

Old Testament Survey Part 3

Wisdom Literature

The Book of Job Chapters 1-21

Background and Introduction

Authorship and Setting

- Authorship - Authorship not stated. Some think Moses, Elihu, Solomon, Isaiah, Hezekiah, Jeremiah, and Ezra. It is not extremely significant.
- Job was a real person and the events in Job really happened.
 - Evidence that Job and Elihu were contemporaries with Abraham
 - Events of the Job likely occurred during the patriarchal period.

MacArthur is helpful on authorship:

“The date of the book’s writing may be much later than the events recorded therein. This conclusion is based on: 1) Job’s age (42:16); 2) his life span of nearly 200 years (42:16) which fits the patriarchal period (Abraham lived 175 years; Genesis 25:7); 3) the social unit being the patriarchal family; 4) the Chaldeans who murdered Job’s servants (1:17) were nomads and had not yet become city dwellers; 5) Job’s wealth being measured in livestock rather than gold and silver (1:3; 42:12); 6) Job’s priestly functions within his family (1:4, 5); and 7) a basic silence on matters such as the covenant of Abraham, Israel, the Exodus, and the law of Moses. The events of Job’s odyssey appear to be patriarchal. Job, on the other hand, seemed to know about Adam (31:33) and the Noahic flood (12:15). These cultural/historical features found in the book appear to place the events chronologically at a time probably after Babel (Ge 11:1–9) but before or contemporaneous with Abraham (Genesis 11:27ff.)”

Significance

- Serves as an introduction to wisdom literature – Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon.
- Biblical concept of wisdom:
 - Definition of Wisdom - living skillfully - living in light of the Truth
- What is Truth, and who defines it?
 - God centered: God IS the truth and defines good and evil
 - Satan and Man centered: Man (or Satan) define what is good or evil.
 - Eden, Babel
- “The fear of the Lord is the *beginning* of wisdom”
 - Only God is God, as King, Creator and Owner He defines truth, good and evil, and does everything right
- Two common mistakes when trying to understand the significance of Job
 - Missing the middle

- Common summary - Satan tests Job by taking everything except his life. Job's friends fail to comfort him. In the end God gives Job everything back.
 - Satan doesn't test Job, he tests God, and God puts Job forward to prove His rightness.
 - The book is 42 chapters, and we tend to focus on beginning and the end, glossing over 90% of the book.
- Missing the main idea – these are all flawed or not fully-orbed
 - Common idea - Job is a book about how to handle suffering
 - Suffering occurs in the first two chapters of the book. In a book about suffering wouldn't you expect the beginning to introduce this theme?
 - Job 1:1: ***“There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.”***
 - Job is a man of character
 - Job's suffering is a vehicle used to arrive at the purpose of Job
 - Suffering tests our theological presuppositions and causes us to ask the big theological questions
 - Job's suffering leads to his question of the rightness of God and all He does in a fallen world.
 - Job and his friends existed in a pre-bible world. What they knew of God was derived from natural revelation and passed down from God's chosen genealogy of Adam and Noah (word-of-mouth).
 - Job's friends operate on the thesis of Divine Retribution (similar Karma today)
 - God *always* blesses the righteous, and always punishes the wicked *in this life*.
 - If you prosper - you must be righteous
 - If you suffer - you must be wicked
 - Flawed worldview because this is manmade and man-centered

Theological Theme

The main point of Job – ***God's righteousness is established in heaven and on earth and His ways can be understood through His revelation.***

- The Book of Job teaches that God is right and true in all that He does, regardless of our finite perspective.
- The Book of Job shows us that true knowledge of God and how He operates is found in His self-revelation.

Structure

- Book of Job revolves around two courtroom scenes where God is on trial
 - In the Heavenly Courtroom – God is on trial

- Satan accuses God of unjustly influencing Job's righteousness by blessing Him
- Asserts that Job will curse God amid suffering
- In the Earthly Courtroom – God and Job are on trial
 - Job questions why he is suffering
 - Assertion of Job and his friends is that either God is unrighteous for causing the righteous to suffer OR Job must be unrighteous because he is suffering

The Structure of the book:

- I. Prologue: The Heavenly Courtroom (Job 1:1-2:10)
- II. Dialogue: The Earthly Courtroom (Job 2:11-37:24)
- III. Dialogue: God Answers (Job 38:1-42:9)
- IV. Epilogue: Job Restored (42:10-17)

I. Prologue: The Heavenly Courtroom (Job 1:1-2:10)

1. Introduction to Job (1:1-5)

The book begins with the introduction of the man Job,

There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. (2) There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. (3) He possessed 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and very many servants, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east. (4) His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. (5) And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and consecrate them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, "It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually.

