

Introduction

In the previous study based on chapter 30, Job was desperate to hear God's voice. Job has desired an audience with God for the simple reason of asking Him "Why?" Job begs to proclaim his innocence in the sense that the flaws of his humanity do not fit the ferocity of his affliction. As one who has placed his full confidence in God, it is reasonable to feel that God has betrayed him and even cut off His relationship with Job. When Job needed to hear God's voice, there was nothing but silence. Even worse, the suffering and affliction go on with no end in sight. This study follows God's breaking His silence and revealing Himself to Job. As always, God's revelation is on **His** terms and not man's.

Read verses 1-6

Have individuals read verses 1-6 from various translations. In the case of Job, the words are sometimes easier to understand in freer translations because Job quotes God twice in these verses. Here is a translation from The New Living Translation:

¹Then Job answered the LORD and said,

²"I know that You can do all things,
And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.

³"Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?"
Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand,
Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know."

⁴Hear, now, and I will speak;
I will ask You, and You instruct me.'

⁵I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear;
But now my eye sees You;

⁶Therefore I retract,
And I repent in dust and ashes."

¹Then Job replied to the LORD:

²"I know that you can do anything, and no one can stop you.

³You ask, 'Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorance?' It is I. And I was talking about things I did not understand, things far too wonderful for me.

⁴"You said, 'Listen and I will speak! I have some questions for you, and you must answer them.'

⁵"I had heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes. ⁶I take back everything I said, and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance."

Q: Review the context in which Job makes his response to the Lord. In what manner did God speak to Job? What is the purpose of the rhetorical questions? (Rhetorical questions are questions that need no answer because the answers are obvious and they tend to answer themselves by the very nature of the question.)

A: God has finally revealed Himself to Job beginning in chapter 38. God makes two speeches to Job by asking Job a series of rhetorical questions. In chapters 38 and 39 Job is asked questions about whether or not he can match God's handiwork in nature and in the animal kingdom. At the beginning of chapter 40, Job gives God a brief response that is tantamount to keeping his mouth shut (a wise thing to do). In chapter 41 God asks more rhetorical questions about whether or not Job can match God concerning His power. The purpose of the rhetorical questions is to contrast God's knowledge and power with that of Job's.

Q: Why is it important for God to respond in this manner to Job?

A: The point is to make it clear that man (Job) has neither the understanding nor the power to hold God accountable for His actions. That includes suffering.

Q: Does God ever tell Job why he suffered?

A: No. There is no indication that Job was ever told of the conversation that God had with Satan in chapters 1 & 2, and there is no indication that Job ever learned the reason behind his suffering. [Note: Who did God reveal chapters 1 & 2 to? Obviously, to the writer of the book, who wasn't Job.]

Q: When Job responds "It is I" to the question "Who is this that questions my wisdom?" how does this both vindicate and condemn Job?

A: It vindicates Job in that Job knew all along that God must have been behind the whole thing and had allowed calamity to come upon him without a good reason (from Job's point of view, a notion that greatly upset his three friends and did not fit with their theology). But it also condemns Job in the sense that, in his conclusion that God had allowed him to suffer, he also questioned God's judgment in doing so.

Q: What two lessons can we learn from Job's response, "It is I"?

A: First of all, it is possible that God will let good people experience bad things. (That means you and I can suffer because even though we know we're not perfect, there are plenty of people in the world who deserve much greater punishment than we.) Second, that we're not to question God's wisdom or judgment in allowing us to suffer. The point is that things go on in heaven that we don't know about for which we have to trust God's decisions.

Q: Why does God say to Job, "Listen and I will speak! I have some questions for you, and you must answer them"?

A: Because it's obvious that Job **can't** answer them. Point: God knows more than Job. (More than us, too.)

Q: How is verse 5 both an answer to prayer and a humbling moment for Job?

A: Because Job demanded an audience with God and now he has one. Unfortunately, now that he has one, he has nothing to say.

Q: How does Job repent?

A: He says, "I take back everything I said."

Application: Man has neither the understanding nor the power to hold God **accountable** for His **actions**—even suffering. Spiritual things are taking place outside of our **knowledge** for which we have to **trust** God.

⁷It came about after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, “My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has. ⁸Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves, and My servant Job will pray for you. For I will accept him so that I may not do with you according to your folly, because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has.” ⁹So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the LORD told them; and the LORD accepted Job.

¹⁰The LORD restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends, and the LORD increased all that Job had twofold. ¹¹Then all his brothers and all his sisters and all who had known him before came to him, and they ate bread with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversities that the LORD had brought on him. And each one gave him one piece of money, and each a ring of gold.

Read verses 7-17

Q: Does God ever get angry at Job for asking all his questions?

A: No. God never condemns Job for asking why. He only points out to him that he doesn't have all the information.

Q: Who does God get angry with, and why? What does God's statement mean to the three friends?

A: God gets angry at Job's three friends because, “*you have not been right in what you said about Me, as my servant Job was.*” This means that they were dead wrong in their assumption that Job was suffering because he had sinned.

Q: How was Job right and they wrong? (And who is omitted from the condemnation, and why?)

Job was right in his assertion that he was innocent and that God was allowing an innocent man to suffer. The one not condemned is Elihu because he was partly right; Job should not try to hold God accountable for His actions. Elihu, unlike the other three, didn't take the position that Job was suffering because of his sins, but took the position that Job had no right questioning God's judgment.

Q: How does the fact that God allowed an innocent man to suffer point to the cross?

A: God is going to allow the most innocent man of all to suffer, and the whole thing will have to do with the problem of evil (Satan).

Application: God does not condemn for asking ***why***, only those who presume to ***speak for Him***.

Overall Application

The Greatest Lesson of Job:

In Job God allowed an **innocent** man to suffer for His purposes in the course of dealing with **evil (Satan)**; it foreshadows when God will allow the most **innocent** man of all to suffer and die on the **cross** in the ultimate confrontation with **evil (Satan)**.

- How does the fact that God allows innocent people to suffer affect our concept of Him?
- Are you suffering? Does a theological discussion help alleviate the suffering? If not, what does?

¹²The LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had 14,000 sheep and 6,000 camels and 1,000 yoke of oxen and 1,000 female donkeys. ¹³He had seven sons and three daughters. ¹⁴He named the first Jemimah, and the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch. ¹⁵In all the land no women were found so fair as Job's daughters; and their father gave them inheritance among their brothers.

¹⁶After this, Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons and his grandsons, four generations. ¹⁷And Job died, an old man and full of days.

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