

The Book of Job Matthew King and Michael McKinney April 4, 2014

Mr. King, Introduction:

We're going to have an interesting format tonight. Mr. McKinney and I are both giving the Bible Study, and the focus is going to be the book of Job.

Job is a book which seems to have, depending on whom you talk to, many views and many interpretations, with regard to what the meaning and purpose actually is. While there are numerous interpretations, there are two major prevailing perspectives on the book of Job.

The first perspective is that of suffering. The book is often viewed as a book on suffering. It can be explained as an attempt to explain why good people suffer, how to endure suffering, a book explaining that the followers of Christ will suffer, etc.

The second general perspective is that of a condemnation of an individual who is being self-righteous. Over time, this perspective has received a lot of focus. After all, in the book, Job holds to the fact that he has done nothing wrong, seemingly until the very end. All the while, while he is holding to his belief that he's done nothing wrong, throughout the book, his friends chide him in an effort to help him see the error of his ways, and to understand that he has been self-righteous.

It is important to consider these perspectives briefly as we begin the study, to help lay the groundwork so that we can get to the heart of the matter and understand what is really going on in the book. These perspectives help us to establish that framework and foundation.

But as we consider these perspectives, there is one theme that we should spend a little time with that influences both these perspectives. And that theme is that God, especially what many refer to as the God of the Old Testament, is seen as a harsh being, as a cruel God.

In the commentary, "*Reading Job: A Literary and Theological Commentary*", by Larry Crenshaw, he espouses this idea that God is a harsh God, and he does it in a direct and, at the same time, a very contemplative way. In writing the commentary, Crenshaw evaluated many commentaries, interpretations, views and perspectives of Job and he boils them all down to this succinct statement,

"Regardless of the lens one uses when reading the book, Job's God [it's interesting to note that he refers to him as "Job's God"] transcends morality. For this reason, the book does not depict a comforting deity or an accommodating universe".

That statement summarizes what many see as troubling in the book. Here is a man, Job, who by all accounts, tries to do what is right, as he comprehends what is right and wrong, yet gets punished severely for trying to do what is right. This God, as Crenshaw identifies him, transcends or goes beyond the limits of morality—at least morality from *his view*. And in his view, this God spurns any semblance of comfort for Job and pursues His purpose in a harsh, and

demanding way that many of us wouldn't even consider being moral. That frames the view that many hold of the God of the Old Testament.

This view of the Eternal—what some would view as the God of the Old Testament—is not restricted to Crenshaw or to the book of Job, but is a more broadly-held view of God. That view of the Eternal as a harsh God is generally prevalent in society today. The harsh God of the Old Testament is contrasted frequently with the loving, kind, gentle Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

But this view of God is not something new. It's not something that we see just in modern times. We'll see this view even among Job's friends. But we will get back to that in a little while.

But back to the two main perspectives of the book: the concept of suffering and self-righteousness.

Job's trials are often viewed as an example of enduring suffering, as we mentioned before, at the hands of a difficult, inflexible and sometimes demanding God. The goal, as this perspective would encourage, is to learn to endure incredible suffering, all the while knowing that God is allowing the suffering so that he, Job, can learn to endure. Others view the book as a way of explaining why 'good' people suffer.

One of the best summaries that I have seen with regard to viewing the book from a suffering perspective is written by a Catholic priest, Charles Pope.

In trying to understand the meaning of suffering as presented in the book, Charles Pope postulates that the answer to the question "why suffering?" is a non-answer. He states, "***That is the answer of the book of Job. God answers our questions with more questions. It may not feel satisfying, but it is an answer.***"

When we evaluate the book of Job from a perspective of trying to understand suffering, the book is quiet. It doesn't have a lot to say on the reasons why. Obviously, we can learn lessons. There are principles we can take away from the book of Job with regard to suffering, but the book simply does not answer many of the questions we have with regard to why we have suffering in this life.

We will all experience suffering in this life, to a greater or lesser degree. James shows in chapter 1:2-4, we will encounter fiery trials and that we should rejoice in the trials because they help us mature and become more perfect. But the thrust of the book of Job is not focused on the purpose of suffering or enduring suffering. As a matter of fact, most of Job's time in the book is engaged in trying to understand why he is suffering.

Another popularly held belief, and one that has been frequently considered in the Church, is that Job is a book about self-righteousness. Or to put it another way, it's a book about a self-righteous man that is brought to a position through his trials that he understands how self-righteous he actually is.

