

1. There is a wonderful feeling we can get reading a book or even watching a movie when all the different parts of the story come together and we see the big picture. That's often what makes the story worth being a part of. I've had one of those moments this week while studying this long story. To explain what that plot point is, first I need to back up, briefly explain the story to date and explain how it affects all of our lives. Here we go:
  - a) The opening two chapters discuss a bet between God and Satan. The short version is God tells Satan that Job is "one of his". Satan responds, "He's only one of Yours because You bless him so much". God then tells Satan, "OK then, go mess up Job's life horribly, and you'll see Job is truly one of mine." Satan then takes away all of Job's extensive wealth, his children and finally his health. Job's left suffering trying to figure why all this occurred!
  - b) The rest of the book so far, has been three friends of Job coming to "comfort" him. Instead of trying to help Job feel better, they spend chapter after chapter laying into Job saying in effect, "You must have sinned something horrible to be in this condition." Job responds by maintaining his innocence. We've had four rounds of dialogue with essentially the same points being stated over and over again. I'm tired of this by now, but since no one solved the mystery of why Job's suffering, it continues. Just to speed it up a little, I'll cover both Rounds 5 and 6 in this lesson, to help us get through it faster.
  - c) OK then, what's the insight? How has it come together so far? What puzzled me is why is Satan mentioned in the first two chapters, and never after that? After all, it was his idea to try to get Job to sin. Why is he written out of the story? Then it dawned on me, he's been part of the story ever since that chapter. In effect, he's been working through Job's friends to date. Let me explain with a comparison:
    - i) In the early chapters of the Gospel accounts Satan appeared to tempt Jesus. Then there is no mention of any him appearing after that. What we don't get is he's still there working, but working through people. Let's face it, anytime we're not doing God's will or anyone's not doing God's will, Satan's working behind the scenes to call the shots. Jesus referred to Satan as the prince of this world (John 12:31, 16:11). My point is whether it was the Pharisee's, Jesus disciples or his family members, it seems like people were always arguing with Jesus with the goal of getting Him to not do the will of God the Father. The point is Satan's working behind the scenes.
    - ii) Then it dawned on me. Satan doesn't have to appear after Chapter 2, because he's been working through Job's three friends. Those guys understood well how God works. So does Satan. What those friends lack is any sort of compassion for Job as they are too busy trying to insult him! Yes, Job complains about his pain. He wants an explanation for his pain. He wants a mediator between God and Himself. What we don't read is Job denying God or sinning in anyway. In that sense, the dialogue we're been reading for many chapters now, is a continuation of the dialogue that we read between God and Satan back in the first two chapters. My apology if you have already figured that out, but it just occurred to me and I needed to share that!
2. With that speech out of my system, let me talk about these four chapters. We're going to read the fifth and six round of a nine round discussion. Yes, a lot of it is repetitive and we've been reading the same points for many chapters so far. Again it's getting repetitive. It's also getting boring. The really good news is the Gospel message is blatantly preached in this lesson. It never ceases to amaze me how the Gospel message is woven all through the Old Testament and that includes the book of Job, which is the oldest bible book in terms of when it was written.
  - a) That leads to the important question: Why should we keep reading? We get the fact Job is part of the bible so it's natural that the Gospel message is woven through this book. All of us get the fact that Job's three friends is the opposition. So what?

- b) The answer is to remember why we study the bible in the first place: To draw us closer to God and learn what it is He expects of us. He wants us to understand the Gospel message and use our lives to make a difference for Him. Ok, that's the big picture. Why should we read these four chapters? Because we may go through a situation where we're accused of something we didn't do and have to defend ourselves. We may be in a situation where of we've got nothing to look forward to in life, other than the fact we are unconditionally loved by God. It's when we get to a point in life where we realize we've got no alternative but to trust in the cross, that is when life is worth living. That's what Job had to face at this point in the story, and often that's what we must face in life as well. An unfortunate truth of life is we may find ourselves in Job's shoes most likely in some way not as horrid as his, but still bad enough to where we must depend upon God alone to get through life. That's the lesson of the book of Job.
  - c) Meanwhile we've got four chapters to cover. When most of us where in young we had to learn of something called a "non-sequential argument". That's when Point A is correct all by itself and Point B is correct all by itself, but Point A and Point B doesn't lead to Point C. In other words Job's three friends say:
    - i) Job you're suffering horribly (Point A).
    - ii) God punishes wicked people (Point B).
    - iii) Therefore, God must be punishing you, Job. (Point C, the false accusation.)
    - iv) That's the essence of Job's three friends arguments so far.
    - v) In these chapters, Job's going to respond by reminding us that often wicked people will live out great lives in this life, so "Points A & B doesn't always equal Point C".
    - vi) The other thing Job will argue is that God does exist, He will resurrect all of us and we will be redeemed to live with Him forever. That's Job telling us He doesn't get why He's suffering. He doesn't get why God won't explain it, but He's still trusting in God despite all this pain and Job's positive God loves him despite all the horrid things Job's had to suffer. That's Job's defense.
  - d) Now let's come back to the basic premise of the book that Job trusts in God despite all the accusations of his friends. The book is still about the bet between God and Job, but the bet is being played out in Job's life and his three friends. What we see is Job still being a good witness for God despite all that suffering and "winning the bet". That's what makes Job a good read and a good reason to study it. Not to learn Job's fate, but to understand how to be a good witness for God even through the worst of times.
  - e) By the way, that's my lesson title, "How to be a good witness for God no matter what". OK then, time for the details to get started with the text of these four chapters.
