

Dr. John Walton, Job, Session 25 – Podcast

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Welcome back, everyone, for another Deep Dive. This time, we're going to be looking at the Book of Job. Oh, great.

And it should be a really interesting one. This is a book that's really perplexed people for centuries. It's got some really challenging stuff about suffering and injustice.

Absolutely. And we're going to be talking about it through the lens of John Walton's work. He's a scholar who's done some really interesting stuff on the ancient world and how they viewed creation.

Right. One of the things that Walton talks about is this idea of creation as ordering. Okay.

But he's not just talking about God creating physical things, right? He's talking about God establishing a functional system, a cosmos. So instead of just putting pieces down on a game board, he's setting up the rules of the game. Exactly.

Yeah. And for the ancient Israelites, this idea of order wasn't limited to just the material world. Right.

It also encompassed the moral and spiritual realms as well. So everything was part of this interconnected system reflecting God's design. Okay.

So we've got order. Yeah. But then Walton throws in this other idea of non-order.

Right. And this is where I get a little bit tripped up. Sure.

So how is non-order different from disorder? Okay. So that's a really important distinction. Okay.

Because we tend to think of disorder as the bad stuff. Yeah. Like when bad things happen.

Exactly. But non-order is something different. Okay.

Think of it like this. Imagine you've just moved into a new house. You've got boxes everywhere, furniture's not in place, the rooms are echoing and empty.

Yeah. That's kind of like non-order. So it's not necessarily bad; it's just not complete yet.

Exactly. It's like potential waiting to be realized. Okay.

A state of incompleteness. And Walton's saying that even before the fall, the world wasn't entirely ordered. Right.

There was some of this non-order present. Exactly. Like think about the vastness of the sea in Genesis 1 or the world outside the Garden of Eden.

Those were spaces where God's ordering work wasn't fully realized yet. Interesting. Okay.

So we've got this element of incompleteness even in the pre-fall world, but then disorder enters the picture with the fall. Yeah. So how did that change things? Well, disorder, as Walton defines it, is really the result of the fall.

It's the introduction of evil and corruption into the world. Okay. And while there might be other forces at play, human actions are really the primary drivers of this disorder.

Okay. We disrupt the order. We introduce chaos.

Right. We act in ways that go against God's design. So now we've got this mix of order, non-order, and disorder.

And I'm starting to see how this could really complicate how we understand God's actions in the world. Absolutely. Especially when it comes to suffering.

Yeah. Yeah. And that's where the book of Job really throws a wrench into our assumptions.

Okay. Because Job and his friends were operating under what we call the retribution principle. Okay.

This idea that good deeds are rewarded and bad deeds are punished. Like a cosmic karma. Exactly.

Okay. But the story of Job shows us that life doesn't always work that way. Right.

Good people suffer, bad people prosper, and it doesn't seem fair. So that's where Walton's ideas about order, non-order, and disorder come in. Exactly.

Because if we accept that the world is no longer a perfect reflection of God's justice, that it's been tainted by disorder, then we need to rethink our assumptions about what suffering means. So you're saying it's not always a punishment from God. Right.

It might not be. Okay. That's a challenging thought.

It is. So how do we make sense of suffering then? Well, that's a question we'll continue to explore as we dive deeper into Walton's work and the book of Job. Okay.

But what's important to remember is that we're dealing with a complex reality. And easy answers aren't always available. This is definitely going to be a thought-provoking journey.

It is. And for our listeners out there, get ready to have your assumptions challenged as we continue our deep dive into the book of Job. We'll be back after a short break.

Sounds good. So before the break, we were starting to talk about how order, non-order, and disorder might change how we think about suffering and how God's involved in all that. It's important to remember that we're not saying that God isn't just or that he doesn't care about suffering.

Right. Of course. But we are saying that the situation is complex and our human understanding of justice might be limited.

Okay. So it's like we can't just say that when bad things happen, it's a direct result of something someone did. Right.

It's not always a simple cause and effect. And that's where Walton's ideas about the ancient worldview can help. Because if we understand that creation wasn't just about making things, but about God setting up a functional system, then we can see how even non-order might be part of that.

So even the stuff that seems kind of chaotic or incomplete could actually have purpose. That's right. Think of it like a musical composition.