Many see the book as a warning against self-righteousness. To be careful of the trap that Job fell into, that is feeling that his righteousness—or what he did—rivalled that of the Eternal’s. This is probably one of the more broadly-held perspectives of the book. Again, this perspective also fits with the underlying theme of a harsh God. If Job was self-righteous—at least to the degree his friends claim he was—then God had to address his self-righteousness aggressively. So that is at least one of the concepts that we see.

There are several places in the book that could lead us to the conclusion he was self-righteous.

Consider Eliphaz’s comments in Job 15:

Job 15:5-11 *For your iniquity teaches your mouth, and you choose the tongue of the crafty.*
Verse 6: *Your own mouth condemns you, and not I; Yes, your own lips testify against you.*

Why would his lips testify against himself? Because from Eliphaz’ perception, Job is self-righteous. Note, that this is *Eliphaz’* perception.

Verse 7: *Are you the first man who was born? Or were you made before the hills?*
Verse 8: *Have you heard the counsel of God? Do you limit wisdom to yourself?*
Verse 9: *What do you know that we do not know? What do you understand that is not in us?*
Verse 10: *Both the gray-haired and the aged are among us, much older than your father.*
Verse 11: *Are the consolations of God too small for you, and the word spoken gently with you?*

Eliphaz is obviously frustrated that Job would not listen and agree with what he and his friends were saying. But the contrast is also with the Eternal. Eliphaz has the perspective that Job is so angry and so convinced of his own righteousness that he ignores the comforts of God and the wisdom they have conveyed for God. The operative phrase here is *the wisdom they have conveyed for God*.

When you look into the words Eliphaz uses, he is telling Job, “We’re giving you wisdom that has come from God.” So when you look at this, Eliphaz has painted a picture of a standard that *he believes*, or *that he has applied to Job*. And he’s frustrated that Job won’t listen to him.

Consider as well Job 27. Remember we are talking about the perspective that Job was self-righteous.

Job 27:4-6 *My lips will not speak wickedness, Nor my tongue utter deceit.*

At first glance, we can look at that and say, “Wow! Job really was self-righteous.” But Job had been very careful to keep the letter of the law, at least as far as he understood it. When we read chapters 1 & 2 of Job, (which we’ll get to in just a minute) we see that

even the Eternal recognized Job's effort and his desire to keep the law. It was something that the Eternal recognized and validated.

Verse 5: *Far be it from me that I should say you are right; [referring again to Bildad] till I die I will not put away my integrity from me.*

Verse 6: *My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; My heart shall not reproach me as long as I live.*

The point Job is making is that he will continue to do all that he knows to do.

So the two major perspectives on the book of Job are that it is possibly an example of enduring trials and suffering, or a warning of self-righteousness.

But as we will see as we progress further in the Bible study, neither of those perspectives is an accurate view of the purpose of this book. *Neither of those perspectives actually describes what God is doing in Job's life.*

So what is the purpose or intent of the book?

One of the important aspects of understanding the book of Job is **understanding the overall structure of the book.**

Often when we read the Bible, it is easy to get in the habit of reading it from a linear perspective. Our system of education, stemming from a Greek-based education, encourages us to approach information from a linear or logical process. Greek education and thought process is based on a linear-based logic, where one step leads to another, then the next, then the next, etc. and you have to go through those steps in order.

But what does not generally happen in Greek logic is moving from step 1 to step 3, and then from step 3 to step 7, and then go from step 7 down to step 2. It's a linear, logical process.

The challenge with the book of Job in particular is that **the Hebrew thought process is not linear.** Probably one of the easiest ways to describe the Hebrew thought process is what you could call *block logic*. Block logic is different--where the concepts are expressed in self-contained units or blocks of thought. The blocks do not necessarily fit together in an obvious linear or logical pattern – at least from a human perspective.

The challenge with this way of thinking is that it creates a propensity for paradox or apparent contradiction, especially if you are approaching it from a linear-thought process.

From a Hebrew perspective, at times it is OK to start with step 1, move to step 3, come back to step 2 and try to make sense of an overall concept or idea. But that goes against the Greek linear thought process.

This type of block logic is the basis of what you find in both the Scriptures and the Apostolic writings. Let's consider one example in the Apostolic writings. Please turn with me to Matthew chapter 10:39.

Matt 10:39. *He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.*

If we look at this scripture, we see two blocks of thought. The first block is "If you find your life you will lose it. The second is "You lose your life, you will find it."

The first seemingly stands in contrast to the second. "If you find your life you will lose it," which, from a logic perspective, stands in contrast to "losing your life to find it."

