

The Problem of the Wicked

Job 21:1 – 34

Nutshell: Job has questioned the idea that God judges the wicked in this life. Now he treats it in full. Does God respond in justice to the wicked in this life? That is a major issue in Job. It is a major issue in life. Elihu's answer is therefore a major, moral resolution.

Review

- A. Job is the ABCs, or kindergarten, of the Bible. It lays out the basics of the God-man relationship. Yet it's a kindergarten where you come out with a Ph.D.
- B. Review
 1. *God bragged* to Satan that godly Job was THE best, 1:8
 - a. Satan said Job's devotion was 'bought' with blessings, 1:10
 - b. God said Satan could take them away, 1:12
 - c. Job lost all children and possessions, 1:13-19
 - d. But he worshiped and didn't murmur vs. God, 1:20-21
 2. God bragged on Job again, 2:3
 - a. Satan said Job would sell God out for his own skin, 2:4-5
 - b. God said Satan could touch him, 2:6
 - c. Satan gave Job death-preferred boils, 2:7-9; 30:18, 30
 - d. Job still didn't sin, 2:10
 - e. Job went 7 days like this, then cursed his birth, 3:1-26.
 3. Then begins the bulk of the book, the argument cycle, chaps. 4-31.
 - a. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar have each spoken (Eliphaz trusting *personal revelation*, 4:12, Bildad in *tradition*, 8:8, Zophar in *mystery*, 11:7), Job answering each one: six speeches, chaps. 4-14 = **Argument Cycle 1**
 - b. They have increasingly hinted that Job must have sinned to have received this degree of calamity

Kid-speak: Why did Job's friends say the bad things all happened to him? He must have sinned. But had he? No.

- c. ***Job has increasingly accepted that premise;*** thus he begins accusing God for wrongful punishment, 40:8; 9:15; 10:2-7. *What Satan couldn't do, the friends did!* Consider your power as a friend.

Kid-speak: Job started saying that if God was punishing him for being bad, then God was wrong. But was God punishing Job? No. But did it feel like it to Job? Does it feel like God doesn't like us sometimes? Sure, we wonder why He doesn't make things better.

- d. The 3 friends speak again. Job answers each one, six more speeches, 15-21 = **Argument Cycle 2**
- e. One last cycle, minus Zophar, 22-25, then
- f. Job insists on his uprightness, 26-31
- ‡ g. The 3 friends fail to induce a confession of sin, 32:1 = **Argument Cycle 3**

4. Then the human hero of the book (a type of Christ- truth incarnate), **Elihu**, sets things straight, ch 32-37
 - a. God corrects Job, 38:2; 40:2, 8, and his three other friends, 42:7, but never Elihu
 - b. Elihu and God were in agreement, 32:2; 40:8
 - c. Elihu's *last* speech, chap 37, becomes God's *whole* speech: Creation, 38-41. God tag-teamed w/ Elihu.

Kid-speak: Who is the person in the book who has the right answer? Elihu! We'll talk about him today.

5. Job will *sulk* in 40:4-5, then *repent* in 42:1-6
6. Theme of Job: How can *I* be right in God's eyes (justification) if *He* is not right in my eyes (sanctification)?

C. **Themes** in Job:

1. God's sovereignty: the main lesson Job learned, Job 42:2
2. God's righteousness. His *sovereignty* is not arbitrary.
3. The necessity of Trials, Ps 119:67, 71. Trials show me my fallen nature. I'd best trust God, not me.

Kid-speak: Do we need bad things to happen to us to make us better? Yes. We won't become good if everything always goes how we like.

4. Death. Christ's abandonment on the cross is especially previewed.
5. God's faithfulness. He didn't quit until Job was restored.
6. God's justice is what Job mainly argued vs.; but God *does* begin to requite the wicked here on earth, Job, 34:10, 20

D. Argument Cycle Recap, chaps 3-31

1. 3, Job curses his birth
2. 4-5, **Eliphaz** advises Job to make things right with God
3. 6-7, Job seeks to correct Eliphaz, that Job's pain makes him long for death. Job calls on God.
4. 8, **Bildad** says that only the wicked get swept away
5. 9-10, Job: God has abandoned me. "Why, God?"
6. 11, **Zophar** claims God is *unfathomable*, yet uses rationality to exhort Job to repent
7. 12-14, Job: God's sovereignty includes the wicked's exaltation. "God, I won't regret if you chop me."
 - *a. Job thought God was tired of his accumulated sins. Hence, he awaited the *afterlife* for God's favor to resume, Job 14:14-17.
 - b. But does Heaven = deferred favor?
8. 15, **Eliphaz** puts Job in a long line of failed evildoers
9. 16-17, Job said God had savagely attacked him, with his friends gladly piling on
10. 18, **Bildad**: "The wicked are consumed- *just like Job!*"
11. 19, Job details his estrangements and insists that the injustice done him be permanently recorded, yet he still has hope in a resurrected body in which he'll see Messiah- God on earth
12. 20, **Zophar** says that the wicked seem propped up, but God is obliged to utterly topple them
13. 21, Job will respond that a lynchpin of their argument- God judging the wicked- is a fiction

Job 21:1-34

I. You're Not Listening, 1-6

- A. If you'll finally really listen, I'll count that as your missing compassion, 2-3
- B. When will you see? I'm not arguing against *you!* 4-6
 - 1. *You* haven't caused this to happen to me! *God* has!
 - 2. Can't you just look and be stunned by it, as I am?