It's not just about the notes that are played. It's also about the silences. The pauses.

The pauses. They give the piece texture, depth, meaning- oh, that's a good way to think about it. Yeah.

So non-order is like those pauses. They might seem empty, but they're actually contributing to the whole thing. Exactly.

And in the same way, things that we might see as disorder, like natural disasters or disease or accidents, they might not be punishments from God. They could just be part of a larger process that we don't fully understand. I mean, that's a hard thing to accept though, isn't it? Oh, absolutely.

Especially when you're the one going through something difficult. Of course. It's hard not to think that you did something wrong or that God's abandoned you.

And the book of Job acknowledges that tension. Job himself rails against God. He demands to know why he's suffering.

But God doesn't give him a straight answer. No. He doesn't say, Job, you did this, and this is your punishment.

Yeah. He talks about the vastness of creation and how complex the world is. Exactly.

And I think that challenges us too, to recognize that our understanding of justice is limited and that we might not always see the bigger picture. So it's not that we should just accept suffering passively. Yeah, not at all.

But we should approach it with humility, knowing that there might be more going on than we realize. Exactly. So then how do we make sense of suffering if it's not always about sin or punishment? Well, that's a question we'll keep exploring.

But for now, it's important to remember that we're dealing with a really complex reality here and sometimes easy answers just aren't available. It sounds like we're being asked to kind of trust in God's wisdom, even when we don't understand his ways. And I think that's a major theme in Job, that faith isn't about having all the answers.

It's about trusting God. Even when we don't know what's going on. Exactly.

Even in the midst of uncertainty and doubt. It's interesting because I feel like, in a way, this idea of non-order can be freeing. How so? Well, it means we don't have to explain away every instance of suffering.

You're right. We don't have to tie it back to some specific sin or wrongdoing. Exactly.

It allows us to admit that the world is complex and sometimes bad things happen to good people. And we don't always know why. Right.

And that's okay. Okay. So then how do we hold on to that trust when we're in the middle of suffering? Yeah.

Or when we see other people suffering? That's a great question and one we'll continue to explore as we go further with Job. Man, we have been talking about some really deep stuff. I know, right? This book of Job.

Yeah. It really makes you think. About how the world works, you know? Definitely.

It challenges our assumptions. Like, we want to believe that everything happens for a reason. Right.

That there is a clear, you know, cause and effect. Mm-hmm. Like, if you do good things, good things will happen.

Exactly. But Job's story kind of throws that out the window. Yeah.

And that's what trips people up. Yeah. They want a simple explanation for suffering.

When someone's hurting, they want to know why. Right. And when there's no easy answer, it can shake their faith.

So what do we do then? If we can't always find those answers? Well, maybe instead of looking for answers, we should lean into the questions. Right. Like, what if we just sat with the mystery? Right.

With the stuff we can't understand? So you're saying there's wisdom in admitting we don't know everything. Exactly. Remember how God responds to Job? He doesn't really give him a reason for his suffering.

Right. He doesn't try to explain it all away.

Instead, he points to creation. To how big and complex it is. Right.

Like, he's saying, look beyond yourself, Job. Look at the bigger picture. And we should do the same.

Exactly. But how do we do that? How do we get that bigger perspective when we're stuck in our own little world? Well, I think it starts with humility. Admitting that we don't know everything.

Yeah. That our understanding of God is limited. And then what? Maybe then we can start to be curious.

Yeah. Like, instead of getting frustrated when we don't have answers, we keep asking questions. We keep trying to learn.

So we approach it with a sense of wonder. Exactly. Instead of demanding an explanation.

Right. And you know what? I think in that process of searching, our faith actually grows stronger. So it's like the book of Job is taking us on this journey.

A journey of discovery. Not just about God, but about ourselves too. Right.

Where do we fit into all of this? Man, this has been a really thought-provoking deep dive. It has. I feel like I'm seeing the book of Job in a whole new way.

I'm glad. And for everyone listening, I hope you are too. Remember, it's not about finding easy answers.

No. It's about thinking deeply. Yeah.

About embracing the mystery. And about trusting God. Even when we don't understand.

Exactly. Well, that's all the time we have for today. Okay.

Thanks for joining us on this deep dive into the book of Job. It was my pleasure. And until next time, happy diving, everyone.