

Job

The book of Job is fascinating – and it's not as well-known as you might think. What most people know about it goes something like this: Job was an upright man, but Satan persuaded God to give him permission to destroy Job's life. After Satan destroyed his life Job complained a lot, then God talked to Job, then Job got all his wealth back. The End.

The trouble with this summary is that people usually skip the entire middle section of Job. They're familiar with the first two chapters and they know how the book ends, but the rest is sort of a blur. This is unfortunate, because the middle chapters of Job are really the heart of the book. When we act as if the book of Job is just three chapters long we shortchange ourselves. The other chapters are there for a reason, and it's not because the Bible was too short and God was trying to stretch it out.

What I'd like to do is take a look at the book of Job – the *entire* book of Job, not just the parts at the beginning and the end.

The beginning of the story is pretty well-known. Job was an upright man:

Job 1:1: “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.”

Job had 10 children:

Job 1:2: “And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.”

He also had great wealth:

Job 1:3: “His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.”

Given the fact that Job was already an old man when these events happened (Job 38:21), and that he lived 140 years after these events (Job 42:16), that implies that Job lived to be 200 to 300 years old. The only time in history when people lived that long was shortly after the Flood. Job was probably born sometime between the Flood (~2348 BC) and the birth of Abraham (~2056 BC). Given the lifespans of the people involved, it's possible that Job and Noah were alive at the same time. It's also possible that Job was still alive when Abraham was born.

Job was such an astoundingly good person that when Satan went to Heaven to present himself to God, the Lord asked the devil about Job:

Job 1:7: “And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

8 And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?”

There is a great deal that can be said about Satan's access to Heaven and his ability to accuse people before God, but since I've talked about that elsewhere I'm not going to repeat it here. The main point I want to make is that *the Lord was actually bragging about Job's righteousness!* God Himself said that Job was “perfect and upright” and that there was *no one else like him on Earth*. Job was literally the most upright person on the planet. (If Noah was still alive when this happened – and there's no way to know if that is the case – then that would mean that Job was even more upright than Noah.)

As we know, Satan claimed that he was not impressed. He said that Job was only serving God because God had given him great wealth. He asked God for permission to destroy Job's life, and the Lord granted it:

Job 1:9: “Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?
10 Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.
11 But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.
12 And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.”

Satan wasted no time. He immediately took away all of Job's possessions – including his servants and family:

Job 1:16: “While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.
17 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.
18 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house:
19 And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.”

One thing I'd like to point out is that the body count in these verses is quite high. Job's servants *and* his ten children were all killed in order to test Job's faith. The Bible doesn't tell us how many servants Job had (only that he had a “very great household”), but it's quite likely that dozens of people died here. These people were not killed because they had done something wrong; they were killed because God was using Satan to test Job's faith. Let me say that again: lots of people were killed in brutal ways (fire from heaven, the sword of the Chaldeans, etc.) in order to test *Job*. This opens up a whole world of possibilities: how many times has something happened to us because God is testing *someone else*? We often think that everything that happens to us is somehow related to us, but that might not be the case at all.

To get back to the story – in one day Job lost everything, including his children. Interestingly,

though, Job did *not* lose his wife. When Satan took away everything that was a blessing to Job, he did not touch his wife. The only thing we know about her is that she urged Job to curse God and die. Her entire testimony boils down to this: when Satan was trying to make Job miserable he left her alive, and she tried to get Job to sin. I know people have tried to defend Job's wife, but think about it: if she had actually been a blessing to Job then do you really think that Satan would have spared her? The fact that the devil took away everything Job had *except for her* is not a good sign.

As we know, despite this untold disaster Job refused to curse God. Instead, he actually blessed Him:

Job 1:20: "Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped,

21 And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

22 In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."

Job clearly believed that God was in control of what happened and that God had every right to give him wealth and take it away. Job said that God was acting within His divine prerogative, and Job fell down and worshiped God. This is astounding and testifies to the genuineness of Job's faith. Job actually *blessed* God instead of cursing Him.