3. Chapter 18: Then Bildad the Shuhite replied: <sup>2</sup> "When will you end these speeches? Be sensible, and then we can talk. <sup>3</sup> Why are we regarded as cattle and considered stupid in your sight?
- a) As we start "Round 5" of the debate, it's always best to keep a couple of things in mind:
    - i) First, God Himself is going to show up later in the book to condemn Job's three friends for the fact they've been wrong about him.
    - ii) Second, these guys make lots of good theological points, but misapply them to Job.
    - iii) Therefore as we read what these friends say, take it "with a grain of salt" knowing that if God's going to "knock them down to size", we shouldn't worry about what's their arguments are as they don't apply to Job.
  - b) As to Bildad himself, this is his second of three speeches. What's gone is the "being nice" to Job that opened his first speech. What we get here is, "I'm really ticked off that Job will not repent and I'm going to lay it into him even thicker this time around!" Ever met some "church going person" who knows their bible backwards, but lack God's love? That's how I think of Job's three friends. To paraphrase 1st Corinthians, Chapter 13, "I may know my bible backwards, I may have every spiritual gift there is, and I may have great faith, but if I'm not kind to others, it's a waste of a life." That's how I see Job's three friends acting.

- c) Ok enough of that, time for specific's. Bildad opens by effectively saying, "Hey Job do you think we're stupid? We know how God works just as well as you do! So Job, shut up and listen to what I have to say because I know about God as much as you do!" That's Bildad's argument in a few thoughts. Again, like a person who has "all the spiritual gifts and does get how God works" but lacks love, is a good description of Bildad, and what's worse is also a good description of the "loveless person" in our world. Yes, that's also how Satan is subtly working through these people. OK we get that, back to the story.
- 4. Verse 4: You who tear yourself to pieces in your anger, is the earth to be abandoned for your sake? Or must the rocks be moved from their place?
  - a) To paraphrase Bildad, "Who died and put you in charge of everything?" Bildad is saying Job is putting down his arguments and the other two guys as if Job runs the world! Yes, it is in a poetic format, but that's the essence of his argument. Let's continue:
- 5. Verse 5: "The lamp of the wicked is snuffed out; the flame of his fire stops burning. <sup>6</sup> The light in his tent becomes dark; the lamp beside him goes out. <sup>7</sup> The vigor of his step is weakened; his own schemes throw him down. <sup>8</sup> His feet thrust him into a net and he wanders into its mesh. <sup>9</sup> A trap seizes him by the heel; a snare holds him fast. <sup>10</sup> A noose is hidden for him on the ground; a trap lies in his path. <sup>11</sup> Terrors startle him on every side and dog his every step. <sup>12</sup> Calamity is hungry for him; disaster is ready for him when he falls.
  - a) We're back to the arguments that the wicked suffer. The implied false connection is that Job is one of the people suffering like those described in these verses. We're back to the view that the wicked do suffer and Job's suffering, so therefore (false conclusion) Job must be wicked.
  - b) All of these verses are colorful ways of saying wicked people will lose in the end. They'll suffer horribly by God based on the wicked things they've inflicted upon other people. It's a whole bunch of verses essentially saying the same thing, "Crime doesn't pay". Obviously some people do get away with stuff in this lifetime, and Job will make that case when we get to Chapter 21. In the meantime, we need to hear Bildad "go on and on about the same thing", because, let's be honest, that's how people will attack us when we're down.
  - c) It's the "You must have done something horrid to deserve this fate" type of argument. All we can do is sit and listen to it, because we may be in too much pain to walk away. There are times when we're forced to confront such situations, and unfortunately all we can do is listen and respond the best we can. Now that I've stated the obvious, back to Bildad.
- 6. Verse 13: It eats away parts of his skin; death's firstborn devours his limbs. <sup>14</sup> He is torn from the security of his tent and marched off to the king of terrors. <sup>15</sup> Fire resides in his tent; burning sulfur is scattered over his dwelling. <sup>16</sup> His roots dry up below and his branches wither above.
  - a) There's a classic expression that goes, "Just when you think it can't get any worse it always does". If Bildad wasn't graphic enough in describing how the wicked suffer in the last bunch of verses, he gets downright nasty by these verses. In his own colorful way, Bildad is saying how the wicked people get devoured by their own mischief. It literally eats away at them and to put it mildly, wipes them out as people.
  - b) As I've been effectively saying all through this debate, "We can't throw the baby out with the bathwater" so to speak. Bildad makes the case in a colorful way that God exists, He'll make the guilty suffer for their sins and "Crime doesn't pay" in the long run. What he says is good theology, but "so what"? Where's the love? Where's the compassion for Job's fate? Where is the comfort for Job? That's why I'm pounding the point that the most solid bible theology is no good without applying God's love to those around us!
  - c) In the meantime, we still have five more verses of "Bildad torture" to put up in this round!
- 7. Verse 17: The memory of him perishes from the earth; he has no name in the land. <sup>18</sup> He is driven from light into darkness and is banished from the world.
  - a) The essence of Bildad's argument is that the wicked will eventually die and all the horrid things they did, will die with them. The false implication is "Job is just like them".

8. Verse 19: He has no offspring or descendants among his people, no survivor where once he lived.  
<sup>20</sup> Men of the west are appalled at his fate; men of the east are seized with horror. <sup>21</sup> Surely such is the dwelling of an evil man; such is the place of one who knows not God."
  - a) The good news is Bildad's all done for this round. We only have to "put up with him" one more time coming up in a few chapters.
  - b) The really good news is Job will get into the Gospel message as a response in Chapter 19.