- **Blameless and Upright:** Every part of Job in respect to the vertical and the horizontal is pure and righteous - he lived a straight and narrow life which, as we will see, makes him a perfect candidate
- **Fearing God:** What is the nature of fearing God? Fear is the recognition that there is somebody greater than you and that means they deserve all your attention and reverence, and you better respond appropriately otherwise you will pay the consequences.
- Job's family is of the utmost importance to him. He had a near-perfect family.
- Job was wealthy: 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 pairs of oxen, and 500 female donkeys
- In verse 5 we see that Job was concerned for his children's spiritual health. He acted as priest and mediator between his children and God.
- Job's biggest fear was that his children would curse God *in their heart* - which was the worst and most secret way to sin against God.

2. Satan Summoned (1:6-12)

The scene then shifts to the heavenly realm in vs 6,

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.

- God calls a meeting of the heavenly court. The angels don't just present themselves before God, *God initiates*. God calls Satan into the Heavenly Courtroom. Here, when you go back and look at the original meaning Satan is preceded by a definite article - *The Satan*. Satan means adversary or **accuser**.

God initiates the conversation, vs 7,

The LORD said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." (8) And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?"

- God is sovereign, completely in control and in charge. Satan is roaming - this isn't just mindlessly wandering - he is hunting for the next Eve, for a way he can thwart God.
- My servant Job...God has providentially appointed Job to be a point of contention between Him and Satan. God points out that there was none like Job, he is the perfect candidate. God describes Job exactly as he is described in 1:1. Job's righteousness is being put to the test here and God is the one bringing it up.

Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? (10) Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. (11) But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face."

- Satan challenges God's intentions and assumes that because God has caused Job to prosper, he responds in righteous. Satan accuses God of protecting and prospering Job so that Job would be righteous.
- The assumption is that if God harmed Job, Job would curse God.
 - This is the **divine retribution principle** that is central to the thinking of Satan and the thinking of human wisdom. If God is truly an upright God, He only harms the wicked. Therefore, if God harms someone who is righteous, then the righteous one must believe that God is not righteous.

3. Job's First Test (1:13-22)

After this, the scene shifts again back to earth in verse 13

Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, (14) and there came a messenger to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, (15) and the Sabeans fell upon them and

took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

- Oxen and the donkeys - Satan starts from the bottom with the oxen and donkeys who are not the top on Job’s priority list but are still significant.
- Sabeans - the Sabeans are a people from the south who “fell upon them”

The narrative continues in verses 16 and 17 and concludes in verses 18 and 19,

While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, “The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you.” (17) While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, “The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.” (18) While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, “Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, (19) and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

Sons and Daughters - Satan saves the worst for last to inflict the maximum amount of pain on Job. If Job does curse God, God is wrong, and Satan is right, and God would be discredited. What does he do? Verse 20,

Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. (21) And he said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” (22) In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

4. Job’s Second Test (2:1-10)

With Job’s faithfulness and Satan’s failure, we return to the heavenly courtroom in chapter 2.

(7) So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. (8) And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes. (9) Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.”

His wife – Satan uses the only family Job has left to tempt him to do what Satan wants – to curse God

- Divine retribution principle – either Job’s sin brought about his suffering, or God is to be cursed for unjustly punishing a righteous man – either way, end it by cursing God

Job responds, and in verse 10, we see he didn’t sin. God decisively wins the case in the Heavenly Courtroom and now we will shift to the earthly courtroom.

II. Dialogue: The Earthly Courtroom (Job 2:11-37:24)

1. Introduction to Job's Friends (2:11)

The second section of Job begins with an introduction to three new characters, vs 11

Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They made an appointment together to come to show him sympathy and comfort him.

- Sympathy and comfort – remember that these three men were supposed to be there to provide sympathy and comfort to Job.
- Job was a real person, and he was really hurting.

2. Job's Complaint (3:1-28)

Job's pain informs his complaint to open chapter 3

Here we will see that Job's key question is why? Job is not asking if God is right to do what He does. God is not wrong or unfair. Just wants an answer to what God's motivation/purpose was.