This did not go unnoticed. The next time Satan came to present himself to God the Lord again brought up the subject of Job:

Job 2:1: "Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord.

2 And the Lord said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

3 And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause."

One thing to notice is that in both cases *God* is the one who brought up the subject of Job – not just once, but twice. Satan did not single out Job for persecution; instead, God mentioned Job and essentially used him to taunt Satan. God told Satan that he was wrong: even though Job had lost everything he had, he was still upright and he still held on to his integrity.

Also, notice that God clearly says that Job was destroyed *without cause*. This is going to become a very important point. None of this happened because Job had sinned; all of this was just a test of Job's integrity.

To the surprise of no one, Satan did not admit he was wrong. Instead he said that God just hadn't cursed Job enough. He asked for permission to destroy Job's health, and God granted it:

Job 2:4: "And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.

5 But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.

6 And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life.”

One thing to keep in mind is that God already knew how this was going to play out. God is omniscient; He has all knowledge. He knew what was going to happen when Satan did this and He knew how it was all going to end. God was *not* doing this because He wanted to see what Job would do. God was not curious or hoping to learn something.

The devil did not waste any time. He immediately struck Job with a very painful disease:

Job 2:7: “So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.

8 And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes.”

Job had now lost everything he had, and his health was destroyed as well. At this point his wife urged him to curse God and die:

Job 2:9: “Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.”

Despite all of this, however, Job still did not curse God:

Job 2:10: “But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.”

Job's wife asked him to curse God, and he refused. The Bible then says that Job did not sin with his lips. Does that mean that Job sinned in his heart, or perhaps in his thoughts? It's tempting to think so, but the text doesn't actually say that. It could easily have said “Job refused to curse God out loud, but he did sin inwardly”, but it doesn't. All we know for sure is that when his wife tempted him he refused. That is a point in Job's favor.

Notice also the argument that Job makes. “Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” That is a remarkable statement! People just don't think that way anymore. When something pleasant happens to us we rejoice, but when we face a grievous trial it's a very different story. Very few people ever echo this verse. Instead people say “How could you do this to me God? What were You thinking?” The truth is that Job was right: God *is* supreme and has every right to send us pleasant things or difficult trials. We are His creation; He is the potter and we are the clay. As hard as it is, we must be willing to receive both good *and* evil from the hand of God. Even Christ had to endure the cross.

This is the part where people tend to skip over to the end, but we're not going to do that. Instead we are going to press bravely on. There are 39 more chapters to cover before we get to the end, and those chapters are *not* mere filler material.

Job was not left alone in his plight. When his friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar found out what happened, they came to visit him. What they saw left them literally speechless:

Job 2:11: “Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him.

12 And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven.

13 So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.”

Job's suffering was so extreme that his friends didn't even recognize him. They were so overcome with grief that they sat down with him and said nothing *for an entire week*. They were deeply moved.

Eventually Job broke the silence and started talking. He cursed the day he was born:

Job 3:3: “Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived.”

He wished that he had never been born at all:

Job 3:11: “Why died I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?”

Job asked why life was given to people who are in great misery and who long for death:

Job 3:20: “Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul;

21 Which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures;

22 Which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad, when they can find the grave?”

As we can see, Job was *intensely* unhappy. He was in tremendous pain and he wanted to die. His friends, however, decided to *not* comfort him. Throughout this entire experience they never said anything like “Oh, your poor thing. You must feel awful. Is there anything I can do to help?” Instead they tell Job over and over that *he* is the problem.

Eliphaz is the first friend to speak up, and he told Job that these things were happening to him because he was a bad person. No one who is innocent ever suffers. Only the wicked have problems:

Job 4:7: “Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?

8 Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.”

Now, you and I know that Eliphaz was completely wrong. *God Himself* actually said that Job was perfect and upright, and that the disasters that fell upon Job happened “without cause”. Job actually *was* an innocent person who was suffering. Besides, Eliphaz' entire point is wrong: innocent people are

killed all the time, while the wicked lead long and prosperous lives (which is a point Job will make later in the book).