  - c) Until then, we must deal with the rest of his response. Again, Bildad correctly deals with biblical "Sunday school truths" without any love attached to them. Of course, what Bildad is saying is not true in every case, and we'll get to that argument later in this lesson. What is important to grasp here is that Bildad's implying that Job's suffering is just like the type of person Bildad's describing in this chapter. It's the truth that God punishes those who'll turn from His will, and since Job's suffering, he must be "one of them"!
  - d) That's why it's so important to see the big picture that "Two truths doesn't always mean a third fact is based on those two truths". It's the non-sequential argument that Job will get the same fate as the wicked just because he's suffering in this lifetime.
  - e) Realize that's why Job gets into "my redeemer lives," biblical theology in Chapter 19. It is Job's way of saying that just because the wicked are punished, doesn't mean Job falls into that group. That's what Bildad failed to argue in this chapter.
  - f) OK, then, onto Job's response which again is a lot more positive.
9. Chapter 19, Verse 1: Then Job replied: <sup>2</sup> "How long will you torment me and crush me with words? <sup>3</sup> Ten times now you have reproached me; shamelessly you attack me.
  - a) If you and I are as tired of these three friends doing nothing but insulting Job by implying he's done something horribly wrong, imagine how Job feels having to listen to all of this! It never ends and in effect that's what Job's saying here,
  - b) Yes we're only on "Round 5" and Job says "ten times you have attacked me". That's simply an exaggeration stated to make a point that "This is going on and on and we're not getting anywhere with this debate!"
  - c) In Verse 4, we'll get into the heart of Job's response:
10. Verse 4: If it is true that I have gone astray, my error remains my concern alone. <sup>5</sup> If indeed you would exalt yourselves above me and use my humiliation against me, <sup>6</sup> then know that God has wronged me and drawn his net around me.
  - a) The essential point is simply that if Job was wrong, these guys have yet to prove it! If Job has sinned, where's the evidence? The main argument of all three of Job's friends is those who do wicked suffer, and Job's suffering, so therefore Job must be wicked! Job responds with, "I don't hear any evidence of what I did". Job then makes the statement in Verse 6 of God's allowed this for some reason, but none of us know what is that reason.
  - b) I have to admit, I'd be tempted to just keep my mouth shut if I was Job here. Why should I keep arguing if these guys refuse to believe anything I say? There's a classic biblical view that God will fight our battles if we stand still. I'm not sure that's biblical. What is biblical is if we're taking a stand for what's right, God will work through us and do what we can't do in standing up for what's right. My point is that we often have to stand up for what is right, even if it's hard or painful to do so. The point as it applies to Job here is none of the three friends nor Job is privileged to why Job is suffering. Therefore, the debate continues to try to figure it out and Job has to defend the fact that God still cares for him despite the suffering Job is enduring.
11. Verse 7: "Though I cry, 'I've been wronged!' I get no response; though I call for help, there is no justice. <sup>8</sup> He has blocked my way so I cannot pass; he has shrouded my paths in darkness. <sup>9</sup> He has stripped me of my honor and removed the crown from my head. <sup>10</sup> He tears me down on every side till I am gone; he uproots my hope like a tree.
  - a) I'll be the first to admit, it's really hard to say, "This too shall pass" when we're right in the middle of something horrid and can't see the end in sight.

- b) If we had some sort of deformity or had to suffer the rest of our lives without say the use of all our senses or say the loss of a limb or cancer, it's too pat of an answer to say this too shall pass when we know we have to live with "that" for the rest of our lives. A key point in the book of Job is essentially "What should we do when we're suffering horribly and no answer can be found?" That's why the debate goes on as long as it does!
  - c) As far as Job knew, he may have to live out the rest of his days the way he's living now. It is a mystery neither Job nor his friends were privy to at this point in the story. Job believes his life is effectively over. He can't see past the suffering which is a common feeling when we're in the middle of something tragic. Yes, we'll read of a happy ending many chapters from now. However, neither Job nor his friends know any of this. Therefore, Job will go on and on about his suffering, because let's be honest, that's what we'd do when we are in the middle of pain. Speaking of complaining about his situation, back to Job:
12. Verse 11: His anger burns against me; he counts me among his enemies.
- a) Job is convinced that God is angry at him for some reason. Yes, it's wrong, but again if we are in a horrid situation, we might come the same conclusion that God's punishing us.
  - b) I admit I'm fascinated by the idea that "God counts me among his enemies". I just figure if God is God, why would He have enemies? Couldn't He just wipe them out, and that's it?
    - i) We're back the classic question of why does God allow evil to exist? Why does He allow people to live out a full life who ignore Him and don't live for Him? Because a small percentage of them will turn to Him at some point in their lives. Because if we see evil and see people turn from God, that reminds us that He does exist and He wants us to use our lives to make a difference for Him.
    - ii) The point is God doesn't wipe out "His enemies" on the spot, because there is some great purpose for allowing evil to exist.
    - iii) Again, notice how Job "stands up for God" despite the pain he's going through.
13. Verse 12: His troops advance in force; they build a siege ramp against me and encamp around my tent.
- a) You can just sense how Job himself is convinced that God "did all of this" to Job. In effect, He did in the sense He allows all things to happen. The problem of course, is no one has an explanation for "why", which is the great question of this book.
  - b) That reminds me, there is a great misconception about the book of Job. Many people think the book is about "Why do the innocent suffer?" If that is the premise, it's never answered. The real question of the book is are we still a good witness for God in spite of whatever it is we're facing in life? That's why this dialogue goes on and on as Job is that good witness in spite of the endless barrage by his "friends".