After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. (2) And Job said: (3) "Let the day perish on which I was born, and the night that said, 'A man is conceived.'...(11)"Why did I not die at birth, come out from the womb and expire?

Job views conception and birth as coming from God. God works to establish life just to let Job suffer. In this section, Job essentially asks 3 questions:

- What are His purposes? and
- How can God be the compassionate God Job wishes He was?
- Why doesn't God reveal his purposes to us? Why hasn't he given us any information about what is going on?
- God answers through fuller revelation over time - but Job doesn't realize it.

3. Round 1 (4:1-14:22)

A. Eliphaz's 1st Speech (4:1-5:27)

- Eliphaz the Historian
- Bildad the Scientist/naturalist
- Zophar the Philosopher/theologian
- Job's friends present 3 sets of arguments
- Together they represent the sum of all (finite) human.
- The question being posed is: Can the best minds of that time (and possibly all time) representing all human wisdom figure out God and His purposes?
- Eliphaz is immediately accusatory of Job (vs 5)

But now it has come to you, and you are impatient; it touches you, and you are dismayed. (6) Is not your fear of God your confidence, and the integrity of your ways your hope? (7) "Remember: who that was innocent ever perished? Or where were the upright cut off?"

The thesis of Eliphaz's first argument: This type of suffering doesn't happen to good people. You reap what you sow. In verse 17 he asks:

'Can mortal man be in the right before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker?

In chapter 5, Eliphaz is playing good cop bad cop.

“Call now; is there anyone who will answer you? To which of the holy ones will you turn?”

- No one will listen to you in heaven - no one there can vindicate you
- Three ironies here:
 - 1: Job has been vindicated in heaven before the angels
 - 2: Job does have a heavenly helper in the heavenly court - Jesus is the mediator
 - **3: Eliphaz doesn't even know what he is talking about, but he speaks as if he was right.**

The conclusion of Eliphaz' bad cop argument: man is made of dust. People are foolish and evil; this is why there is no one who can be right. God has no option but to punish all men. This is how the world works according to Eliphaz, which is a partial truth.

“As for me, I would seek God, and to God would I commit my cause, (9) who does great things and unsearchable, marvelous things without number:

The remaining part of chapter 5 is wise advice - sounds like Proverbs and Hebrews. Eliphaz is both right and wrong.

- He doesn't answer Job's question of why? Man-centered.
- How does he know everything will work out in the end?

B. Job's Initial Response (6:1-7:21)

Job's next statements are a counterargument to Eliphaz

Then Job answered and said: (2) “Oh that my vexation were weighed, and all my calamity laid in the balances!

Job's pain is of divine intensity. He just wanted his friends to comfort him. He doesn't need them to philosophize or therapize him.

“Oh that I might have my request, and that God would fulfill my hope, (9) that it would please God to crush me, that he would let loose his hand and cut me off! (10) This would be my comfort; I would even exult in pain unsparing, for I have not denied the words of the Holy One.

Job's first "wish". Job understands that God alone holds his life in His hands. The thought is that if God was compassionate, He would relieve Job.

Verses 15-17,

My brothers are treacherous as a torrent-bed, as torrential streams that pass away, (16) which are dark with ice, and where the snow hides itself. (17) When they melt, they disappear; when it is hot, they vanish from their place.

Job cuts right to it. He calls his friends out for not being there to comfort him. They are there because they are afraid that his calamity might fall on them – so they judge.

Job continues in chapter 7,

“Has not man a hard service on earth, and are not his days like the days of a hired hand? (2) Like a slave who longs for the shadow, and like a hired hand who looks for his wages, (3) so I am allotted months of emptiness, and nights of misery are apportioned to me. (4) When I lie down I say, ‘When shall I arise?’ But the night is long, and I am full of tossing till the dawn. (5) My flesh is clothed with worms and dirt; my skin hardens, then breaks out afresh.

Job believes that God is right, but he can't see God's compassion. He accuses God of acting like a slave driver. Job has no certainty he will wake up; his nights are filled with suffering. He has worms in or on his skin. His whole life is complete misery.

Christ Connection – Desire for forgiveness

Job closes with this:

If I sin, what do I do to you, you watcher of mankind? Why have you made me your mark? Why have I become a burden to you? (21) Why do you not pardon my transgression and take away my iniquity? For now I shall lie in the earth; you will seek me, but I shall not be.”