Eliphaz, however, was not done. He went on to tell Job that the reason God killed all 10 of his children was because Job was a very wicked person. It was all Job's fault:

Job 5:2: “For wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one.
3 I have seen the foolish taking root: but suddenly I cursed his habitation.
4 His children are far from safety, and they are crushed in the gate, neither is there any to deliver them.”

After blaming Job for the death of his children, Eliphaz told Job that he should be happy that God was correcting him, because after Job repented and learned his lesson God would make everything better:

Job 5:17: “Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty:
18 For he maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole.”

Once again, Eliphaz was *completely* wrong. Job's children were not killed because Job had done something wrong. However, Eliphaz does illustrate why Satan chose to keep Job's friends alive: the three of them actually made the situation even *worse*. They just piled on to Job and made him even more frustrated.

Job responded by reminding his friends that he was a very unhappy person who was drowning in grief:

Job 6:2: “Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together!
3 For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea: therefore my words are swallowed up.”

Sadly, Job's constant reminders that he was suffering never did any good. None of his three friends ever said anything comforting or supporting. All three of them just went from bad to worse. Job told Eliphaz that he had *not* sinned and that his friends were *not* helping:

Job 6:25: “How forcible are right words! but what doth your arguing reprove?
26 Do ye imagine to reprove words, and the speeches of one that is desperate, which are as wind?
27 Yea, ye overwhelm the fatherless, and ye dig a pit for your friend.”

Job repeated that *he was really suffering* and that he had lost all hope:

Job 7:5: “My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken, and become loathsome.
6 My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope.
7 O remember that my life is wind: mine eye shall no more see good.”

After this moving speech from Job, Bildad spoke up. He ignored everything Job said and told him that he was a liar:

Job 8:2: "How long wilt thou speak these things? and how long shall the words of thy mouth be like a strong wind?"

Bildad insisted that if Job was truly a good person then God would be blessing him:

Job 8:6: "If thou wert pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous.
7 Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase."

Once again we see that his friends had no words of compassion for Job. Instead they called him a liar and accused him of being a very evil person. They will actually spend the entire book insisting that Job was a bad, bad, bad man. (With friends like these who needs enemies?)

Job maintained his innocence (because, after all, *he really was innocent*), and wished that he could somehow reason with God:

Job 9:15: "Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer, but I would make supplication to my judge."

Job wanted to bring his case before God and ask God why he was being treated this way. Why was God oppressing an innocent man? Didn't God know that it was wrong to oppress the innocent?

Job 10:2: "I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.
3 Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress, that thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked?"

Job wanted to remind God that men were fragile and that life was short. He thought that God's eternal existence had caused the Lord to forget what life was really like:

Job 10:4: "Hast thou eyes of flesh? or seest thou as man seeth?
5 Are thy days as the days of man? are thy years as man's days,
6 That thou enquirest after mine iniquity, and searchest after my sin?"

Job thought it was bitterly unfair that God was oppressing him. What made it even worse was that there was no way to escape from God's power:

Job 10:7: "Thou knowest that I am not wicked; and there is none that can deliver out of thine hand.
8 Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about; yet thou dost destroy me."

I'd like to make a few comments about this before I go on. First of all, notice that Job believed that God had somehow made a mistake, or done something wrong, or was just plain out of touch. Job

knew that he was innocent but he could not understand why he was suffering; he therefore came to the conclusion that God was doing something wrong. He wanted to confront God in person so that he could tell God that He had made a mistake. This is the sin of Job and this is why God condemns Job at the end of the book. Job never comes out and curses God, but he does say “I am righteous, so therefore God must be wrong”.

As we read this story thousands of years later it's easy to look at Job and condemn him. After all, Job *was* wrong and God *did* condemn Job. What we tend to overlook, though, is that *we do the very same thing*. How many people respond to tragedy by saying “God, how could you do such a thing?” When something terrible enters our lives we tend to react as if God had no right to do what He did, and that God is somehow unjust in treating us that way. We commit the very same sin that Job committed and we do it for the very same reason. This sort of thing happens all the time, but we rarely stop to think about what we're doing.