However, as we understand, having the Spirit of God to guide us, we have to give up this life—pictured through baptism, and take up the cross mentioned a few chapters earlier, and mature into a new creation—that's when we start on the road to true life. Now we see that these two, seemingly conflicting, ideas fit seamlessly together.

But from a linear logical thought process, these two thoughts stand in contrast to each other and cannot be evaluated from a linear perspective. So that's something we have to address as we continue our study of the book of Job.

Turning our attention back to Job, if we read the book of Job from a linear perspective—from this linear, logical perspective--we will miss much of the intent and meaning of the book. So how do we think about Job? How do we look at the structure in the book of Job? For our purposes this evening, we should break the book of Job into three major blocks—three major logical units or sections of scripture.

Section 1 – Chapter 1 -3: The Eternal's View of Job and Satan's attacks.

Section 2 – Chapter 4-37: The Immature Minds' Attempt to Understand Elohim and Their Ways—Their Way of Life.

Section 3 – Chapter 38-42: Job's Reconciliation with the Eternal (Elohim) and Repentance.

When we read and study Job, we should almost think of chapters 4-37 as an inset between the periods when the Eternal is actually working with Job. When we look at chapters 4-37, the Eternal is virtually non-existent in those chapters. Job and his friends will refer to the Eternal frequently, but we don't actually see the Eternal interacting with the people.

So from Job's perspective, we could more accurately refer to him as someone that God is working with, and we see a progression—his mind moving and developing. And this something we will get to as we move through the rest of the study.

So if we think about those three sections: chapters 1-3, 4-37, and 38-42, I think it helps us get a deeper meaning of the purpose and the intent of the book of Job.

Mr. McKinney, Part 1 of Job, Chapters 1-2:

When we read the Book of Job we can get the sense that something is wrong in the world. What we believed in – right and wrong, cause and effect, fairness, justice – has failed us. We want everything to mean something – to have a purpose – and as we will see, the Book of Job very much does. It's just not the meaning that many people take from it.

As we begin the Book of Job we find a righteous man from the land of Uz. In verse 1 it is said that he “*was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.*” He was a very wealthy man. “*He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.*” So far so good. A righteous man is blessed by a loving God. Makes total sense.

Dropping down to verse 6 of chapter 1, we come to the part of the story where many people find a break with reality. Something goes terribly wrong. But as we will see, there is our reality and there then there's God's reality.

Job 1:6 *One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them.*

Verse 7: *The LORD said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the LORD, “From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it.”*

Verse 8: *Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.”*

Again, God himself describes Job as a *righteous* man. Not a *self-righteous* man, but a righteous man. *Ever the accuser*, Satan answers back:

Verse 9: *“Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan replied. He says, “Well, what do you expect? Look how you've blessed him.”*

Verse 10: *“Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.*

Verse 11: *But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.”*

Verse 12: *The LORD said to Satan, “Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.” Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.*

It is interesting to note that Satan mentions the “hedge around” Job. Obedience to God does offer us protection and blessings. Satan suggests that if he is allowed to create a disconnect – take away the physical cause-and-effect relationship – Job will curse God because the life that once

made sense, no longer makes sense. So Satan did just that. He took all of Job's vast physical blessings away from him. But as we will see beginning in verse 20, Job didn't fall for it:

Verse 20: *At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship*

Verse 21: *and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."*

Verse 22: *In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.*

In chapter 2 and verse 3 the Lord asks Satan again:

Job 2:3 *"Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason."*

Verse 4: *"Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life.*

Verse 5: *But now stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face." Satan says, "threaten his very life and he will act like any other man."*

Verse 6: *The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life."*

Verse 7: *So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head.*

Verse 8: *Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.*

Verse 9: *His wife said to him, "Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!"*

Get it over with! It's not worth it!

Verse 10: *He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?"*

In all this, — in spite of all of this — Job did not sin in what he said.

It is good for us to remember that Satan knows human nature inside and out. He is the author of it. And like with Job, he is looking to turn us from God as well. And he's not out there grasping at straws. This is no guessing game. Satan knows what turns our head. He knows what pushes

our buttons. He knows how we think. And he will use anything at his disposal in an attempt to create distance between us and God.

But what he doesn't know is the choice you and I will make when confronted with what we normally respond to with a process of rationalization in our own life.

As we will soon see, we get off track when we view our calling from a physical standpoint. It's spiritual and a lot is at stake.

What is missing from all of the imaginative interpretations of what is going on here – what Mr. King was talking about in the Book of Job – is what God is really doing; the plan of God. As Mr. Armstrong said over and over (and over) again, it all gets back to the two trees in the Garden of Eden.