14. Verse 13: "He has alienated my brothers from me; my acquaintances are completely estranged from me. <sup>14</sup> My kinsmen have gone away; my friends have forgotten me. <sup>15</sup> My guests and my maidservants count me a stranger; they look upon me as an alien.
- a) An interesting question here is did Job have any siblings and where were they to comfort Job through all of this? What about other acquaintances? Before all of this started, recall that Job was a wealthy man. Often when people are so low that they have nothing to offer us, we avoid them as we're afraid they'll ask us for something. It's interesting to watch when people go bankrupt or suffer in some horrible way, how those who used to interact with them, will now avoid them like the plague. I've seen people who've gone bankrupt and others will treat them effectively like they have a horrid contagious disease.
  - b) Anyway, that's the state that Job is in at this moment. In fact the only people that do come to see Job are these three "friends" and all they do is insult him as oppose to help Job!
15. Verse 16: I summon my servant, but he does not answer, though I beg him with my own mouth.
- a) In the opening chapter of the book, Job was wealthy. It's logical he must have had lots of servants back then. What this verse implies is when Job lost his wealth he lost any contact with his former servants.

- b) We're back to the same point that when we hit bottom, everyone around us will abandon us. Even those who used to work with us as well as our extended family will disappear as they fear "they might catch something" or be afraid that Job will just beg from them!
16. Verse 17: My breath is offensive to my wife; I am loathsome to my own brothers.
- a) Many years ago when my wife would complain about bad breath, I'd show her Verse 17. Again, Job's going through a "woe is me" moment and I think we're still on the same point that Job feels abandoned by everyone, including his wife and as Verse 17 tells us, Job had a few brothers. An interesting question to ponder is where is Job's wife through all of this? She was not killed with the rest of Job's family and obviously, she lost all her wealth. They were her children too, and I'm sure she's suffering horribly about all of this! Because she is written out of the story, all we can do is speculate. What Verse 17 implies is, she blames Job for all this suffering and she's not around to comfort Job, as well as Job's siblings.
- b) Hang tight through all this tragedy. The good news is coming in a few more verses.
17. Verse 18: Even the little boys scorn me; when I appear, they ridicule me.
- a) An unfortunate reality of life is little kids pick on innocent people. Children could see Job suffer day after day in his condition and make fun of him. The simple point is Job's aware of this and it adds to his misery! Ok, two more "woe is me" verses. Hang tight through it!
18. Verse 19: All my intimate friends detest me; those I love have turned against me. <sup>20</sup> I am nothing but skin and bones; I have escaped with only the skin of my teeth.
- a) The hard part of the "bottom falling out of our lives" isn't just the loss of things or health. It is the pain of people around us ignoring us or making fun of us, but not helping. When we're that down, people don't want to be depressed or give up their wealth or time to be with us. Again, we're treated like we have some sort of contagious disease. The question is what do we do about it? Do we just sit there and feel sorry for ourselves? Do we give a "woe is me" speech like Job is doing here? What's the solution? In Job's case, his physical health was so bad, "Picking himself up by the bootstraps" won't work here. Sometimes all we can do is "wallow our way through it", trusting in God to rescue us when we have nothing left to trust in. The good news is I've found God does His best work, when we do hit rock bottom, because we realize there's nothing else to trust Him, but Him alone!
- b) By the last part of Verse 19, Job is effectively yelling out, "I've got nothing. I've lost all my wealth, my children and my health. Even the people I still know want nothing to do with me and what's left of my body is in horrid pain." Ok then, where's God when we have moments like that?" Is Job still being a good witness for God at this point? First, it's ok to yell out in pain and complain to God, "Why are you allowing this to happen?" God's still on the throne and still monitoring to see if we still trust in Him. As I suspect we all know by now, God isn't required to answer us just because we ask. He speaks to us through all sorts of methods and sometimes He's saying, "Trust Me, even through this".
- c) OK, then four more tough verses to go, and then it gets better.
19. Verse 21: "Have pity on me, my friends, have pity, for the hand of God has struck me. <sup>22</sup> Why do you pursue me as God does? Will you never get enough of my flesh?
- a) I see Job mustering up whatever strength he's got left at this point to look at the face of his friends and say, "What's wrong with you people? All you want to do is find guilt in me as to ignore the obvious, that I'm really hurting right now!" In that sense, I give Job credit for teaching how one is supposed to act when one is trusting in God!
20. Verse 23: "Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, <sup>24</sup> that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever!
- a) Well on one hand, Job's wish came true. I'm sure it'd be a shock to Job that thousands of years later, millions of people have studied Job's words. I'm sure that when Job wrote all this down, he never envisioned an organized bible let alone the timeless of his work. With that said, I'm speculating he stated that about the importance of the next few verses as they are one of the great highlights of this book

21. Verse 25: I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.
- First, let's discuss the Hebrew word translated "Redeemer". It has several meanings. On one hand it can refer to a relative who'll "bail us out". It's the same word that's used in the book of Ruth to describe her distant relative who married her and became her redeemer.
  - It's also used of the Messiah. That's the Jewish word translated Christ in Greek.
  - Notice it's a lot more than Job saying he believes in the concept of the Messiah. He states that the Redeemer lives. As in not future tense, but present tense. As an aside, that argues against the religious Jewish concept that the Messiah is just a man who will come one day. It implies someone who's always living!
  - Next notice the word "my". It's not "The" Messiah, it's "My" Messiah. He's the one who'll redeem Job. It's the one who paid for Job's sins.