The truth is that God is completely righteous, holy, just, and good. Everything that He does is the right thing to do, no matter how much it might hurt us. All of His ways are right and all of His judgments are just. Just because it seems unjust doesn't mean that it actually *is* unjust. There was a great deal going on here that Job didn't know about. Instead of trusting God, though, he condemned Him, and we are tempted to commit the same sin.

Next, Zophar spoke up. He told Job that he was a liar and that God had punished him less than he deserved:

Job 11:3: “Should thy lies make men hold their peace? and when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?
4 For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes.
5 But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee;
6 And that he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.”

Furthermore, Zophar said that if Job just repented of his sin, God would make everything better:

Job 11:13: “If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands toward him;
14 If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles.
15 For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be stedfast, and shalt not fear:
16 Because thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away:”

He closed by saying that God was against the wicked:

Job 11:20: “But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost.”

All three of Job's friends had now had a chance to speak, and not a single one of them comforted Job. Instead all three condemned him. They all insisted that Job was being cursed because he

was evil, and that if he just repented all would be well again.

Needless to say, Job was not amused. He called his friends liars and asked them to be silent:

Job 13:4: “But ye are forgers of lies, ye are all physicians of no value.
5 O that ye would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom.”

Job wanted to know why God considered him to be His enemy:

Job 13:24: “Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?”

Notice the thought process here: Job believed that since God had taken everything away from him, God must be upset with Job about something. Job knew that he was innocent, so he wanted to argue his case with God and get Him to change His mind. He was convinced that God had made a mistake.

It's very easy for us to do exactly what Job did. As we know, God actually was *not* upset with Job; in fact, God was quite proud of him! The reason all of these things were happening was because God was testing him. Likewise, the reason Job's children were crushed to death was not because they had sinned; it was to test Job. It's true that God does judge sin, but sometimes God brings trials into our lives that are not connected to sin at all. Sometimes God allows things to happen to test our faith and see if we will trust Him when things are at their very bleakest.

Job, however, was not done. He said he was upset that death was permanent. He longed for God to resurrect His people:

Job 14:12: “So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.

13 O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!

14 If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.”

Interestingly, Job later said that he knew his Redeemer was coming and that God would raise him from the dead. Despite what he said here, Job evidently *did* believe that there was going to be a resurrection. I think these verses represent a time when Job's despair got the better of him.

One thing the Bible is quite clear about is that the dead *will* live again. Jesus plainly told us that those who believe on Him shall never die (John 11:25-26) and that God would raise him up at that last day (John 6:40). Through Christ we do have everlasting life. Job longed for a resurrection, and thanks to Jesus we know that resurrection is a certainty. God really has given us everlasting life. Those who believe on Christ *will* live again, and that is an exciting thing. We do not have to feel hopelessness.

Eliphaz spoke up again and called Job a liar:

Job 15:3: “Should he reason with unprofitable talk? or with speeches wherewith he can do no good?

4 Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God.

5 For thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity, and thou chooseth the tongue of the crafty.

6 Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I: yea, thine own lips testify against thee.”

He went on to say that he and his friends were a lot older than Job, so Job should just be quiet and listen to them:

Job 15:9: “What knowest thou, that we know not? what understandest thou, which is not in us?

10 With us are both the grayheaded and very aged men, much elder than thy father.”

Needless to say, Eliphaz was committing a logical fallacy. Being older does not automatically make your arguments true. Saying “Well, I’m older than you, so there!” is actually pretty childish. Job’s three friends may have been old, but pretty much everything they said was wrong and God condemned them at the end of the book. Being old does *not* automatically mean that you know what you’re talking about.

Eliphaz argued that Job couldn’t possibly be righteous because everyone was a sinner:

Job 15:15: “Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight.

16 How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?”

Now it’s true that all have sinned, and it’s also true that there are none who are righteous. However, I’d like to point out that the person who called Job righteous was *God Himself*. Eliphaz, therefore, was wrong.