The decision made there that day by Eve and Adam – the same decision that you and I struggle with every day of our lives – of whether or not to lean on our own understanding, is based on Satan's two lies: first, that we will not surely die and secondly, that we shall be like God.

These lies have disconnected us – separated us – from God because they assert that we can have and sustain life apart from God; that our life does not require a relationship with God to be sustained. And that's appealing to us because from our limited perspective we think that puts us in control; we are the master of our universe. And so the human race from that time to this has been trying to play God without any success.

God's plan is to bring us back into a relationship with Him. God's plan is to be *at one with* or to reconcile man to Himself. If we keep this in mind when reading Job (and in fact, the whole of the Bible), the things that we tend to see from only a human perspective like Job's undeserved suffering – things that loom large from our point of view both here and in our own lives – become quite clear and understandable when seen from a spiritual perspective. But that's hard to do when you're in the midst of scraping the boils on your body.

We have the same situation with Moses. Because Moses disobeyed God in the desert of Sinai by *striking* the rock instead of *speaking* to it to bring forth water for the Children of Israel, God determined that Moses would *see* the Promised Land but never enter it. Moses had let his uncontrolled anger get the best of him.

Some see this as a tragic end to a life devoted to serving God; a punishment that doesn't fit the crime. Jonathan Kirsch writes in his book on the life of Moses: *"The life of Moses came to a tragic end ... it offers such a bleak and dispiriting message about the futility of human endeavor and the unpredictability of divine will."*

God is not fair. God is not just. While God's decree deeply hurt him, Moses himself would not have seen this event in that way. Moses knew something about God that we too quickly forget.

At the end of his life, knowing full well what his end would be, Moses told the Children of Israel in **Deuteronomy 32:3-4**,

“I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, His works are perfect, and all His ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is He.”

These were not empty words to Moses. He came to this conclusion after a lifetime of developing a relationship with God. In the end, he was called the friend of God. Moses knew that this life is only a part—a stepping stone—in God’s overall plan for all mankind. Moses was grateful to be invited to play a part in that plan and knew he was being molded and prepared for a far greater end.

The Book of Job is a bird’s-eye view of that process: the same process that God is engaged in with each and every one of us. It is the process of reconciliation. The process of repentance. The process of self-awareness.

It is not about a harsh God; an unfair God; a capricious God. It is, in fact, the story of a God that loved Job so much he wouldn’t leave him where he was. God was going to draw Job even closer to Him as we will see.

Mr. King, The Middle Section of Job, Chapters 4-37.

Now we’re going to take a look at the inset in the book. In the first three chapters we see the Eternal interacting with Job and then between chapters 38-42, we see God interacting with Job again. But in the middle, we’re introduced to a really interesting situation.

As we noted earlier, it is almost an inset. God’s working with Job almost bookends this middle piece of the book. One of the challenging things about this middle piece is that we often spend a lot of time trying to understand the specifics of how the Eternal is working in Job’s life by reading and pondering chapters 4-37. But in actuality, the Eternal has virtually *no interaction* with the Job and his friends in these chapters. So this evening let’s take a different approach to bring some key thoughts and ideas out of it.

We don’t have a lot of time to deal with these thirty-three chapters in great depth. I don’t think we want to stay here until midnight or one o’clock. But I would like to discuss two themes that will help frame this section—that I hope will bring these chapters to life a little bit. As we think about these themes in approaching Passover and the spring Holy Day season, we’ll find some things to consider.

- The first theme is that man often equates trials with sin and punishment. So when we see individuals enduring trials, one of the first things that is often considered is what they did wrong. Obviously there is sin and there is punishment, and we know there are consequences for sin. But trials and suffering do not always equate with punishment for sin.
- The second theme that we see in these chapters is that, underlying the discussions of Job’s friends, is the thought that God is at times a demanding and a harsh God. It is

interesting how much this theme actually comes up when we are looking for it—how Job’s friends view God.

Let’s turn to **Job 8:1**.

As we consider the first theme, let’s first consider that Job’s friends had some time to consider their responses to Job. Their comments and perspectives were reasoned and considered, not just off-the-cuff remarks. They probably had at least a few days to prepare as they traveled from where they lived to where Job was. And then they sat with him 7 days and 7 nights before they started talking, while they mourned with him. So these individuals had some time to think about and to craft their responses and their discussion with Job.