If God is so focused on causing my suffering, then maybe I did sin. Why doesn't he just forgive me? Job does in fact get his wish in the end.

Job's response to Eliphaz summed up.

- Eliphaz is a failure, he can't assess what is right in front of him (so much for being a historian) his cause-and-effect scheme doesn't really work because he can't know God's purposes.
- Job starts to posit an alternative to the Eliphaz' system. If there was a new system where God forgave sin, then He would be a compassionate God. See how Job is beginning picture the gospel, which answers the deepest questions people have in suffering - the gospel provides the ultimate epistemological certainty - it proves that God is good and compassionate even when he ordains suffering.

C. Bildad's 1st Speech (8:1-22)

- Naturalist's Argument – Cause and Effect: you or your family sinned

Chapter 8: Bildad's Opening argument – responds to both Eliphaz and Job

Bildad first establishes the nature of cause in verse 3 - God's justice and rightness.

Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert the right? (4) If your children have sinned against him, he has delivered them into the hand of their transgression. (5) If you will seek God and plead with the Almighty for mercy, (6) if you are pure and upright, surely then he will rouse himself for you and restore your rightful habitation.

Notice the “if” statements. If your children are sinners, then God is just in taking them away. Bildad is reasoning from a cause-and-effect mindset. If you seek God and plead for his mercy, then God will be with you. If you are pure - which we know Job was - God will proactively intervene and restore you. Bildad is implying that Job wasn't pure.

He concludes in verses 20-22,

“Behold, God will not reject a blameless man, nor take the hand of evildoers. (21) He will yet fill your mouth with laughter, and your lips with shouting. (22) Those who hate you will be clothed with shame, and the tent of the wicked will be no more.”

In essence Bildad is saying, “If only you were a blameless man Job, he would restore you and your joy and shame and punish your enemies.” Bildad’s answer is a little closer to answering Job’s question of why? But it is still not right because it does not resolve the question of certainty.

D. Job’s Second Response (9:1-10:22)

- Rebuttal - Can you really understand the Causer?

Then Job answered and said: (2) “Truly I know that it is so: But how can a man be in the right before God? (3) If one wished to contend with him, one could not answer him once in a thousand times.

Job says to Bildad, you are essentially correct. Fundamentally, cause-and-effect makes sense. How is it possible that man is right before God? Is Job giving in? In verse 3: Even if man was right, he could never answer God. God is too powerful and too smart that I (Job) would never win a debate even if I was right. Job is making the case that you can never grasp the cause - God, unless God tells you about how He works, which He hasn’t. Science, says Job, is not the ultimate way to explain human suffering.

9:21-24

I am blameless; I regard not myself; I loathe my life. (22) It is all one; therefore I say, ‘He destroys both the blameless and the wicked.’ (23) When disaster brings sudden death, he mocks at the calamity of the innocent. (24) The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; he covers the faces of its judges— if it is not he, who then is it?

God deals with the wicked and innocent in the same exact way - we all live short lives and die. In the immediate, temporal sense this is true, but in eternity he is wrong.

9:32-35

Job 9:32-35 For he is not a man, as I am, that I might answer him, that we should come to trial together. (33) There is no arbiter between us, who might lay his hand on us both. (34) Let him take his rod away from me, and let not dread of him terrify me. (35) Then I would speak without fear of him, for I am not so in myself.

Christ Connection-Desire for a Mediator

Job’s question of God’s justice or fairness have progressed into a deeper question of God’s compassion. **Job wishes for an arbiter who can relate to both him and God. What Job is really asking for is one who is both God and man to be an arbiter for both him and God.** The incarnation shows us that God really does care - this is essential to the foundation of the Gospel. The incarnation shows that God went through extreme lengths to understand your pain and your struggle with temptation. Job suffered and experienced pain like all men do, however he didn’t know about Christ the Mediator that we have. He longed for the comfort of this Mediator.

Job continues into chapter 10.

Verses 14-15,

If I sin, you watch me and do not acquit me of my iniquity. (15) If I am guilty, woe to me! If I am in the right, I cannot lift up my head, for I am filled with disgrace and look on my affliction.