After telling Job that he was *definitely* an awful person who drinks iniquity like water, Eliphaz explained that the lives of the wicked are full of pain:

Job 15:20: “The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days, and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor.”

Job’s pain, therefore, was happening because he was such a wicked person.

Job told Eliphaz that he was wrong and that his friends were utterly failing to comfort him:

Job 16:2: “I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all.”

By now Job noticed that his friends had spent all their time painting him as a hideously evil monster and had not said a single comforting thing. He told them that if their positions were reversed he would be kind to them and strengthen them:

Job 16:4: “I also could speak as ye do: if your soul were in my soul’s stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you.

5 But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief.”

Job then resumed his complaints against God. He said that God had delivered him over to the hands of the wicked:

Job 16:11: "God hath delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over into the hands of the wicked."

He wished once again that he could argue his case before God:

Job 16:21: "O that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbour!"

Job said that he had become a byword:

Job 17:6: "He hath made me also a byword of the people; and aforetime I was as a tabret."

He also added that all of his friends were idiots:

Job 17:10: "But as for you all, do ye return, and come now: for I cannot find one wise man among you."

As you might imagine, his friends were not happy about being called idiots. Bildad was pretty irritated about it and tried to defend himself:

Job 18:3: "Wherefore are we counted as beasts, and reputed vile in your sight?"

I have to say that in this case I am on Job's side: throughout this entire event his friends showed a complete lack of wisdom and compassion. They would have been much better off if they had just remained silent.

Bildad went on to say that bad things happened to bad people. He apparently believed that if he just said it enough times Job would eventually agree:

Job 18:5: "Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine."

All three of his friends had been repeating the same thing: only evil people suffer, so since Job was suffering he must be evil. If Job repented then God would bless him and everything would be fine, because nothing bad ever happens to good people.

By now Job had pretty much had it with his friends. He asked them how long they were going to keep bothering him:

Job 19:2: "How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words?
3 These ten times have ye reproached me: ye are not ashamed that ye make yourselves strange to me."

Job then turned his attention back to God. He cried out that God had wronged him and no one

cared:

Job 19:6: “Know now that God hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me with his net.
7 Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there is no judgment.”

Job said his life was so bad that his friends, his family, and even small children despised him:

Job 19:18: “Yea, young children despised me; I arose, and they spake against me.”

Job begged his friends to have pity on him:

Job 19:21: “Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me.”

For the record, his friends never did take pity on him. They insisted on condemning Job, right up until God Himself confronted them and condemned *them* for being fools.

Interestingly, Job wished that his words were printed in a book:

Job 19:23: “Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book!

24 That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!”

Job got his wish; his words (and the words of his friends) *were* printed in a book. Considering how the story turned out, I wonder if he regrets making that statement. If it was me I'd rather *not* have 39 chapters of the Bible dedicated to me and my friends making utter fools of ourselves. Don't get me wrong – I'm glad the book of Job is in the Bible; I'm just wondering if perhaps this didn't turn out the way Job expected. Job believed that God had wronged him, but in reality he was the one who wronged God.

Interestingly, despite what Job said earlier, he really did believe in the resurrection:

Job 19:25: “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

26 And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

27 Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.”

Job knew that in the latter days his “redeemer” would come, and he knew that even though he would die he would see God “in my flesh”. There is an interesting tension here between Job's earlier cries of “death is the end!” and “after death I will see God in the flesh”. Once again, I think the earlier statement was just Job's despair getting the better of his judgment.

Zophar, however, was quick to squash Job's hope. He told Job that the triumph of wicked hypocrites like Job was short, and that he would perish forever:

Job 20:5: “That the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment?