As Job’s three friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar sat with him, they were looking at a man who had been so afflicted and was in a tremendous amount of despair. It is a natural reaction to want to understand why this bad thing had happened to him. It’s part of the human condition to want to understand suffering, – especially when there was an expectation, as we see with these men, that God was involved in Job’s life.

What is interesting to consider is, what issue did they actually jump to? What question is swirling around in their mind when they start to talk to Job? And the question that comes out through their comments is, **“What did Job do to deserve all this punishment?”**

It is as though Job had to have some terrible, deep-seated sin, and from their perspective as they were looking at Job, Job had done something wrong and as a result he was being punished.

Have we ever done that? Have we asked that question about others? Have we fallen into that trap? Obviously there is punishment for sin, but that is often our first response when we see someone going through trials. Let’s look a little more closely at how Job’s friends viewed him:

Job 8:1 *Then Bildad the Shuhite answered and said:*

Verse 2: *"How long will you speak these things, and the words of your mouth be like a strong wind?"*

Verse 3: *Does God subvert judgment? Or does the Almighty pervert justice?*

Verse 4: *If your sons have sinned against Him, He has cast them away for their transgression.*

So here we get an indication of Bildad’s view of what has gone on. He knew that Job had a relationship with the Eternal. If these calamities had been allowed, from his perspective, sin *had* to be involved and God was punishing the sin. This same thought process doesn’t just apply to his sons, he has the same view of Job as well. Bildad continues:

Verse 5: *If you would earnestly seek God and make your supplication to the Almighty,*

Verse 6: *If...*

...and here Bildad makes an interesting statement, and it has a lot of depth.

IF you were pure and upright,

Let's consider what Bildad is actually saying here. Bildad directly disagrees with the Eternal's assessment of Job. In the first chapter the Eternal referred to Job not just once, but *twice*, as being upright. Here Bildad questions his uprightness. What's more interesting is that Bildad uses the *exact same term for upright* that the Eternal used. But Bildad's perspective was the Job's troubles stemmed from his sins, *which is just the opposite of what the Eternal had said about Job.*

So Bildad is laying out *his own thought process* about what Job's troubles were. He wasn't trying to understand what the Eternal was doing—he was laying his own perspective over it. Let's continue,

Verse 6: *Surely now He would awake for you, and prosper your rightful dwelling place.*

But as we can see, based on what Mr. McKinney said earlier, Job didn't do anything wrong. God considered Job righteous. He considered Job as an upright man. He was not self-righteous, he did not have some great or horrendous sin that he was hiding in his closet for which the Eternal had to punish him.

We all sin, and there's no doubt that Job did sin, but there was not some massive, problematic sin that Job needed to deal with. I would refer us back to the first two chapters of Job. It's important that we ground ourselves in the Eternal's view of Job.

Have you considered that Job's way of life, his uprightness, was confirmed in the mouths of three witnesses, and four if you consider Job's wife as a witness. The three are: the individual who wrote the book (most likely Moses) stated that Job was upright, the Eternal stated that Job was righteous and even Satan confirmed that assessment—and then Job's wife. So in the mouths of four witnesses Job was confirmed to be upright. I think it's interesting that not even Satan disagreed with that assessment.

But the carnal mind, and at times a weak spiritual mind, will equate trials and suffering with sin and punishment. That is exactly what Bildad was doing here. And much if not most of the time, that equation is not accurate. In this case, Bildad's assessment had very little to do with what God was teaching Job, of how he was working with Job.

Let's move into the second theme that we see in these chapters:

The second theme is similar to something we discussed earlier. That is the thought that God is a harsh and at times mean and demanding God. This is not something that is new, it has been around for thousands of years.

This is also a perspective that we can see in our own thought process. The ideas of this world do impact the way we read the Bible, the way we understand things. It is frequently useful to really

scrutinize our thought processes and beliefs because of that. But it is interesting that Job's friends even have this thought process, and that shades what we see in chapters 4 through 37.

Let's consider Zophar's comments in Chapter 11:

Job 11:5 *But oh, that God would speak, and open His lips against you,*

Verse 6: *That He would show you the secrets of wisdom! For they would double your prudence. Know therefore that God exacts from you less than your iniquity deserves.*

Let's think about this comment for a second—given to an individual who was sitting in an ash heap, scraping his sores. Given that Zophar was, purportedly, a close friend of Job, he probably understood that Job had a close relationship with the Eternal. To add to the emphasis here, and to give more insight into Zophar's frame of mind, consider something that Job said in Chapter 29:1-4.

These are important scriptures to help us understand Job's frame of reference as he was going through these trials.