  - Now notice "in the end". That's a "Second Coming" Reference. After all the horrors that is described in the book of Revelation, the Redeemer will stand victorious over the world as it's conqueror as well as the one who paid for our sins.
  - Again, remember that Job was written even before the "Torah" was given. My point is Job is the oldest book in the bible, and speaks of the Redeemer standing on the earth. This is another proof that the important concepts taught in the bible are consistent throughout all the books of the bible.
  - OK, I can calm down now. I got that out of my system. The good news is Job continues:
22. Verse 26: And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; <sup>27</sup> I myself will see him with my own eyes--I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!
- Before I discuss this verse, let's pause to ask, why is Job making this point here? Because of the "endless" accusations that Job is a sinner. Job's three friends have been saying over and over again for many a chapter that 1) God punishes sinners, 2) Job is suffering, so that means (wrong conclusion) that 3) God is punishing Job.
  - Job's response is in effect, "You got it all wrong. I'll be resurrected to see my Redeemer, so get off my back about some sin I never confessed". Unfortunately, as I stated to start this lesson, these three guys represent Satan working through them, so they need to deny the fundamental truth of being resurrected to stand face to face with the Messiah.
  - With that said, I interrupted Job as he's on a role. In Verse 26, he states quite blatantly that he'll see God "in his flesh". Yes, that's a reference to the resurrection. Verse 27 effectively makes the same point. Verse 27 ends with the statement of how Job's heart yearns for that event to occur. That is why God calls Job "One of His" back in Chapter 1.
  - Meanwhile, two more verses until we start Round 6 of this seemingly endless debate!
23. Verse 28: If you say, 'How we will hound him, since the root of the trouble lies in him,' <sup>29</sup> you should fear the sword yourselves; for wrath will bring punishment by the sword, and then you will know that there is judgment. "
- Job ends his argument here by looking back at his friends as if to say, "You should fear the wrath of God yourself". You're so busy condemning me for some sin I didn't do, none of you have considered the possibility that if you bring false charges against someone, you'll pay the price as if you committed that sin yourself. (See Deuteronomy 19:18-19).
  - Job's implying that his friends should have enough knowledge of how God works that if they make a false accusation, they'll suffer for it. It's Job's closing argument that there's no great sin that he's guilty of, so his friends should "watch their mouth".
  - Unfortunately, it doesn't sink in. Let's face it, even though Job's three friends don't realize it, they're being used by the "prince of this world". Speaking of being used:
24. Chapter 20: Then Zophar the Naamathite replied: <sup>2</sup> "My troubled thoughts prompt me to answer because I am greatly disturbed. <sup>3</sup> I hear a rebuke that dishonors me, and my understanding inspires me to reply.
- My very loose translation, "You talking to me Job? Nobody else here but us Job! Are you accusing us of lying to your face? " Therefore, Zophar's going to lay into Job for that!

- b) The good news is this is the last we'll read of Zophar. Yes he's tough on Job, but let's face it, he's already been rebuked because Job has declared his innocence, even though none of his friends would accept that fact. OK, then back to Zophar:
25. Verse 4: "Surely you know how it has been from of old, ever since man was placed on the earth, <sup>5</sup> that the mirth of the wicked is brief, the joy of the godless lasts but a moment.
- a) I have to admit, of Job's three "friends" Zophar bugs me the most. He's the toughest of the three on Job and essentially gives a bunch of basic "Sunday School lessons" which haven't anything to do with Job's case!
- b) Yes, he states he truth that the joy that wicked people get in this life, will only last for one life at the most. That's Zophar's main point. The logical question to ask of course is, "OK, what does that have to do with Job?"
26. Verse 6: Though his pride reaches to the heavens and his head touches the clouds, <sup>7</sup> he will perish forever, like his own dung; those who have seen him will say, 'Where is he?'
- a) Zophar is arguing that the reason Job won't confess his sin is because he's too full of pride. It's the false assumption that were guilty and hiding behind our ego. Zophar then returns to his false argument that God punishes sinners, Job's suffering, so therefore he must have sinned something horrible. With that said, he continues to make his bad points:
27. Verse 8: Like a dream he flies away, no more to be found, banished like a vision of the night. <sup>9</sup> The eye that saw him will not see him again; his place will look on him no more. <sup>10</sup> His children must make amends to the poor; his own hands must give back his wealth. <sup>11</sup> The youthful vigor that fills his bones will lie with him in the dust.
- a) Zophar's making the case that wicked people will vanish without a trace. It's the idea that all people die and eventually they're forgotten. Since they're wicked they'll end up in hell so "don't make that your legacy". If all of that wasn't bad enough, Zophar then makes the point that even the children of the wicked have to suffer for their parents mistakes. Yes, I could give a whole lecture on that, but I suspect most of us have seen cases where the kids have had to suffer badly due to the mistakes their parents made. Again, Zophar's giving us a bunch of "Sunday School Lessons" that don't apply to Job's situation. Verse 11 comes back to the original point here that eventually the wicked "are gone and forgotten".
- b) Let me move on to cover a little more of Zophar's "put Job down" speech, and then I'll talk a little more about how we should deal with the "Zophar's" of the world.
28. Verse 12: "Though evil is sweet in his mouth and he hides it under his tongue, <sup>13</sup> though he cannot bear to let it go and keeps it in his mouth, <sup>14</sup> yet his food will turn sour in his stomach; it will become the venom of serpents within him. <sup>15</sup> He will spit out the riches he swallowed; God will make his stomach vomit them up. <sup>16</sup> He will suck the poison of serpents; the fangs of an adder will kill him. <sup>17</sup> He will not enjoy the streams, the rivers flowing with honey and cream. <sup>18</sup> What he toiled for he must give back uneaten; he will not enjoy the profit from his trading.