If God does whatever He wants, does it matter if I do good or evil? Job is stuck because he knows the Divine Retribution principle breaks down. God is so much more complex. There is no box for Job to put God into. In Job's mind, the only solution for Job is to die so that he is free from pain, and he doesn't have to deal with questions he can't answer. The principle that Bildad and Eliphaz lay out is based solely on Truth and Justice. It's almost like Karma. There is no room for redemption and grace.

E. Zophar's 1st Speech (11:1-20)

Philosopher's Argument - God is complicated and above you; so just repent.

Zophar is a philosopher and theologian and responding to Job, Bildad and Eliphaz.

Then Zophar the Naamathite answered and said: (2) "Should a multitude of words go unanswered, and a man full of talk be judged right? (3) Should your babble silence men, and when you mock, shall no one shame you? (4) For you say, 'My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in God's eyes.'

He says that they are all just spewing words without insight; I'll tell you how this really is. All this arguing is just pride. He also believes Job is sinful.

Verses 5 and 6

But oh, that God would speak and open his lips to you, (6) and that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom! For he is manifold in understanding. Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves.

Zophar says they have only been looking at this situation from Job's perspective. He desires to look at it from God's perspective. However, he claims to have special insight and to know what God will say and why God has done what He has done. In effect, Job, you deserved so much worse. This is not an encouraging council to Job.

- Bildad says God works in a cause-and-effect way.
- Job says God is way too complex to understand him like that
- Zophar is saying God is even more complicated than you think Job, so you are wrong.

Verses 19-20,

You will lie down, and none will make you afraid; many will court your favor. (20) But the eyes of the wicked will fail; all way of escape will be lost to them, and their hope is to breathe their last."

Bildad ends with a very solemn warning - if you don't repent your death is guaranteed. This is how God works because he is so complicated. Bildad just wraps it all up in a nice little box and bow, but his argument falls as far short as his friends' arguments.

F. Job's Closing Response (12:1-14:22)

- Rebuttal of all 3 friends - *God's ways are above your ways*. Job calls out their conceitedness and arrogance:

Then Job answered and said: (2) "No doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you.

Job's concluding dialogue breaks all of their worldviews. All three of his friends has assumed that they can understand God and His secret counsel.

Verse 13,

"With God are wisdom and might; he has counsel and understanding.

- Wisdom comes from God. One can only see the world rightly through God. To see this one must start with fearing God. One must renounce all his own reasoning and recognize that God is the only wise One.
- Here we have the beginning of Job's answer to Zophar. Zophar's argument was that God is way more complicated than Job thinks and because of that Job is wrong. Job counters by talking about the complexities of God from verse 14-25. Zophar only spent four verses on God's complexity. Job is going to spend 12, 3 times as much. Job is proving that Job knows more of the complexity of God than Zophar. Job is out-complicating Zophar who said that Job did have as complicated an understanding of God as he did.

Chapter 13:6-8,

Hear now my argument and listen to the pleadings of my lips. (7) Will you speak falsely for God and speak deceitfully for him? (8) Will you show partiality toward him? Will you plead the case for God?

His friends are trying so hard to defend God and condemn Job but they have twisted who God is. They have tried to protect God from appearing to be guilty of doing evil so much so that they misrepresent Him.

Remember Job's two questions: What are God's purposes? and Is God Compassionate?

Christ Connection – Desire to be cleansed

Chapter 14:3-4,

And do you open your eyes on such a one and bring me into judgment with you? (4) Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? There is not one.

If man is so weak and helpless then why are you so bent on hurting people, God? Job is asking a question about God's goodness. Man is so frail that he could never appear clean before God. There is no way anyone can clean up their own lives. Only God can make us clean, and He does so in Christ. Think about how Jesus healed the most unclean people the lepers. Jesus breaks the law and touches the unclean person who other men wouldn't even approach and Jesus makes the unclean clean... Job longs for something that will come eventually.

Verses 13 &14,

Oh that you would hide me in Sheol, that you would conceal me until your wrath be past, that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me! (14) If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my service I would wait, till my renewal should come.

Job is envisioning what death will be like when he is in the afterlife. He wishes for 3 things in the afterlife

- Hide me from your terrorizing in Sheol - Take me away from this world so I would cease suffering here.
- Hide me until your wrath is past - Oh that God would protect me from His wrath.
- That He would set aside an appointed time to and remember him so he can have his day in court.