Job 29:1 *Job further continued his discourse, and said:*

Verse 2: *Oh, that I were as in months past, as in the days when God watched over me;*

Verse 3: *When His lamp shone upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness;*

Verse 4: *Just as I was in the days of my prime, when the friendly counsel of God was over my tent;*

Even in the midst of his trials—after he had lost absolutely everything, and was sitting in the middle of an ash pile with boils covering his body—consider what Job's desire actually was and what that said about how he viewed his relationship to the Eternal.

This statement by Job is very strong: *“when the friendly counsel of God was over my tent”* – in the English, it loses some of the intensity. What Job was actually saying was that he longed for the time when the Eternal came into his tent, sat on the couch, got close to Job, and they had intimate conversations, when they told each other about their deepest most innermost thoughts, when they had discussions that were close and intimate. **That's what Job missed! That's what his desire was for. Even through the midst of his trials.**

What would you or I desire if we were in Job's situation?

Would our desire be for relief? A change in your situation? To eliminate the boils or to heal our bodies?

What is it that really Job desired? **What Job really desired was a restoration of the relationship that he thought that he had lost with the Eternal.**

The comment in verse 4 is a very strong comment. It emphasizes that deep and intimate relationship that he thought was lost between him and the Eternal.

Now let's go back to Zophar's comments in chapter 11 and verses 5 & 6.

Even though the Zophar evidently understood the relationship, or at least had an idea of the relationship that Job had with the Eternal, he assumed and evidently desired that the Eternal would speak *against* Job. Zophar didn't want the Eternal just to encourage him, or just to speak to him, but he wanted the Eternal to speak *against* him. But most striking is the last part of verse 6. This explains the frame of mind that Zophar approached Job with:

Verse 6: *“Know therefore that God exacts from you less than your iniquity deserves.”*

Another translation of this verse puts it this way, *“Know this: that God has forgiven some of your sin.”*

Again, our focus is on Zophar's perspective. What is his view of God as he is speaking to Job? What does it say about the Zophar's mindset and his view of God when sees a God that would punish someone this harshly for being self-righteous, even when God had forgiven some of Job's sin?

So from Zophar's perspective, Job is being punished this harshly even after God has eliminated some of Job's sins. He has forgotten them. What does that say about Zophar's mindset, his view of God, and about the interaction he is having with Job?

It's interesting that Job even struggles with what he considers, at times, the Eternal's harshness. He struggles to understand what he has done to deserve this harsh and hard treatment from the God Who he thought was his close, intimate friend, who would come into his tent and they would have these conversations.

This theme of harshness is somewhat consistent throughout these chapters 4-37.

A key to understanding the book of Job is to understand the overall structure of the book. As we consider the structure it is important to recognize that the middle section is more about how an immature—or the carnal—mind attempts to understand Elohim's ways. It's more about that, than how God works with mankind, and how God is specifically working with Job. That is the reason you see this long discourse of men talking about who and what God is. But what you don't see is the Eternal-- you don't see Elohim interacting with these men. **You see men talking about God, not God interacting with the men.**

It is informing to us to consider the Eternal's response when He decides to intervene in the discussions in Job 38:2.

Job 38:2 *Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?*

Job and his friends were in a place where they did not understand what God was doing. That was something Mr. McKinney referred to earlier. This is a process of reconciliation. It was a process that the Eternal wanted Job to go through to understand, not that he was doing something specifically wrong, but **He wanted Job to come to a new view of what Job was**. Job and his friends didn't understand that. They did not have a clear picture of what the Eternal was trying to do.

But they did a lot of talking about it!

What can make it more confusing is that, while many of the things that these men said about God, could be true, being applied in the right context. But in this section of Job they are being misapplied to the Eternal. Because they didn't understand what the Eternal was trying to do in Job's life.

To understand the real purpose of the book, to understand the fundamental theme of the book which we, as called-out ones, need to understand, we have to understand what the Eternal was doing with Job, and we have to understand how the Eternal constructs this book so that we can look at it correctly. One of the ways we do that, to understand how the Eternal was working with Job, we have to take the first three chapters together then connect them to chapters 38-42. When we read those chapters, we see God working with a man to reconcile his mind to Himself.

And now Mr. McKinney will pick it up from chapter 38 to fill out the story.

Mr. McKinney, The Third Section of Job, Chapters 38-42:

And now for something completely different. God enters the picture.

Beginning in chapter 38, God gives what is happening in the Book of Job meaning and purpose. It is no longer a seemingly random event but a purposeful interaction.