- a) As I said earlier, Zophar is my least favorite of Job's three friends. He gets downright ugly as he describes the lives of people who turn from God. Obviously, not everybody who is living like this, literally suffer this way in this lifetime. Job will make that point clearly as we get to the next chapter.
- b) We have to admit, these verses read like a "Hell and brimstone" sermon. It's as if a pastor is preaching, "Hell is so horrible, let me try to get as graphic as I can to describe the horror that exists when we turn from God". Personally, I've never liked the idea of trying to guilt someone into becoming a Christian. I'd rather teach about God's love and explaining how living the Christian life is the best way to live out our lives on earth. I'm reminded of the old expression, "If they won't listen to Jesus, give them Moses". What that means is if they refuse to trust in God's love, then they need to hear about God's standards that He expects us to live by, or "Moses" for short. Trying to "guilt" a person into accepting Jesus will only go so far. Eventually the guilt wears off. That's the problem with Zophar's little sermon here. It's anti-God in the fact that "Hell and brimstone" doesn't change people's lives!



- c) Yes, I can into the specific's of Zophar's speech, but I think the text speaks for itself as far as trying to describe the horrors one will eventually face from turning from God.
  - d) Again, we're back to the question of so what? None of this applies to Job's life, so why go on and on about this? Zophar is so convinced Job has some unconfessed sin, he resorts to a "Hell and brimstone" speech to try to frighten Job into confessing.
    - i) Let's face it, such speeches only work if we feel guilty over something we did or if we refuse to believe in God's existence.
    - ii) Unfortunately, he's not done, so let's plow our way through this.
29. Verse 19: For he has oppressed the poor and left them destitute; he has seized houses he did not build. <sup>20</sup> "Surely he will have no respite from his craving; he cannot save himself by his treasure. <sup>21</sup> Nothing is left for him to devour; his prosperity will not endure. <sup>22</sup> In the midst of his plenty, distress will overtake him; the full force of misery will come upon him.
- a) Zophar continues to lay it on thick. He lists the sins including "seizing houses he did not build". In other words Zophar is accusing Job of stealing. The same with "oppressing the poor". Zophar is getting specific here. He's saying, "Hey Job, you want to know what it is your guilty of? Let me lay it on you here and now! Then Zophar gets back to the issue of how the guilty will suffer and one never wins in the end by cheating other people.
  - b) By the way, Job never claims he's sinless. He's just positive there is no unconfessed sin in his life. God doesn't want us to live our lives with guilt over sins we've already confessed. One of the hardest things to accept about life is, we're forgiven once we confess that "God was right and we were wrong" and turned from that sin. We're tougher on ourselves than God is, because we think we should have done better! Also that's not an excuse to go sin and "confess it later". God still wants us to avoid sin as that's the best way to live life out!
  - c) Zophar's much harder on Job than God will be. The essence of his argument is that Job is guilty of some sin, and that's why he's suffering so much. Zophar's laying it on thick as to try to make Job feel guilty about something he didn't do. Again, think of it as Satan trying to make us feel guilty as "we should have done better". That's one of his favorite tricks to get us to turn from God! It's an "You'll never be good enough for God, so why bother" so why keep trying false view of how God works in our lives! Remember that religion is all about trying to make efforts to please God with our lives. Christianity teaches that it's not possible to do that. Therefore, all we should do is try to be a good witness for Him as we live to make a difference for Him in our lives.
  - d) With that understood, let's finish Zophar's "make Job feel guilty" speech:
30. Verse 23: When he has filled his belly, God will vent his burning anger against him and rain down his blows upon him. <sup>24</sup> Though he flees from an iron weapon, a bronze-tipped arrow pierces him. <sup>25</sup> He pulls it out of his back, the gleaming point out of his liver. Terrors will come over him; <sup>26</sup> total darkness lies in wait for his treasures. A fire unfanned will consume him and devour what is left in his tent. <sup>27</sup> The heavens will expose his guilt; the earth will rise up against him. <sup>28</sup> A flood will carry off his house, rushing waters on the day of God's wrath.
- a) Before I finish condemning Zophar, let's not "Throw the baby out with the bathwater". It's true that a life of ignoring God never pays in the end. It's true that God judges those who have turned from Him all their lives and ignore the fact He exists! What Zophar is saying is truly "Sunday school truths". Yes, it's colorful and yes, it's poetry, but the bottom line is the fact that people who do turn from God will suffer for it when we're judged by Him.
  - b) Yes I've pounded the point to death that none of this applies to Job. The other question to consider is what should we do when we're accused of something we didn't do? If we just maintain our innocence is that good enough? Should we defend ourselves to others, or do we just let the evidence (or lack thereof) speak for itself? Should Job have just keep his big mouth shut and wait for God to respond? I'd argue that God wants "boldness" especially when we're using boldness to stand up for our relationship with Him!

- c) The good news is Job does have boldness and we've got a big response coming up in the next chapter to respond to these charges. In the meantime Zophar's only got one line left to say and then we're done with him completely. Let's get it over with:
- 31. Verse 29: Such is the fate God allots the wicked, the heritage appointed for them by God."
  - a) Zophar's final line is a summary of his whole argument: That God exists, he punishes the wicked and they lose what God desires of them, an eternal relationship of drawing close to Him. The implication is that all of this fits Job's life, but we know that isn't true.