Job wants a resurrection; this is the only way the unclean can be clean. If God could defeat death, then I could have my day in court and then I could know that God is a compassionate God, and I could understand His ways. What Job has wished for is that sins would be forgiven by someone who is both God and man and that He would make unclean things clean by virtue of a resurrection. Job longs for the God of the Gospel and in the 65 other books of the Bible in which God reveals Himself to be that exact same God. If God takes care of these things that says something about who God is; **you can trust God now in your suffering**. God has done the humanly impossible in Christ. He will work all things for the eternal good of those who are His.

4. Round 2 (15:1-21:34)

A. Eliphaz's 2nd Speech (15:1-35)

- Historian's Argument

Eliphaz's second argument - you look/act guilty therefore you must be guilty. In verses 1-5 Eliphaz challenges Job. In essence, he is saying Job you are full of hot air.

"Should a wise man answer with windy knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind? (3) Should he argue in unprofitable talk, or in words with which he can do no good? (4) But you are doing away with the fear of God and hindering meditation before God.

Eliphaz's thesis is this: Job's argument is emotional and worthless because his heart is filled with guilt. Job's actions are a response to his prior guilt. Job, according to Eliphaz, is being defensive because he is guilty. Eliphaz, is making a natural assumption without any valid backing or evidence. In verses 7-9 Eliphaz points back to history.

"Are you the first man who was born? Or were you brought forth before the hills? (8) Have you listened in the council of God? And do you limit wisdom to yourself? (9) What do you know that we do not know? What do you understand that is not clear to us?

They are at an intellectual stalemate here. Eliphaz then repeats his Divine retribution argument in verses 14-16.

What is man, that he can be pure? Or he who is born of a woman, that he can be righteous? (15) Behold, God puts no trust in his holy ones, and the heavens are not pure in his sight; (16) how much less one who is abominable and corrupt, a man who drinks injustice like water!

Man is evil and God punishes the evil one. God doesn't even trust the lofty angels, let alone you. Eliphaz's key argument is still: "Job your guilt is the cause of your suffering." Is Job a sinner, yes. Is Job suffering, Yes. Is Job's suffering a result of his sin? No. But Eliphaz doesn't know this.

In the rest of the chapter, he has argued that Job must be guilty because of what is happening to him and now he is going to prove that Job is guilty because of how he is acting.

Eliphaz then points out Job's circumstances as proof. Once God punishes the ungodly man, he lives a desolate life outside the city in ruins, just like Job:

...and has lived in desolate cities, in houses that none should inhabit, which were ready to become heaps of ruins; (29) he will not be rich, and his wealth will not endure, nor will his possessions spread over the earth...(34) For the company of the godless is barren, and fire consumes the tents of bribery.

Eliphaz is working within a closed system. He puts God in a box. The wicked always get punished in this life in this box. Their folly always kills them in the end. This is the way things always are and have always been.

B. Job's Initial Response (16:1-17:16)

- Rebuttal - God has intervened.

In verses 7-8 Job gives his argument:

Surely now God has worn me out; he has made desolate all my company. (8) And he has shriveled me up, which is a witness against me, and my leanness has risen up against me; it testifies to my face.

Job is saying, "God has done this to me." He has framed me. God formulated my circumstances to make me look guilty. Job is trying to bring God into Eliphaz's closed system.

In verses 11-12 Job argues that God not only framed me he set me up so that my friends would mock me for being guilty,

God gives me up to the ungodly and casts me into the hands of the wicked. (12) I was at ease, and he broke me apart; he seized me by the neck and dashed me to pieces; he set me up as his target;

In Chapter 17, Job continues to drive home the point that his friend's logic is circular and partial, verses 4-7,

Since you have closed their hearts to understanding, therefore you will not let them triumph. (5) He who informs against his friends to get a share of their property— the eyes of his children will fail. (6) "He has made me a byword of the peoples, and I am

one before whom men spit. (7) My eye has grown dim from vexation, and all my members are like a shadow.

The way Eliphaz sees the world is that if a man is suffering, he is bad. But Job says he only sees what he wants to see.

Job's friends' inability to see clearly causes Job to lose hope, verse 15,

...where then is my hope? Who will see my hope?

Job's hope is dead because he can't find someone who knows the situation. God is the witness Job needs and God knows Job is innocent all along. Neither Job nor his friends know this.