We, by our nature, are not very teachable. We don't like to listen. We like to be the sole judge of our own thinking and behavior. And that attitude gets us into trouble. We live in our own head and we deceive ourselves as Jeremiah reminded us in Jeremiah 17:9.

We find ourselves year after year running over the same old ground and being OK with it. Human beings are masters at rationalization. *"Yes, I know I shouldn't do that but let me explain. Once you've heard my story, you'll understand why I do what I do."*

I wonder if that was the key issue for the Church in Sardis that we read about in Revelation 3. The report in Revelation on the church in Sardis says:

Rev 3:1 *I know your deeds, that you have a reputation that you are alive, but in reality you are dead.*

In other words, you believe that you are doing what is right, but you aren't listening, you aren't growing; you are basking in a reputation of your own making. The angel said:

Verse 2: *Wake up then, and strengthen what remains that was about to die, because I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.*

Sins of omission. "You're glossing over what you don't want to deal with and calling it good enough."

If we are not growing spiritually, we are dead. I wish it weren't so, but trials are the primary means of making that happen. Trials (and fasting) pull us out of our routines and make us teachable.

We need "negative" often-jarring experiences in our life to get our attention; to get us into a teachable frame of mind. Being uncomfortable is motivating to us. Lacking something, or being in pain over something, causes us to question and address our perceived self-sufficiency.

We begin to doubt our "master of the universe" status. Maybe we aren't God after all. We begin to look beyond ourselves for answers. In this moment we become teachable.

Trials are of vital importance to us in the plan of God – the primary means God has to shape us into the people He wants us to be—to convert us.

It's not surprising then that James begins his letter to God's people by saying,

James 1:2 *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials.*

It's the first thing James touches on. It may seem like an odd way to start a letter, but James knows it should be a primary concern for us. It is a critical part of the process of reconciliation.

The Book of Job gives us a perspective on this process so that we can better relate to what James is saying. So, it's not a matter of "Is it fair?" "Is it just?" "Why is this bad thing happening to such a good person?" "Do I deserve it?" The fact is we NEED it.

As we have seen in the middle section of this Book, it is quite natural of humans to ask when faced with a trial, "What? What did I do?" I think we've all been there. But at that point we're not very teachable. That's a defensive posture. We're still trying to defend ourselves. The question at this point is rhetorical. We're not really listening.

At some point, though, our trial stops us in our tracks, we run out of excuses and we turn to and fully submit to God. And we then let God take us to where He wants us to be.

Sometimes it's not about where we've been or what we've done, but where we are going – where God is taking us—the next place we need to be in our relationship with God. This is where Job was at.

Too often we judge righteousness just on the surface – do’s and don’ts’s. The rules are certainly important, but they’re the showy part of obedience. Compared to what is really going on inside of us, that is the easy part. God looks on the heart. God is looking for something deeper. God is looking to change more than just behavior,

God is looking to change who we ARE. Admittedly that will change our behavior, but not because of our own willpower. But our behavior will change because of what we are becoming. A repentant attitude brings about a change in our thinking. Our goal is to change the thinking behind the behavior, so that the right behavior naturally flows from that.

Too often, we rely too much on the power of our will—our own strength. And that has gotten us into trouble. I appreciate where it comes from but it emphasizes self-reliance and can minimize the vast difference between God and man.

God is not conflicted, as we are. He is not fighting His own nature. We need God to help us replace our nature with His mind. That’s why Christ told us to abide in Him.

God is working on Job’s heart. God is about to draw Job into a closer relationship with Him than he has ever been before. Job will develop an understanding about God that he never could have imagined. The difference between what Mr. King just covered and what we are about to read, is the difference between intellect and understanding.

In Job 38 we read:

Job 38:1 *Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said:*

Verse 2: *“Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?*

Verse 3: *Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me.*

God is turning the tables. In Job 13:3 remember that Job wanted to argue his case with God. He wanted to *reason* with Him. God is about to explain to him that you don’t know what you ask. Our intellect only reveals our ignorance and hides what we do not know. God is preparing Job’s mind for the understanding he is about to have revealed to him.

Verse 4: *Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding,*

Verse 5: *Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it?*

Verse 6: *To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone,*

Verse 7: *When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy?*

Verse 8: *Or who shut in the sea with doors, when it burst forth and issued from the womb;*

- Verse 9:** *When I made the clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band;*
- Verse 10:** *When I fixed My limit for it, and set bars and doors;*
- Verse 11:** *When I said, 'This far you may come, but no farther, and here your proud waves must stop!'*
- Verse 12:** *Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place,*
- Verse 13:** *That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it?*

He's saying, ***"Job, what do you think you know? You know nothing of these things. And yet you are trying to figure out life on your own."***

God is creating a teachable Job.