  - b) One thing that Zophar's right about is that God desires a relationship with Him. He made us to live with Him forever. He also gave us free will. That means many choose to ignore His love and live like His laws don't apply to us! Like I've been saying, not all of Zophar's stuff is bad. He states a lot of biblical truths, but their misapplied to Job!
  - c) The good news is Job's going to rebuke the charges against him well in the next chapter!
- 32. Chapter 21, Verse 1: Then Job replied: <sup>2</sup> "Listen carefully to my words; let this be the consolation you give me. <sup>3</sup> Bear with me while I speak, and after I have spoken, mock on.
  - a) We've now gone through five and one half rounds of debate. I really doubt Job expected any of his friends to change at this point. Job just wanted to speak his mind on the reality of how life really works. That means he's about to lecture his friends about the fact that wicked people don't always suffer in this lifetime. Therefore Job effectively says, "Please listen to what I have to say, and then you can go back to mocking me!" That's not what a person says if he thinks he's going to win a debate. It's just something to get off his chest.
- 33. Verse 4: "Is my complaint directed to man? Why should I not be impatient?
  - a) Job doesn't blame any person for what happened. Considering that the loss of his wealth was due to a foreign group "raiding him", (Chapter 1) that alone is an amazing statement.
  - b) Job was smart enough to figure out, "This can't be a coincidence, that I lost my health, my family, and my wealth all in a short time span. Therefore, I need to discuss what God did allow to happen to me. Job's saying God's not punishing him, but Job realized he's being tested by God.
- 34. Verse 5: Look at me and be astonished; clap your hand over your mouth. <sup>6</sup> When I think about this, I am terrified; trembling seizes my body.
  - a) My loose translation, "Hey guys, check me out, I'm in horrid shape. When I stop to think about all I've been through, it terrifies me". I don't know how much time the conversation took, but I suspect it's been "more than five minutes". At the least we know, that all three of them were there for seven days before anyone said anything. My point is Job's friends were well aware of his condition. The point Job's going to make is not everyone suffers in this life based on their treatment of God. Job's starting with himself to make an illustration that will last for a number of verses.
- 35. Verse 7: Why do the wicked live on, growing old and increasing in power? <sup>8</sup> They see their children established around them, their offspring before their eyes. <sup>9</sup> Their homes are safe and free from fear; the rod of God is not upon them. <sup>10</sup> Their bulls never fail to breed; their cows calve and do not miscarry. <sup>11</sup> They send forth their children as a flock; their little ones dance about. <sup>12</sup> They sing to the music of tambourine and harp; they make merry to the sound of the flute. <sup>13</sup> They spend their years in prosperity and go down to the grave in peace.
  - a) I have to admit sometimes I love to read Job in "bunches". Verses like these are pretty self-explanatory. Job's obvious point is that often people who live wicked lives never suffer in this life. Job uses colorful illustrations about how the animals of the wicked won't fail to breed and their children go about enjoying their lives. They financially prosper and go to the grave in peace.
  - b) The obvious point is God's judgment is not always in this lifetime. There's a classic line to say to those who ignore God, "Enjoy it while you can because that's all the pleasure you'll get for all of eternity". That's essentially what Jesus said in Luke 12:18-20. The case Job is building is, "Hey one's condition is not always related to one's relationship with God!"

- c) OK John, we get all of this. How does any of it apply to our lives? For starters, all this is a reminder that there is an eternity and "stuff in this life" is not necessarily any indication of how we'll live eternity. It's not, "He who dies with the most toys wins". It's he or she who uses their lives to make a difference for God and seeks to do His will" who wins. I'd argue that's Job's point through this little sermon of his. Speaking of which he's not done!
- 36. Verse 14: Yet they say to God, 'Leave us alone! We have no desire to know your ways. <sup>15</sup> Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him? What would we gain by praying to him?'
  - a) Before we move on, remember that Job didn't expect his three friends to be moved by any of this. This lecture opened in effect with Job saying, "Let me explain how God works and then you three can go back to mocking me!"
  - b) Therefore, Job just wanted to pound the point that he wasn't suffering due to any sin that he had committed. That's why this speech is here. Again, speaking of which:
  - c) Job's doing his imitation of someone who's ignoring God. To paraphrase, whoever Job is describing, he's saying, "Why should I bother to pray to God, my life is good as it is!" It's an "I don't need God's help" lecture in these verses.
  - d) Obviously there are many people who only turn to God when life is falling apart. I really wonder if God's thinking about them, "Good to hear from you. Been a while! Good thing that I allowed that to happen." Does that mean we'll suffer less if we pray regularly? No. It means we're trusting in the God of the Universe to guide our lives. Can't ask for better help than that to help us through life!
- 37. Verse 16: But their prosperity is not in their own hands, so I stand aloof from the counsel of the wicked.
  - a) Time for one more very loose translation: The successful people who ignore God all their lives don't realize God's the one who gave them that ability to prosper in the first place. It is a reminder of why God created us in the first place: Due to His love for us. He desires a relationship with us after we trust that He exists, died for our sins and commit our lives to serving Him. (Nothing like sneaking the Gospel message in here!)
  - b) Then Job takes a stab at his three friends. It's as if he knows their counsel isn't godly, even though they speak "Sunday school" talk, Job can tell they don't have love in their hearts. It is a sad commentary and ties well to my opening comments about how Satan is working behind the scenes all through this story. OK then, back to Job.
- 38. Verse 17: "Yet how often is the lamp of the wicked snuffed out? How often does calamity come upon them, the fate God allots in his anger? <sup>18</sup> How often are they like straw before the wind, like chaff swept away by a gale?