C. Bildad's 2nd Speech (18:1-21)

- Naturalist's Argument - What comes around goes around

Bildad argues that there is a system in nature in which everything works a certain way. He starts off with an observation in verse 3,

Why are we counted as cattle? Why are we stupid in your sight? (4) You who tear yourself in your anger...

Job, you say we are acting like dumb beasts. But you are the one acting like an animal, tearing yourself and us apart with such uncontrolled anger. In the rest of verse 4 he points out to Job that Job is insignificant.

"shall the earth be forsaken for you, or the rock be removed out of its place?"

He is saying to Job that he is not exceptional, the earth doesn't revolve around him.

Bildad turns to creation to lay the groundwork for his thesis,

"Indeed, the light of the wicked is put out, and the flame of his fire does not shine. (6) The light is dark in his tent, and his lamp above him is put out.

The life of the wicked always burns out just like light. Candles will always burn out. All life eventually burns out, but the life of the wicked burns out especially fast.

His strong steps are shortened, and his own schemes throw him down. (Job 18:7)

According to Bildad the wicked man always dies quickly, his own trap always ends up backfiring and leads to his demise. What goes around comes around.

Bildad concludes by warning Job of how terrible this end will be for him. Eventually in the end, he will be driven into a supernatural afterlife out of this world, there will be no future for him or his descendants, and no one in the world will think good of him after he's gone,

He is thrust from light into darkness, and driven out of the world. (19) He has no posterity or progeny among his people, and no survivor where he used to live. (20) They of the west are appalled at his day, and horror seizes them of the east. (21) Surely such are the dwellings of the unrighteous, such is the place of him who knows not God."

In other words, what goes around comes around, and Job will be forgotten and forsaken.

Christ Connection: Certainty of a Redeemer

D. Job's Second Response (19:1-29)

- Job's rebuttal - God has caused this - He is outside of the system

In chapter 19 Job lays out the problem with internal causation. Things break in this world. There is fallibility in the world. In science one must always work in a controlled system to prove a hypothesis. However, the world isn't a test tube. There are too many variables. We can't explain the way the world works through science alone. Science lacks complexity. A closed system can't explain God.

In verse 6 Job gives the thesis for his argument by asserting again that he was framed.

...know then that God has put me in the wrong and closed his net about me.

God is the one who has set my foot in that trap you said I set up for myself. But Bildad, you forgot about God. He then goes on to point out how the world doesn't always work the way it we think it should, if it were in a closed system.

"He has put my brothers far from me, and those who knew me are wholly estranged from me. (14) My relatives have failed me, my close friends have forgotten me.

In a closed system, one's closest friends and family would always come and comfort you during hard times. But the opposite is the case with him, he says.

(15) The guests in my house and my maidservants count me as a stranger; I have become a foreigner in their eyes. (16) I call to my servant, but he gives me no answer; I must plead with him with my mouth for mercy.

In a closed system, servants always answer their master. But in my situation, my servants don't even recognize me as. "I must beg them to help me", Job says. How do you explain that Bildad.

(17) My breath is strange to my wife, and I am a stench to the children of my own mother.

In a closed system, one's wife should love and comfort him, but the fact that I am breathing is offensive to my wife. Job uses his life as the prime example of why Bildad's system is broken.

Job wants a new system; he knows there has to be a different system than that of Divine Retribution or Karma. God doesn't work like this, verse 25 where Job says,

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.

Notice that this is not a mere wish, as before. This is a conviction of knowledge, "I KNOW". Job knows that God is right, and he knows that God will do right. Even though he doesn't feel that God will do right, he knows deep in his soul that God will prove, in a new system, that God and man can both be declared righteous. Therefore, he knows that the only way that this system could work is with a Redeemer. Redeemers pay debt. Redemption delivers out of a bad situation and restores into a right situation. Job does not know who this Redeemer is. He does not know about the cross. He does not know about the incarnation, or the resurrection, although he has wished for these things. He knows that there is a system that validates God's

rightness and justifies man before God. The irony and beauty of this is that Job gets the new system that he wants. As a result of this new system Job says,

And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, (27) whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!

The outcome that Job wants is that God will make everything right; he will have a personal, intimate relationship with God. He longs with all that is in him to be made God's companion. The beauty of it is he gets it all and more. This should drive **us** to love the gospel more deeply! It should drive **us** to place a higher value on the revelation of God. What great comfort the gospel provides in suffering. It displays God's amazing compassion, His willingness to provide salvation for such insignificant creatures. **We should trust Him when we are suffering.**

E. Zophar's 2nd Speech (20:1-29)

Job's "friends" continue:

- Philosopher's Argument - God's justice is always served in this life.