6 Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds;

7 Yet he shall perish for ever like his own dung: they which have seen him shall say, Where is he?”

Zophar said God would do this because Job had done incredibly evil things:

Job 20:19: “Because he hath oppressed and hath forsaken the poor; because he hath violently taken away an house which he builded not;”

Apparently it wasn't enough for Zophar to call Job a liar; now he was accusing Job of terrible crimes – crimes for which there was absolutely no evidence at all. No one had any proof that Job had done those things, and in fact *Job hadn't done those things*. But that didn't stop Job's friends! They just made things up and charged him with every awful crime they could think of.

Job spoke up and asked if he could get a word in before they continued mocking him:

Job 21:3: “Suffer me that I may speak; and after that I have spoken, mock on.”

Job pointed out that despite what his three friends had been saying, the wicked led very comfortable lives and the hand of God was not against them:

Job 21:7: “Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?

8 Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes.

9 Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them.”

What Job was saying was that the entire idea that bad things only happen to bad people and that good things only happen to good people is actually completely wrong – *and Job was right*. There are many cases where good people (like Jesus Christ) suffered awful things (like being crucified), while terrible people led long and healthy lives. The entire premise of his friends' argument was wrong.

Job did add that ultimately the wicked would be judged by God:

Job 21:19: “God layeth up his iniquity for his children: he rewardeth him, and he shall know it.

20 His eyes shall see his destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty.”

Job ended by telling his friends that they were completely wrong:

Job 21:34: “How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood?”

Eliphaz, however, refused to listen. Despite the complete lack of evidence, he doubled down and said that Job's iniquities were infinite and that his crimes had no end:

Job 22:5: “Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite?

6 For thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought, and stripped the naked of their clothing.

7 Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry.”

Eliphaz told Job that he thought he could hide his sins from God, but he was wrong:

Job 22:13: “And thou sayest, How doth God know? can he judge through the dark cloud?”

Eliphaz said that if Job just repented then gold would rain down from the sky and he would become wealthy again:

Job 22:23: “If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles.

24 Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks.

25 Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver.”

As you can see, Job's friends were no longer merely wrong; they were now *ludicrously* wrong. They went far beyond accusing Job of sin and now accused Job of an infinite list of high crimes against humanity. They furthermore claimed that if Job just repented then God would bless Job with great wealth, because God always makes sure that all good people are extremely wealthy.

These arguments are utterly laughable, and that is exactly why Job was mocking them. Job knew what his friends refused to admit: that the righteous suffer, that some men of integrity are quite poor, and that there are wicked men who are powerful and rich. Job therefore ignored his friends and turned his attention back to God. He wished once again that he could argue his case with God. He was convinced that if he could just talk to God that God would fix things and strengthen him:

Job 23:3: “Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!

4 I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.

5 I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me.

6 Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me.”

Interestingly, Job turned out to be completely wrong. God actually *did* plead against Job with His great power. God did *not* strengthen Job; instead He put Job in his place. God broke Job's pride and made him realize that he had no right to condemn God.

Job argued that he was a good person who highly esteemed God's commands:

Job 23:11: “My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined.

12 Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the

words of his mouth more than my necessary food.”

Job said he was scared of God because God did as He pleased and no one could stop Him:

Job 23:13: “But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.

14 For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him.

15 Therefore am I troubled at his presence: when I consider, I am afraid of him.”

As you can see, Job really wanted a God who was accountable *to him* – a God that Job could control. At the end of the book God reminds Job that the Lord has infinite power and wisdom, and that Job's wisdom and strength are utterly nothing in comparison. God will not be held accountable by anyone and does not have to explain His actions. Mankind may wish to judge God, but the Lord is the great Judge and He will judge us all.

After Job said once again that he was a good person who had done nothing wrong, Job talked about all the awful sins of the wicked:

Job 24:2: “Some remove the landmarks; they violently take away flocks, and feed thereof.

3 They drive away the ass of the fatherless, they take the widow's ox for a pledge.

4 They turn the needy out of the way: the poor of the earth hide themselves together.”

Job said that despite all of this, the wicked often got away with it:

Job 24:12: “Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out: yet God layeth not folly to them.”

In other words, God allows the wicked to get away with all kinds of horrible sins and does nothing to stop them. He allows them to do terrible abominations and they do not suffer for it; instead they lead comfortable lives.