Kid-speak: Job wished his friends would just look at how bad he was hurting. But would they do that? No. They were too worried about saying he must have done something bad.

II. Immoral People Live Well, 7-13

- A. If God were on the job, as you suggest, why do bad folk live at all? v 7
- B. But they live well, 7
 - 1. Their children have lived long and still stand safely before them, 8-9
 - 2. Their livelihoods are stable, and their young children romp on open land, 11-12
 - 3. Where life's genuine enjoyments are, they enjoy them, 12
- C. Then they die painlessly, 13

Kid-speak: Job's friends said that God always punishes bad people. But Job said, "No He doesn't. There are lots of bad people who live a long, happy life."

III. The Immoral Have No Use for God, 14-15

- A. They don't want God imposing on their happiness, 14
- B. What good would it do them? 15

IV. But *God* is the One Who Gives Them Their Good, 16

- A. *They* didn't provide all of life's benefits and enjoyments for themselves! *God* did it!
- B. Job: I don't endorse their philosophy or lifestyle, but that doesn't change the equation.

V. How Long Until God Addresses the Immoral? 17-21

- A. We agree that God doesn't approve of them. But why does He withhold judgment? 17-18
- B. When is God's disapproval going to fall on the next generation, where the Bad Folk can see it? 19-20
 - 1. But is a bad man really even concerned about how his children will fare after him? 21a
 - 2. Will he really calculate the number of additional months he might have lived except for his bad habits? 21b

Kid-speak: Job asked, "How long does it take for God to pay bad people back? If it takes too long, they don't even care!"

VI. Clearly, God Apportions Men's Good or Lack of It, After Which They Die, 22-26

- A. Apparently, God wasn't listening to your paradigm about bad people when He designed all this, 22

B. It's all a jumble. Men live well or in pain, then they die. There are no morals tagged onto people, sorting it all out, 23-26

VII. You, My Friends, Have *Invented* a World Where Bad Men are Repaid, 27-34

A. You see me as a bad man repaid, so you try to paint the whole world in those colors, 27-28

B. Sorry! There are plenty of prosperous, happy, ungodly people in the world! Look beyond your silly, 1-mile horizon! Count the testimonies of others outside your circle! 29

C. Oh, it's all just delayed judgment? So he gets away with it scot-free until then! Ha! How rich! 30-31

D. Nope. He dies pain-free. Frankly, death is a slipping of accountability for *all* men! (We remind ourselves that death is the one thing Job longs for right now.) 32-33

E. Your tight scheme of God keeping tabs on everyone in this life is ridiculous. *YOUR WORLD ISN'T REAL!* How can that comfort me? 34

Lessons:

VIII. There **Are** Bad People Who Disregard God and Who Violate His Protections for Men

A. This was obviously part of God's equation from the blueprint stage

B. God had to have thought it through beforehand

IX. Bad People Represent a Problem: Is There any Standard by which God Deals with Bad People in this Life?

A. The issue arises in the Bible with Cain, the Flood, Abraham's discussion about Sodom, etc.

B. God is recorded as being interactive with individuals and mankind, giving serious, yet multi-faceted consequences for evil

Kid-speak: Does God deal with bad people in the Bible? When was the first time (after Adam and Eve)? Cain. When was the biggest time so far? The Flood! When did it mean fire coming from Heaven? Sodom.

X. The Issue of God's Moral Governance is One of the Main Dilemmas **Elihu** Addresses

A. Showing us that it is a legitimate moral and philosophical concern

B. Elihu answers this contention of Job at length in 34:8-37 and 36:2-27

C. See attached sheet for a brief, guided tour (Fuller exposition next time.)

Wrap-up: Being offended with God is inevitable. The nature of trials is that they irritate us, not just superficially, but at our core. The question is whether we will learn to be frank with God about our misgivings.

We cannot help having universal concerns. It's not just how things affect me, but how they affect me compared with others. More than one Bible author works through the problems that arise from that vantage point. It is a good test of our trust in God how completely we can leave circumstances that seem unfair (either to us or to others) in His hands. We must learn to use Biblical mechanisms, such as the teachings of Job, to that end.