Zophar begins his final argument by proclaiming that Bildad was partly right, the world has always worked in a system, verses 4 & 5,

Do you not know this from of old, since man was placed on earth, (5) that the exulting of the wicked is short, and the joy of the godless but for a moment?

The success of the wicked always ends, the godless always lose their joy. God always serves justice in this life. This satisfies our human view of justice. The bad guy always dies, evil is always defeated in this life. We all like to think this way. God always gets His justice in this life, if not He can't be God. Zophar furthers his argument by looking at the rich as an example, verses 10 & 11,

His children will seek the favor of the poor, and his hands will give back his wealth. (11) His bones are full of his youthful vigor, but it will lie down with him in the dust.

The evil man will always die young. Isn't this how the movie is supposed to end? The bad guy always loses his riches. He is destroyed in his relative youth.

He concludes by saying, that in the end the wicked man's sin is always revealed, he will lose everything he has, and he will experience God's wrath in this life. He has decreed it to always work this way, verses 27-29,

The heavens will reveal his iniquity, and the earth will rise up against him. (28) The possessions of his house will be carried away, dragged off in the day of God's wrath. (29) This is the wicked man's portion from God, the heritage decreed for him by God."

Aren't most people closet Zopharians? We always want things to work out in the end. Zophar is the reason why movies work. Most good movies always have a resolution to evil in the end. What is the major secular argument against God: Why does a good God allow good people to suffer in this world? The prosperity gospel also gets its philosophy from Zophar. If you are a good Christian God will reward you in this life. Most of us like the nice tidy package that Zophar wraps up for us.

F. Job's Closing Response (21:1-34)

- God Sometimes Prospers the Wicked

Job's response to Zophar that Zophar's system, in fact this entire closed system argument is one of idealism. Job's point is that the world isn't always ideal, verses 7 and following, ***Why do the wicked live, reach old age, and grow mighty in power? (8) Their offspring are established in their presence, and their descendants before their eyes. (9) Their houses are safe from fear, and no rod of God is upon them.***

His first point starts with a question: why do wicked people grow old, and keep increasing in power? Zophar's argument was the culmination of the Divine retribution principle, and the worldview of man's wisdom. With this statement Job pulls the rug out from under it. If God always punishes the wicked in this life, and he brings such great demise to them then why do the wicked live long lives and continue to prosper as they age?

He continues, rich parents stay rich and so do their kids. God doesn't always destroy their estate no matter how corrupt they are. The real evil man has living kids - my kids are dead, what does that say about my righteousness?

Job furthers the argument by pointing out how even when the wicked openly rebel against God they are often still blessed, verses 14-16,

They say to God, 'Depart from us! We do not desire the knowledge of your ways. (15) What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit do we get if we pray to him?' (16) Behold, is not their prosperity in their hand? The counsel of the wicked is far from me.

They don't want any personal relationship with God or see themselves as accountable to God. They don't recognize His power or His worth. Is their prosperity a result of their own works? No, the God whom they mock has given them all they have.

Jump to verse 22,

Will any teach God knowledge, seeing that he judges those who are on high?

Here we have Job's critical point: Everyone is operating on the Divine retribution principle and trying to fit God into their logical box. Job has shown that they are acting as if they know better than God - they are trying to teach God how to be God. They think they have a better plan than God and so they have created a system in which God follows their plan.

Job concludes in verse 34,

How then will you comfort me with empty nothings? There is nothing left of your answers but falsehood."

The Divine retribution/ Karma system is a lie; it's empty. This is not how the world works and not how God works. There must be a new system. As we will see, Zophar stops talking after this rebuttal from Job. Why? Job has completely decimated his argument and recognizing that Job is right he shuts his mouth. There must be another system in which God works and Zophar, being one who studies God, finally has enough humility to shut his mouth and agree with Job.

However, Job's other friends, the ones who rely on history and science to explain God keep talking.

As we have seen glimpses of the system of grace and the gospel, which is outside of people's fleshly thinking is in view. But Eliphaz and Bildad are not persuaded and continue with their faulty arguments, until at last the One who has the final word speaks.