  - a) Job's asking the question, "How often do non-God fearing people really suffer in this life? It's a timeless truth that most people who ignore God still go on with their lives as if He's a non-issue and it doesn't affect any other aspect of their lives. Remember that the reason God created us in the first place is to have a relationship with Him! Life's about His love flowing through us and helping others by His power. That's what Job's three friends fail to see here. That's why Job's getting a little sarcastic at this point in his response.
- 39. Verse 19: It is said, 'God stores up a man's punishment for his sons.' Let him repay the man himself, so that he will know it!
  - a) The "it is said" part is not biblical. Yes children often suffer due to the sins and faults that their parents commit, but it doesn't mean God children due to parent's sins. In fact one of the biblical laws is that children should not be punished for parent's sins. (Deuteronomy 24:16.) The reason Job's making this point is so his friends can't say, "Maybe it was your parents who did something horrid and caused you to suffer this way!"
- 40. Verse 20: Let his own eyes see his destruction; let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty.
  - a) Remember that Job's still lecturing about people who ignore God all their lives. Job fully admits that God will punish them eternally for ignoring Him. Realize Job's saying that he is sure everybody gets resurrected but many of those people will suffer eternally.

41. Verse 21: For what does he care about the family he leaves behind when his allotted months come to an end?
- a) This is one of those, "When you're dead you can't change the destiny of those who are still living" type of arguments. He's not saying that ungodly people don't care about the fate of for their own children. This is another, "When you're dead, your dead" arguments. He's making this point as to show that even when the wicked die, others don't learn from it.
42. Verse 22: "Can anyone teach knowledge to God, since he judges even the highest?
- a) Job's stating the point that God judges all people who ever lived. It includes the greatest to the lowest of people. It even includes judging angels since they too have free will!
  - b) The underlying point to Job's three friends is, "Do you think you can speak for God?"
43. Verse 23: One man dies in full vigor, completely secure and at ease,<sup>24</sup> his body well nourished, his bones rich with marrow.<sup>25</sup> Another man dies in bitterness of soul, never having enjoyed anything good.<sup>26</sup> Side by side they lie in the dust, and worms cover them both.
- a) Job's essential point is many people go through life as if God doesn't matter. That includes wealthy as well as poor people. Eventually they all die. The reason he's stating all of this is because Job's friends are saying God punishes us in this lifetime. Job's response is many people go through life ignoring God and they all end up dead one day!
44. Verse 27: "I know full well what you are thinking, the schemes by which you would wrong me.<sup>28</sup> You say, 'Where now is the great man's house, the tents where wicked men lived?'
- a) Job's saying what he believes his friends are thinking, "Job you've lost all your possessions to wicked people and that's the evidence that God judges people in this lifetime!" He has effectively responded by saying, "That's not how life works. Many wicked people live out their lives with no problems. Many innocent people suffer. However, none of that is any indication of God judging people in this lifetime!" There is a judgment but it won't come until the next life, to state the obvious one more time! The underlying point here is all the accusations that Job's friends are making about him, are not true! Job rebukes them as he explains how "this life" really works.
45. Verse 29: Have you never questioned those who travel? Have you paid no regard to their accounts--<sup>30</sup> that the evil man is spared from the day of calamity, that he is delivered from the day of wrath?<sup>31</sup> Who denounces his conduct to his face? Who repays him for what he has done?<sup>32</sup> He is carried to the grave, and watch is kept over his tomb.<sup>33</sup> The soil in the valley is sweet to him; all men follow after him, and a countless throng goes before him.
- a) Job gives an interesting illustration to wrap up his response. In effect he's saying, "Go ask a traveling salesman about how life works. Talk to people who travel a lot and see lots of things about how good and evil men live "side by side" and nothing horrid happens to the evil person in this lifetime! That's the essence of this argument.
  - b) Verse 33 then makes the point that others follow after evil men? Why is that? Because it is a false-argument that "crime pays" because they see people get away with stuff. Need a modern example? Hollywood is full of very successful people who ignore God. Many do want to be like them because of their fame or financial success. What many people fail to see is how miserable such people are despite having all that success. As someone who's lived in the background of that world, I know there is a lot of "substance abuse" as well as other downfalls because in the end all that success doesn't satisfy the soul. This is another good argument that we're all built with a need to worship something, and God is waiting for us to satisfy that need by worshipping Him.
  - c) OK then, last verse! (Hey four chapters in one lesson, I think that's pretty good!)
46. Verse 34: "So how can you console me with your nonsense? Nothing is left of your answers but falsehood!"
- a) At this point, Job "brings it home" by saying, "Is all these arguments you're making going to make me feel any better? All of your answers fail to answer the basic question of why it is I'm suffering in the first place!

- b) You'd think that Job's "drop the mike" moment here would get his critics to shut up. No it does not and it just gets them to "dig their heels in" even more. That's why we have a few more rounds of this debate, before God Himself comes on the scene as if to say, "I've had enough of all of this, everybody shut up and let Me explain how the world works since I made it in the first place!"
  - c) Hopefully you can all see after four chapters why I called this lesson, "How to be a good witness for God no matter what" as Job is a great witness for God despite all the pain he is suffering. You can also see how Satan was "pulling the strings" behind the arguments for the other three men as they lack any love while making their points.
  - d) Therefore, let's move on to the closing prayer and ask God to fill us with His love so we'll use our lives as a living witness for Him!
47. Let's pray: Heavenly Father, First of all we thank you that we are "One of yours". Help us to use our lives as a living witness for You. May the Holy Spirit guide us so that we use the time you've given us to make a difference for You. Make it obvious to us what it is You desire of us and guide us as we use our time for Your glory! We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.