He continues to ask Job about the creation and the ability to sustain it. He talks about the animal kingdom. God is explaining that there is much more going on here. The point being, that Job lacks God's perspective.

In chapters 40 and 41 the Lord talks about Behemoth and Leviathan to demonstrate that there are things that only God can control. God has a purpose beyond what we understand. There's more to the story than what you can physically see.

Finally, in Job 42, Job says he gets the point.

- Job 42:1** *Then Job answered the LORD and said:*
- Verse 2:** *"I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.*
- Verse 3:** *You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.*
- Verse 4:** *Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, 'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.'*
- Verse 5:** *"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You.*
- Verse 6:** *Therefore [as a result], abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."*

Reading the book of Job before Passover and around the Day of Atonement is especially appropriate. Job says in verse 5:

Job 42:5: *“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You.”*

He is saying, *“I knew you intellectually. But now I understand you. I knew the physical, but now I see the spiritual.”*

Four chapters of very descriptive language helped Job to *see* God in a new way. Job now better sees himself in relationship to God. And so in verse 6 he says,

Verse 6: *Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*

“I hate what I *AM*,” Job says. He has gone beyond the physical to see the spiritual aspect of repentance.

This is not a harsh God. This is a God Who loves Job so much that He wouldn’t leave him where he was. God was helping Job to close the distance between them. This is a blessing from God. It’s what drives James’ comment about counting it all joy when you fall into trials.

God did not crush Job as his friends tried to do, and as we sometimes feel the need to do to each other. Instead, God lovingly humbled him by showing him a new perspective and opened his mind. There’s a difference. He showed Job another way to look at life that would allow Job to get himself into a right relationship with God.

When we play God we imagine how things ought to be—how the world ought to work—we push our own agendas. God is telling Job that only He has the power to deal with the forces that surround us. We cannot sustain life without God. We will surely die. We cannot begin to see things as God sees them. Our only hope is to rely on our Creator.

When we look back on our lives, what you and I become will not be so much because of the plans we’ve made or the goals we’ve set, but what we will have become will be due to our response to our calling, our opportunities, and the unavoidable adversity that will come our way. What will make us is our response to the things outside of our control; the trials that will come our way. The book of Job helps us to form a proper response.

In the end, a very loving God brings Job to new understanding of God and Job’s relationship with Him. Job develops a deeper sense of who and what he is. Even though he was “righteous” he finds that at the core of his being there is more work to be done. In this physical life, reconciliation will never be a *state* we’ve arrived at, but a *process* we’re committed to.

I think this is especially a key concept for second-generation Christians. Growing up with an understanding of God’s way of life, we are outwardly righteous. We keep a lot of laws. We often don’t really understand repentance in the way that someone coming to that understanding later in life does.

As we grow—primarily through trials and tests—we begin to see our very nature and its opposition to God. We come to a deeper repentance. Baptism is only a beginning.

The book of Job helps us to see the perspective that leads us to a deeper repentance.

The book of Job is really about the process of repentance and the deeper connection to God that it brings. It's a message that we need to read over and over again as we vacillate between self-reliance and dependence on God as we go through our conversion process.

We are human and we struggle with our limited perspective and the desire to have life on our own terms. We struggle to see our life from God's perspective and the process we have been invited to a part in. The book of Job helps to see our calling more clearly.

Mr. King, Conclusion:

Hopefully this Bible Study will provide a backdrop for a different perspective of Job. As we've seen, there are a lot of perspectives as to what God is doing in Job's life—how He is working with Job. Sometimes people look at the book as being about suffering. Sometimes it's about Job's self-righteousness.

But to really understand what Elohim, and what the Eternal in particular is doing with Job, we need to look at the structure with which this book was inspired to be written. There are probably other structures we could look at in the book, but looking at it in the three sections, hopefully it helps you see it in a different way.

You put the first section and the third section together—chapters 1 through 3, and then 38 through 42. It gives a consistent view of the Eternal working with Job to bring him to a place where he is willing to understand repentance and he understands his relationship to God. The Eternal gives Job an incredible gift, and that is to see who He really is.

But in the middle section—the inset of this book—what we see is the carnal mind trying to understand what God is doing with mankind. And what we see is that the carnal mind can't make that leap. It can't evaluate. It can't assess. It can't understand how God is working with mankind.

Hopefully, going through the book this evening, it's been valuable and will give you a different perspective from which to look at the book of Job.