This does not last forever, though. Ultimately the wicked are judged:

Job 24:24: “They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low; they are taken out of the way as all other, and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn.”

Here Job is reminding his friends of a very obvious fact: the wicked are *not* always punished immediately for their sins, and in fact many evil people lead long and prosperous lives. His speech about the terrible crimes that the wicked get away with must have been quite convincing, because after this his friends don't have much to say. The only friend who speaks up again is Bildad, and his pitiful speech only lasts six verses. Bildad feebly protested that no one could possibly be considered righteous in God's sight, so Job *must* be a bad person:

Job 25:4: “How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?”

Bildad might have had just six verses, but after this Job *really* goes off and talks for *seven straight chapters*. Job repeats yet again that God had taken away his judgment and vexed him:

Job 27:2: “As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment; and the Almighty, who hath vexed my soul,”

Job said that he wished he was back in the good times, when life was grand:

Job 29:2: “Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me;”

Job said that now he was utterly despised by the lowest class of people:

Job 30:1: “But now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock.”

Job said that he obeyed God and served Him, but in return God had treated him with cruelty:

Job 30:21: “Thou art become cruel to me: with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me.”

Job finished by saying that he absolutely has *not* sinned, and he wishes that God would answer him:

Job 31:35: “Oh that one would hear me! behold, my desire is, that the Almighty would answer me, and that mine adversary had written a book.”

Job's final argument was a summary of what he had been saying all along: he insisted that since he was a good person, God was doing something wrong. He believed that the Lord had erred and he wished that he could talk with Him and set God straight.

Interestingly, Job's three friends never condemned him for this line of reasoning. In fact, they never responded to it at all. Since they had been unable to convince Job that he was an evil monster, they just gave up:

Job 32:1: “So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.”

After all of this Elihu speaks up. Elihu was not one of Job's three friends. The Bible says that he was someone who had been standing around listening but had been afraid to speak up because of his youth:

Job 32:6: “And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said, I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not shew you mine opinion. 7 I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.”

Elihu said he decided to speak up because he realized that Job's friends were fools:

Job 32:9: "Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment.

10 Therefore I said, Harken to me; I also will shew mine opinion."

The reason he was motivated to speak up was because Job had spent his entire time justifying himself *instead of justifying God*:

Job 32:2: "Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram: against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God."

Elihu began by pointing out that Job has essentially been saying "I am a good person and yet God is against me":

Job 33:8: "Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing, and I have heard the voice of thy words, saying,

9 I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me.

10 Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy,

11 He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths."

Elihu condemned Job for this line of reasoning. He pointed out that God was not accountable to Job:

Job 33:12: "Behold, in this thou art not just: I will answer thee, that God is greater than man.

13 Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters."

Elihu said that God was greater and wiser than man, and He did not have to give an account of himself to anyone. Elihu went on to point out that Job had actually claimed to be more righteous than God:

Job 34:5: "For Job hath said, I am righteous: and God hath taken away my judgment."

Elihu said that Job's line of reasoning was utter nonsense because God was wholly righteous and never did evil:

Job 34:10: "Therefore hearken unto me ye men of understanding: far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity."

Elihu said Job should have asked God to teach him the things he could not see and to show Job if he had sinned:

Job 34:31: “Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more:

32 That which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.”

Elihu said that Job's real problem was that he had been condemning God:

Job 34:37: “For he addeth rebellion unto his sin, he clappeth his hands among us, and multiplieth his words against God.”

Elihu added that it was utterly wrong for Job to claim that he was more righteous than God:

Job 35:2: “Thinkest thou this to be right, that thou saidst, My righteousness is more than God's?”

Interestingly, Elihu urged Job to remember the unsearchable greatness of God by pondering His creation:

Job 36:26: “Behold, God is great, and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out.

27 For he maketh small the drops of water: they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof:

28 Which the clouds do drop and distil upon man abundantly.”

As we will see in a minute, God will later use this same line of reasoning. When the Lord speaks to Job He will use examples from His creation to illustrate His greatness.

