okay. How do you think he reacts? Well, if I were Job, I'd probably be pretty frustrated. Like, okay, God, you made your point.

I get it. I'm small. Right.

But what about my pain? That's a natural response. Yeah. But Job, surprisingly, doesn't argue back.

He says, okay, you win. I have no answers. Wow.

But John Walton makes a crucial point. The book of Job isn't simply about acknowledging our ignorance. There's something more.

Ooh. Okay. I'm intrigued.

What is that something more? Where does this deep dive take us next? Well, that's where the next part of God's speech comes in. He goes beyond dismantling Job's worldview and starts offering a more positive framework for understanding. Yeah.

And get this. He does it through two of the most fascinating and maybe even terrifying figures in the Bible, Behemoth and Leviathan. Now, those names sound like trouble.

I'm getting some serious Godzilla vibes here. Can't wait to hear more about them in the next part of our deep dive. But for now, you've given us a lot to think about.

If the world isn't the simple system of rewards and punishments, then what does explain suffering? And how does recognizing our limited understanding change how we relate to the world and to God? So we left off with Job kind of realizing how little he actually understands. Right. God showed him there's more to the story than just simple human-centered morality.

Yeah. And now, he's about to introduce these two wild creatures, Behemoth and Leviathan. Yeah.

You definitely left us hanging with those names. What's the deal with these creatures? Right. Why turn them up in a conversation about justice and suffering? I mean, they sound like something out of a monster movie.

Yeah. It's what makes it so interesting. They aren't just some random mythical beasts that God's showing off.

Okay. They represent something much deeper. Okay.

Think of them as like the ultimate examples of God's creative power and the sheer diversity of what he's made. So it's like God saying, look what I can do. I made this too.

Deal with it. It might seem that way at first, but there's more to it than just a display of power. Okay.

You know, these creatures, they kind of embody those raw, untamed aspects of creation that exist outside of human control and understanding. So you're saying just like we can't control a behemoth or a Leviathan, we can't control suffering either. Exactly.

That's a pretty humbling thought. It is. And I think that's exactly what God's getting at.

Okay. He's not saying suffering is pointless or random. Right.

He's highlighting that the world is full of these forces and processes that we can't fully comprehend or manage. Yeah. We want like easy answers and tidy explanations.

We do. Yeah. But God's pushing Job and us to look beyond those simplistic ideas.

It's like he's saying, hey Job, you're only seeing a tiny sliver of the picture. Yeah. Like when we thought the earth was the center of the universe.

Exactly. Perfect analogy. Yeah.

It's a massive shift in perspective. Right. And remember those concepts of order, non-order, and disorder? Yeah.

Well, behemoth and Leviathan, they represent that wild non-ordered realm. Okay. It might seem chaotic to us, but it has its own purpose and place in God's grand design.

So even the seemingly chaotic parts of creation have their place. That's what John Walton suggests. You know, I've always struggled with that.

Yeah. I like things neat and tidy. Right.

But you're saying that even the stuff that feels scary or out of control, it's all part of a bigger order. That's exactly it. It's like God is saying, trust that I know what I'm doing even when it doesn't make sense to you.

That's a tough ask, especially when you're in the middle of suffering. It is. But I guess it's also a message of hope, right? Absolutely.

And suggests that there's more to the story than our limited human perspective can grasp. Right. And that brings us to the end of God's first speech.

Sure. Remember, he hasn't actually answered Job's questions directly. Right.

He's challenged his assumptions, broadened his perspective, and shown him just how vast and complex creation is. Right. It's a world that doesn't revolve around human ideas of fairness.

So he's basically flipped Job's world upside down. Yeah. But how does Job respond to all of this? Does he demand more answers? Yeah.

Does he finally get an explanation for his suffering? Right. We'll have to find out in the next part of our deep dive when we explore Job's reaction and the final part of God's speech. So we left off with God kind of, you know, dropping some major truth bombs on Job about the nature of the universe.

Yeah. And honestly, if I were Job, I'd probably be feeling a bit overwhelmed at this point. It's understandable.

He went from demanding answers to realizing just how little he really gets. Right. But God's not done yet.

He's painted this picture of this vast and complex creation with creatures like Behemoth and Leviathan. Yeah. Those crazy powerful creatures.

I'm still trying to wrap my head around them. Yeah. So what happens next? Does God finally give Job the explanation that he's been wanting this whole time? Not exactly.

Instead of giving this, like, point-by-point explanation for Job's suffering, God continues to challenge his assumptions. He asks Job, Wow. Is it God saying, you think you can control this world? You think you understand how it all works? That's exactly it.

God's using these vivid, almost playful descriptions of Leviathan, yeah, to really highlight just how limited human power and understanding really are. But is God saying that suffering is just this random, meaningless thing that we just have to endure? No.

I don't think that's the message at all. Remember, God isn't saying suffering is pointless or that he doesn't care about it. But he's also not offering easy answers or simple explanations.

Right. Instead, he's inviting Job and us into a deeper kind of trust. A trust that goes beyond needing to know all the answers.

Exactly. It's a trust that says, even though I don't get why this is happening, yeah. I believe that God is good, that he's in control, and that he has a purpose, even if I can't see it right now.

So how does Job respond to all of this? Does he argue back? No. Something remarkable happens. After encountering this awe-inspiring display of God's power and creativity, Job humbles himself.

He says, You asked, It's like he's finally letting go of that need to understand. Yes. The need to be right.

And in that surrender, he finds a new kind of peace. So the Book of Job isn't really a story about finding a perfect explanation for suffering, is it? It's more about learning to live with the mystery, to trust God, even when life doesn't make sense. That's a beautiful way to put it.

And it's a message that resonates so deeply with our own experiences. Yeah. I mean, we all face those moments when life throws us curveballs.

When we question everything, when we question God, and the pain just feels unbearable. It's tempting to either demand answers from God or to come up with some neat and tidy explanation. Right.

That makes the pain go away. But the Book of Job suggests a different path. It does.

It reminds us that our understanding is limited. Yeah. That the world is full of mystery and complexity.

But it also offers this incredible invitation to trust, to rest in the goodness and power of a God who sees the bigger picture, even when we don't. So, as we wrap up our deep dive into Job, here's what I'm taking away. Maybe the answer to the problem of suffering isn't an explanation, but a relationship.

A relationship built on trust and surrender, even when we're facing the unknown. What do you think about that? I think that's a profound insight. And it's something that each of us can carry with us as we navigate the complexities and challenges of our own lives.

Well said. That's all the time we have for today's deep dive. But remember, this is just the beginning of the conversation.

Keep exploring, keep questioning, and most importantly, keep trusting.