Elihu finishes by reminding Job that God does things that we cannot comprehend, and His creation illustrates this:

Job 37:5: “God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend.

6 For he saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth; likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of his strength.”

This is the last we hear from Elihu; he is not mentioned again, and if Job had anything to say in response it is not recorded. After this something unexpected happens: God Himself comes and talks to Job. All throughout Job's discussion with his friends he had repeatedly wished that he could talk to God, and after Elihu finished Job got his wish.

Now, it's worth taking a moment to stop and realize what God did *not* say. God never told Job what was actually going on. God never explained to Job that he was being tested or that Satan had accused him. The Lord does not encourage Job or explain what was going on. Instead He rebuked him:

Job 38:1: “Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said,
2 Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?”

God demanded to know where Job was when He created the world:

Job 38:4: “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.

5 Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?

6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof;

7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

Why did God say this? Well, remember, Job's whole argument had been “God is out of touch and I know more than He does; God made a mistake and wronged me and I need to set Him straight.” God is essentially saying “All right, Job, if you're so great then where were you when I created the world? If you really know everything then answer my questions:”

Job 38:16: “Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth?

17 Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?

18 Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? declare if thou knowest it all.”

God then started talking about His creation. Is Job the one who created the animals? Do the birds fly by Job's wisdom?

Job 39:26: “Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings toward the south?

27 Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high?”

God finished by saying that since Job was daring to instruct God, then let him answer these questions. If Job really thinks that he knows more than God then let him prove it:

Job 40:1: “Moreover the Lord answered Job, and said,

2 Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it.”

Job was horrified. He realized that he had sinned, and he had nothing to say:

Job 40:3: “Then Job answered the Lord, and said,

4 Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.

5 Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further.”

But God is not done. The Lord condemned Job for daring to condemn Him:

Job 40:6: “Then answered the Lord unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said,

7 Gird up thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

8 Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be

righteous?"

God told Job that if he really was so great and powerful then he should step up and prove it:

Job 40:9: "Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?
10 Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty.
11 Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath: and behold every one that is proud, and abase him.
12 Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place.
13 Hide them in the dust together; and bind their faces in secret.
14 Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee."

Job, of course, could do none of these things.

God went on to talk about the astounding creatures He had made (the behemoth and the leviathan) and reminded Job that *everything* belongs to Him:

Job 41:11: "Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him? whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine."

Throughout the entire book Job had stubbornly held on to his pride, to such an extent that he was willing to *condemn God Himself*. God, however, was not pleased. While He does lift up the humble, He resists the proud:

James 4:6: "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

Job's speeches utterly lacked any trace of humility. He proudly insisted that he was right and God was wrong. Because of this, when God met him He did *not* lift him up; instead He rebuked Job and reminded him that God was great and Job was very small, weak, and foolish. God utterly broke Job's pride. By the time He was done Job repented:

Job 42:5: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.
6 Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

But the story is not yet done. Job was not the only person that God was upset with; He was also angry with Job's three friends. God tells them that His wrath is against them:

Job 42:7: "And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.
8 Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall

pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job.

9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the Lord commanded them: the Lord also accepted Job."

Interestingly, God never condemns Elihu, the young man who condemned Job for condemning God.

After Job prayed for his three friends, God restored the wealth and prosperity of Job:

Job 42:10: "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.

11 Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold.

12 So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses.

13 He had also seven sons and three daughters."

As we can see in verse 13, Job had ten more children. He lived for another 140 years and saw his children to the 4th generation:

Job 42:16: "After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations.

17 So Job died, being old and full of days."

Interestingly, this is not the last mention of Job in the Old Testament. He is also mentioned in the book of Ezekiel, where the Lord holds him up as an example of a righteous man:

Ezekiel 14:14: "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God."

When the Lord wanted to hold someone up as an example of incredible righteousness, he chose Noah, Daniel, and Job. That is quite a testimony! Yes, Job sinned, and yes, Job condemned God – but he repented of it and became a wiser man.